

Operation Corporate: Operational Art and Implications for the Joint Operational Access Concept

**A Monograph
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Abstract

Operation Corporate: Operational Art and Implications for the Joint Operational Access Concept
by MAJ Paul A Olsen, United States Army, 44 pages.

This paper explores the development of an operational approach to secure the Falkland Islands following the Argentine invasion on 30 March 1982. The Falklands Islands campaign is a case study of operational art and the development of an operational approach by the military leaders of the United Kingdom. Operational movement, force employment, and the influence of national policy decisions all contributed to the modification and adaptation of their campaign plan. This campaign, characterized by joint maritime and land operations in a distributed area of operations, provides a way ahead for the application of operational art in emerging contingencies based on an understanding of the relationship between theory, joint doctrine, and actual execution of tactical actions. Joint Operational Access Concept precepts and their application during this campaign provide relevance to ensure access during forcible entry operations. JOAC principles focus on the requirement to develop an operational approach, along multiple distributed lines of operation, employing precision strikes at operational distance, and denying or defeating the enemy's anti-access or area denial capabilities. Using a historical case study serves as a proof of concept to provide a compelling narrative and cautionary tale regarding the implementation of this operational access concept.

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Introduction

The Falklands War of 1982 between Great Britain and Argentina offers a compelling perspective on the complex interrelationships of war: the lines between politics and military actions, the integration of air, land, and sea efforts, the centrality of logistics in the conduct of the campaign, and the dominance of terrain and weather in operational concepts. The Falklands campaign is a near perfect model of a campaign: geographically isolated, offering distinct advantages and disadvantages to each adversary, fought with weapon systems remarkably similar for both sides, set against an intense political background, and brought to a decisive victory for the British in only seventy-five days. While it was not without its share of tragedies, this campaign is ultimately known for brilliantly executed, well-led, courageously fought battles by men seeking to do their duty as they understood it.

This monograph explores the broad body of literature about the Falkland Islands campaign to answer the following question: How did the United Kingdom successfully achieve its campaign objectives in light of the evolving strategic and tactical events during the Falklands War? To answer the research question the paper will define the role of operational planning in theory and practice as well as the importance of relating the strategic end state to the operational approach. This monograph focuses on the role of doctrine, command and control structures, and the development of a British operational approach during the Falkland Islands campaign.

Closely related to the issue of military and political interrelationships is the matter of integrating tactics and operations with strategy to achieve political ends. In the Falkland Islands campaign, the British operational commander considered the arrangement of tactical actions to achieve strategic objectives, although not without adaptation and miscues along the way. Command and control structures as well as confusion regarding command relationships amplified the frictions resulting from limited resources, communications, and the environment itself. Comparing current methods of operational art and the British approach afford us an opportunity

to test the relevance of a theory that formalized doctrine, education, and experience were not equally weighted during the development of the British campaign plan for the Falklands War.

Finally, this monograph looks at the role of operational art as it pertains to the Falklands Islands campaign and the United States military's recently published Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC). In many respects, the Falklands Islands campaign illustrates many of the precepts articulated in the JOAC to include the primacy of operational initiative, cross-domain synergy, and basing options to retain flexibility during planning and operations.¹ In short, to what extent did commanders and planning staffs apply these tenets of operational warfare and how are they relevant to the emerging American military concept of projecting and sustaining joint combat power against an armed opposing force? This is especially relevant considering the proliferation of weapons and other technologies capable of denying access to or freedom of action within an operational area.

Theory and Doctrine

A review of classical and contemporary military theory develops an appreciation of operational art during this period. Vego's *Operational Warfare at Sea: Theory and Practice* and Corbett's *Some Principle of Maritime Strategy* provide the intellectual underpinning of maritime force employment and combined operations.² Three variables mentioned in Biddle's *Military Power* influenced the development of the British operational approach: technology, preponderance, and force employment.³ While technology and material preponderance favored

¹ Department of Defense, "Joint Operational Access Concept," (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), ii–iii.

² Milan Vego, *Operational Warfare at Sea: Theory and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 3–5; Julian Corbett, *Some Principle of Maritime Strategy* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1988), 91–106. Maritime force has to be regarded in a joint context in which naval assets enable the actions executed ashore by land forces. Maritime power projection facilitates the intervention at a time and place of political choice and an opportunity to exploit joint assets.

³ Stephen Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 48–51.

the Argentinean forces, the British military's method of force employment is particularly salient in this study. The impact of force employment during the Falklands Islands campaign demonstrates the importance of adaptation in operational planning based on an understanding of the interaction between strategy and tactics.

The strategic context of the conflict provided by Hastings and Jenkins perspective of the *Battle for the Falklands* encompasses a broad range of tactical actions and strategic decisions that provide insight into the strategic and operational decision-making process. Watson and Dunn provide an American perspective on lessons learned from the Falkland Islands War while the United Kingdom's official report on the Falklands summarizes salient strategic and operational lessons learned during the course of the war. Freedman's two-volume *Official History of the Falklands Campaign* discusses strategic-political maneuvering as well as the tension between the operational commanders and tactical commanders during the Falklands War. In *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years On: Lessons for the Future*, the authors argue the experience during the Falklands conflict is not isolated to that period and has implications for contingency operations characterized by extreme operational reach, limited means, and the necessity of a clearly defined strategic end state.

Current US joint doctrine defines an operational approach as the "broad actions the force must take to transform current conditions into those desired at end state" while operational art is "the use of creative thinking by commanders and staffs to design strategies, campaigns, and major operations and organize and employ military forces."⁴ An understanding of existing doctrine guiding expeditionary warfare and the professional military education system serves to illuminate the methods available to the British during this campaign. This is critical to the question since

⁴ US Department of Defense, Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), II-7.

formal doctrinal manuals—as understood by the US military—did not exist in the British armed forces until after the Falkland Islands campaign.

Papers from the Joint Services Command and Staff Course (JSCSC) regarding professional military education and JSCSC monographs focused on operational art during the Falkland Islands War highlight the influence of doctrine, formal education, and experience. These monographs and reports focus on the operational level of war with particular attention to the command relationships, command and control structures employed during the campaign, and discussions on the state of British operational art in the early 1980s. The analysis of the campaign and lessons learned provide a detailed understanding of the challenges faced by the British operational commanders during this campaign. The importance of the commander during operational planning and adaptation during “out of area” operations is an issue that the British addressed after the campaign through development of joint doctrine and professional education programs. This perspective provides additional insight into the intellectual underpinning, cognitive development, and espoused military theory during this period and the years following the campaign.

An overview of the JOAC precepts and their application during Operation Corporate provides relevance to the newly published concept to ensure access during forcible entry operations. The JOAC provides principles that focus on the requirement to develop a unified operational approach, operating along multiple distributed lines of operation, employing precision strikes at operational distance, and denying or defeating the enemy’s anti-access or area denial capabilities through a combination of deception, stealth, and ambiguity.⁵ The monograph will illustrate the application or omission of these principles during the operational overview later in the paper. This serves as a proof of concept using a historical case study to provide a compelling narrative and cautionary tale regarding the implementation of this operational access concept.

⁵ Department of Defense, “Joint Operational Access Concept,” 17.

The Strategic Context

Geo-Political Background

At first glance, it appears that the Falkland Islands are of minimal strategic importance to either Great Britain or Argentina. A distance of over 7,500 miles separates Britain from the Falklands while Argentina is 300 miles distant to the west. Situated close to the Antarctic Circle between latitudes 51 and 52 degrees, the Falklands endured a harsh and inhospitable climate that kept them uninhabited until the late 17th century. The crew of the British Royal Navy ship *Desire* originally sighted the islands in 1592, and not until 1690 did the British crew of the *Welfare* land on the islands themselves.⁶ Argentina did not exist at this time, and the islands remained essentially unclaimed.

The two main islands, East and West Falklands, are separated by the Strait of San Carlos or Falkland Sound and generally follow a northeast to southwest orientation. As illustrated in Figure 1, irregular coastlines characterize both East and West Falklands; this feature in turn led to the formation of many good landing sites and potential harbors. The land surface on both islands is generally hilly and barren. The islands themselves have little to offer. The terrain is treeless and windswept, and only the grasslands ashore and the fishing of the seas adjacent offer any livelihood to the inhabitants. Early settlers introduced cattle, later replaced by sheep, to feed off the grass. By 1972, the 4,700 square miles of the Falkland Islands supported a population of only about 2000, over half of them in the main settlement of Stanley.

⁶ Peter Calvert, *The Falklands Crisis* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 5.

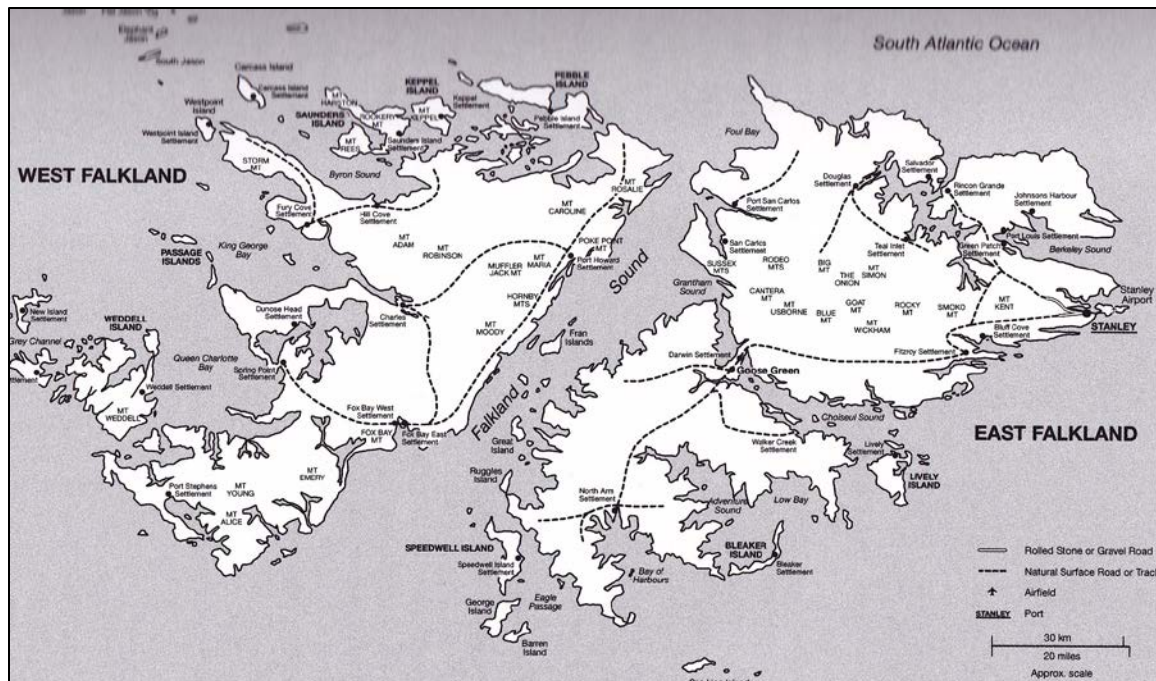


Figure 1: The Falkland Islands.⁷

Shortly after the independence of Buenos Aires in 1816, the Argentinean government established a penal colony on the islands. However, the strategic concerns of Britain required the establishment of a way station on the important route around the Cape of Good Hope into the Pacific Ocean. This led Britain to reassert its rights of sovereignty based on a consistent history of claim to the islands. The frigate *Cleo* deployed to the Falkland Islands in 1833 with orders to evict the Argentinean administrators and raise the Union Jack over the territory. This mission succeeded and the British claim and sovereignty remained uninterrupted until 1 April 1982.⁸

The strategic importance of the Falkland Islands had not increased over the years as technology advanced and wind driven ships gave way to coal and steam powered vessels. The islands remained a convenient location to refuel and refit, particularly for those ships that had

⁷ Map by Mark Lacey, *The Origins of the Falklands War*, vol. I of *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign*, (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2005), xiii.

⁸ Calvert, *The Falklands Crisis*, 5.

recently completed the arduous passage around the Cape Horn from the Pacific Ocean, but was certainly not critical to the security of the British Empire.

The Falkland Islands were of even less strategic importance to Argentina considering its ideal position on Tierra del Fuego. If the Falkland Islands were of minimal strategic importance, then the island of South Georgia—800 miles east-southeast of the Falklands—was insignificant in terms of strategic importance to either contending nation. Ironically, it was on South Georgia where the first military action of the 1982 Falklands War occurred. While Clausewitz writes that war is merely a continuation of policy by other means, we must also regard the importance of international politics in relation to domestic politics when discussing the drivers of conflict in this war.⁹

Political Background

The two contending powers and their attendant political systems drove the political leaders of Great Britain and Argentina into a situation that regarded war in the Falklands as the only suitable outcome to an intractable problem. For the Argentineans, the decision to invade the Falklands resulted from desperation influenced by misinformation, miscalculation, and false assumptions. Argentina was still recovering from the effects of power transition between the Peronist regime and the most recent military junta. Rampant corruption, economic chaos, government sponsored terrorism, and military brokerage of politics characterized the Argentinean political context immediately before the Falklands War.¹⁰ The junta deposed the government of General Viola on 16 December 1981 and sought to consolidate its power base by appealing to the nationalist Argentinean demands concerning the Malvinas Islands. The Galtieri junta, a triumvirate of the Army, Navy, and Air Force chiefs of staff, was keenly aware of a need for

⁹ Calvert, *The Falklands Crisis*, 7.

¹⁰ Martin Middlebrook, *Operation Corporate: The Falklands War, 1982* (London: Viking, 1985), 35–37.

success, for however much the military held sway in Argentinean politics, the junta understood their power ultimately depended on popular opinion to ensure their continued position in power.

Although General Galtieri was ostensibly the head of state, Admiral Jorge Anaya, Commander-in-Chief of the Navy, heavily influenced Galtieri in matters of policy regarding the Falkland Islands. President Galtieri, former Army chief of staff, had only recently cultivated relations with the new Reagan administration and by early 1982, was certain his nation was instrumental in the furtherance of the United States' Latin America policy.¹¹ Galtieri sensed he could secure a quick and relatively bloodless victory in the Falklands, gain US support or at worst non-interference, secure moral and political support in the Third World dominated United Nations, and solidify his position domestically by satisfying a long-held nationalist ambition of the Argentineans, the return of the Malvinas Islands.¹²

Margaret Thatcher, head of the Conservative Party and Prime Minister of England, was no less vulnerable to the currents of public opinion. Britain's national morale was low. There was a long-term problem of the steady decline from post-World War II great power status. However, there were more immediate problems. Only nine months earlier the worst urban riots of the twentieth century affected forty cities and towns, while in January unemployment exceeded the three million mark for the first time since the Great Depression of the early 1930s. The latest round of talks with the Argentinean junta over the issue of Falkland Islands self-determination ended inconclusively in February 1982. The *status quo ante* with Argentina seemed assured as long as either side did not escalate the situation and create a problem that might involve others. During this period, Britain failed to deter the Argentinean junta from invading the Falklands, in no small part because the British were pursuing two contradictory policies:(1) negotiate a

¹¹ The Sunday Times of London Insight Team, *War in the Falklands* (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), 61.

¹² Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands* (New York: Norton, 1983), 45–60; Lawrence Friedman, “The War of the Falkland Islands,” *Foreign Affairs* (Fall 1982): 196–210.

settlement with Argentina over the Falklands; and (2) protect the rights of the Falkland islanders as British citizens.¹³

The escalation of the Falkland crisis in March–April 1982 surprised the British Government and underscored the need to maintain a credible deterrent force in the area while clearly communicating foreign policy objectives. Figure 2 illustrates the geographical challenges that influence the British operational approach during the campaign.

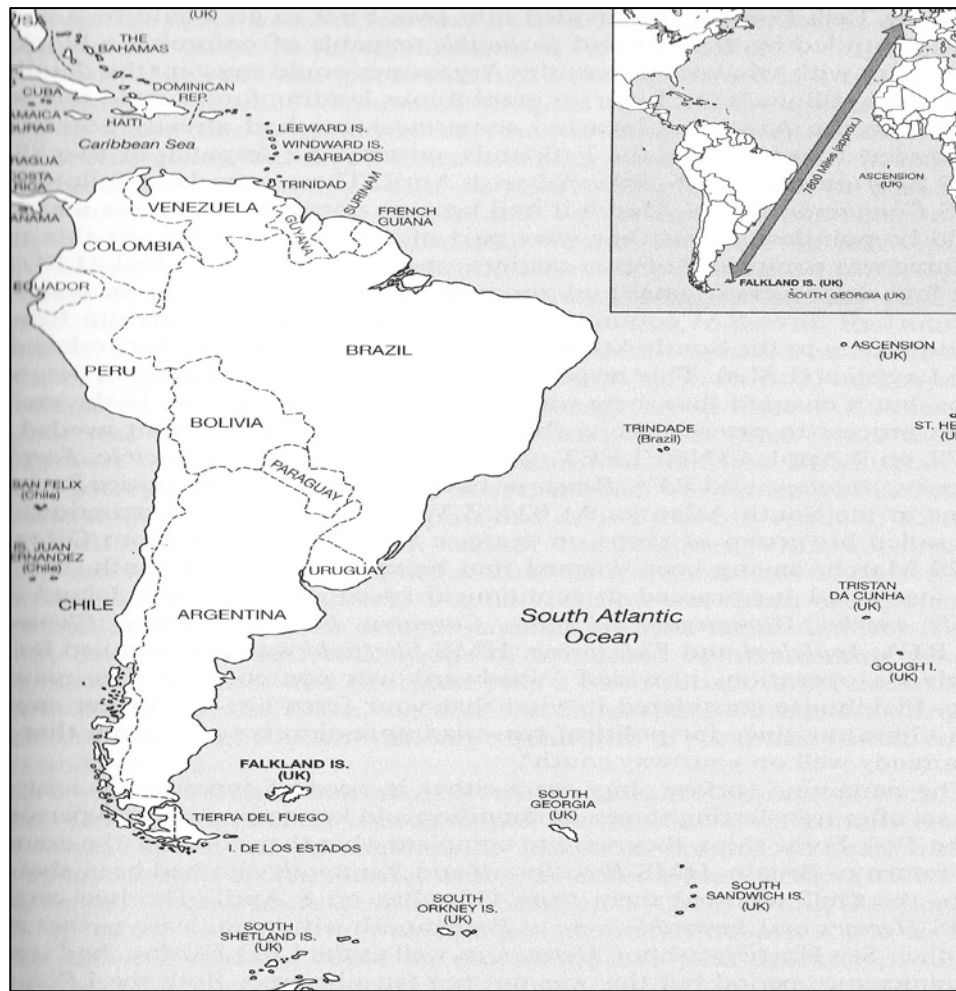


Figure 2: Strategic and Operational Distance.¹⁴

¹³ Hopple, "Intelligence and Warning," 348–350; Kinney, *National Interest/National Honor*, 46.

¹⁴ Map by Mark Lacey, *The Origins of the Falklands War*, vol. I of *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign*, (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2005), xii.

Initial assessments on the evening of 31 March 1982 from the Joint Intelligence Committee and a variety of other sources argued that a military operation conducted 8,000 miles from Great Britain, in deteriorating weather conditions and against a numerically superior enemy was a high-risk venture.¹⁵

However, Admiral Sir Henry Leach, First Sea Lord, spoke with the Prime Minister on 31 March 1982 and offered a different perspective on the crisis. Admiral Leach admitted that while nothing could deter the invasion, the Royal Navy could mount an expedition to re-take the Falklands within days and arrive in the South Atlantic within three weeks.¹⁶ The Prime Minister accepted the First Sea Lord's advice and the following day, ordered the dispatch of a naval task force to regain the islands. Once the news of the Argentinean invasion reached Great Britain on late 2 April 1982, a firestorm of criticism erupted from British public and the opposition Labour Party for the obvious intelligence and policy failures of the Conservative Government.¹⁷

Military Background

While the decades long political and diplomatic maneuvering continued its interminable rounds of offers and counteroffers, other developments informed the Argentinean assumptions regarding a British response to an invasion of the Falkland Islands. The Home Office decided that the 1981 Nationality Act would not include an exception for Falkland Islanders, thereby depriving them of their automatic right to British citizenship.¹⁸ The British Government also announced that the future of the British Antarctic Survey Base at Grytviken in South Georgia was under review. The Ministry of Defense announced the results of the 1981 Defense Review, which

¹⁵ Lawrence Freedman and Virginia Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War: The Falklands Conflict of 1982* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 123.

¹⁶ Middlebrook, *Operation Corporate*, 67; Stephen Badsey, Rob Havers, and Mark Grove, eds. *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years On: Lessons for the Future* (New York: Frank Cass, 2005), 68–70.

¹⁷ Hastings and Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands*, 72–82.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 30–31.

recommended a reduction of one-third of the Royal Navy's surface fleet, including the light carriers *Hermes* and *Invincible*, and the amphibious assault ship *Intrepid*.¹⁹ There was also widespread speculation in the press of plans to abolish the Royal Marines.

Moreover, the Ministry of Defense announcement to withdraw the Antarctic Protection Vessel *Endurance* had the greatest impact on the Argentinean junta's decision to invade the Falkland Islands. The *Endurance* not only had a sophisticated intelligence gathering capability, but was also a highly visible symbol of Britain's determination to retain its sovereign interests in the South Atlantic. Based on the actions and decisions announced by the British government, the Argentinean junta assumed that Britain would abandon its territories in the South Atlantic, and would shortly lack the capacity to defend them, even if she sought to assert those sovereign rights. According to Lawrence Freedman, "there was a lack of political will in London to either solve the dispute once and for all in some deal with Buenos Aires, or else accept full responsibility for the long-term security and prosperity of the Islands."²⁰

In response to the perceived British abandonment of their claims to the Falklands and South Georgia, the Argentinean junta initiated planning for two operations to occupy, and if necessary, seize control of those islands. Project Alpha focused on "the clandestine establishment of an Argentinean presence on South Georgia" while Operation Azul centered upon the overt "full-scale invasion of the Falkland Islands."²¹ However, these two planning efforts—developed in isolation—lacked the required coordination to ensure either complementary or reinforcing effects from each operation. Operation Azul based its operating concept on the departure of the *Endurance* from the South Atlantic in May 1982 and the arrival of a new 30-man Royal Marine detachment at Port Stanley. Additionally, Operation Azul's initial invasion date of 9 July 1982 set

¹⁹ John Woodward and Patrick Robinson, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1992), 68.

²⁰ Friedman, "The War of the Falkland Islands," 208.

²¹ Duncan Anderson, *The Falklands War, 1982* (Oxford: Osprey, 2002), 15.

it during the middle of the southern winter season, when weather conditions would constrain large-scale naval movements and military operations.²²

The military maneuvering over the Falkland Islands began in December 1981 with Project Alpha—an Argentinean effort ostensibly to conduct a preliminary survey of a derelict whaling station at Leith, South Georgia—that elicited a strong protest from Britain. This initial incursion and a second attempt on 9 March 1982 were provocations designed to test British resolve and a precursor to the invasion of the Falkland Islands themselves. Within a week of the second incursion, the Argentineans reinforced the Project Alpha force with over 100 Argentinean Marines, although there was no direct confrontation with the contingent of British scientists ashore.²³ Accordingly, the governor of the Falkland Islands requested the *Endurance* return to South Georgia and either defend Grykiven or eject the Argentineans.

The British Government was immediately aware of the incident and a flurry of diplomatic activity ensued, attempting to forestall escalation of the crisis.²⁴ More importantly, there was widespread speculation that *Endurance* would soon receive support from the Royal Navy in the form of nuclear submarines deployed from Gibraltar to the South Atlantic. The *Endurance* arrived at South Georgia on 24 March 1982 and deployed a Royal Marine detachment overlooking Grykiven. Now the Argentinean junta found itself in an unenviable position of either escalating the crisis or backing down from the British only to suffer international humiliation and the potential for another military coup.

The Argentinean junta met on 25 March 1982 and realized that their window of opportunity was rapidly closing with the deployment of British nuclear submarines. The junta sought to pre-empt the British maneuver and invade the Falkland Islands while Argentina

²² Anderson, *The Falklands War*, 15.

²³ Middlebrook, *Operation Corporate*, 37–39.

²⁴ The Sunday Times of London Insight Team, *War in the Falklands*, 71.

retained the initiative. Accordingly, on 26 March 1982, the junta decided to initiate Operation Azul and ordered the deployment of the Argentinean Navy under the guise of naval maneuvers.²⁵

On 2 April 1982, Task Force 40 landed elements of the Argentinean Marines and special operations forces to seize control of Port Stanley and overpower the Royal Marine detachment on the island. Within hours of the invasion, the Argentines secured Port Stanley, seized the Governor's House and the Royal Marine barracks, and captured the governor and the Royal Marine detachment after sporadic resistance.²⁶ The Argentines attacked South Georgia on 3 April 1982 and occupied Grykiven after a brief engagement between the Royal Marines and the Argentinean Navy.²⁷

An Overview of Operation Corporate

Deploying and Staging the Task Force

As Argentina moved to stockpile supplies and reinforce her troops on the Falkland Islands, the British Government responded quickly to deploy forces and stage additional units for the eventual re-taking of the Falkland Islands. Britain's official position in April 1982 was she preferred to resolve the crisis through diplomatic negotiations and would only employ the task force if peaceful means failed. Operation Corporate's stated objectives were the forceful removal of the Argentinean forces and the reclamation of the Falkland Islands.²⁸ The War Cabinet approved a clear objective to which the government and the military leaders could plan and execute. Admiral Lewin, in fact, drafted the overall end state of the operation prior to his first meeting with the Prime Minister on 31 March 1982. It stated,

²⁵ Middlebrook, *Operation Corporate*, 41; Anderson, *The Falklands War*, 1982, 16–17.

²⁶ Middlebrook, *Operation Corporate*, 45–52; Hastings and Jenkins, *Battle for the Falklands*, 72–74.

²⁷ Hastings and Jenkins, *Battle for the Falklands*, 74.

²⁸ Badsey, Havers, and Grove, eds. *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years On*, 70.

The overall aim of Her Majesty's Government is to bring about the withdrawal of Argentine forces from the Falkland Islands and dependencies, and the re-establishment of British administration there, as quickly as possible. Military deployments and operations are directed to support this aim.²⁹

According to Stephen Prince, the Prime Minister's agreement to Admiral Lewin's proposal provided "vital support for Lewin, both in view of the finite endurance of the Task Force and the critical limitations imposed by the approaching southern hemisphere winter."³⁰ However, the exigencies of military operations set the timetable, not the requirements of the diplomats. Weather and the availability of forces informed the initial operational approach conceived by Admiral Sir John Fieldhouse, task force commander for Operation Corporate. Following the initial guidance from the Prime Minister, Great Britain sought to isolate Argentina and legitimize her own actions through various diplomatic means and venues.³¹

While Prime Minister Thatcher suffered the outrage of the House of Commons on 3 April 1982, Sir Anthony Parsons, Britain's ambassador to the United Nations (UN), scored a vital victory with the passage of UN Security Council Resolution 502, which stressed the illegitimacy of the use of force and called for an immediate withdrawal of the Argentinean forces.³² That same day, the British Foreign Office secured France's agreement to halt the export of Exocet anti-ship missiles, Super Entard fighter-bombers, and engines for Pucara ground-attack aircraft, all of which would seriously reduce Argentina's military capability. Additionally, on 9 April 1982, Great Britain managed to secure a 30-day European Economic Community trade embargo on Argentina with an option to extend the embargo further if required. Finally, Great Britain

²⁹ Richard Hill, *Lewin of Greenwich* (London: Cassell, 2000), 356.

³⁰ Stephen Prince, "British Command and Control in the Falklands Campaign," *Defense and Security Analysis* 18, no. 4 (2002): 339.

³¹ Patrick Bratton and Wallace Thies, "When Governments Collide in the South Atlantic: Britain Coerces Argentina during the Falklands War," *Comparative Strategy* 30 (March 2011): 17.

³² Lawrence Freedman, *War and Diplomacy*, vol. II of *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2005), 34.

managed to secure the tacit support of the United States, in terms of technical intelligence, logistic support, and the use of Wideawake airfield on Ascension Island in the Atlantic Ocean as an intermediate staging base.³³ These actions at the strategic level had direct impact on the development of an operational approach as well as the tactical actions of the British land, air, and maritime components.

From its inception, Operation Corporate, an “out of area operation” in NATO military terminology, depended on the Royal Navy’s capabilities to ensure mission success.³⁴ As a result, senior Royal Navy officers at the strategic and tactical level greatly influenced the initial operational approach. The Royal Navy’s Commander in Chief, Admiral Fieldhouse, assumed command of the task force and reported directly to Admiral Lewin, the Chief of the Defense Staff. Major General Jeremy Moore, commander of the Royal Marines, assumed duties as the task force deputy commander. The tactical commanders of the task force were Rear Admiral John Woodward, commander of the carriers and surface warships; Commodore Michael Clapp, commander of the amphibious ships; and Brigadier Julian Thompson, commander of the landing forces.³⁵

A significant problem within the command and control structure was the absence of a forward deployed operational commander to coordinate the actions of three subordinate tactical commanders as well as the aerial, special operations, and logistic efforts.³⁶ Another difficulty was Admiral Fieldhouse’s insistence that the submarines remain under his direct operational control instead of Rear Admiral Woodward’s Task Group 317.8.³⁷ Stephen Prince observes that Admiral

³³ Milan Vego, *Operational Warfare at Sea: Theory and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 78–79.

³⁴ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Facts and Figures* (Brussels: NATO Information Services, 1989), 376–77; Prince, “British Command and Control in the Falklands Campaign,” 336.

³⁵ Freedman, *War and Diplomacy*, 25–27.

³⁶ Middlebrook, *Operation Corporate*, 94–100; Freedman, *War and Diplomacy*, 26

³⁷ Woodward and Robinson, *One Hundred Days*, 123–24.

Fieldhouse maintained command and control at Northwood since the headquarters was able to fully integrate “strategic requirements, assets, and information...into the campaign.”³⁸

Beginning on 2 April 1982, the Defense Operations Movement Staff contracted and requisitioned 68 ships from 33 different companies, which ranged from the luxury liners including the *Canberra* and the *Queen Elizabeth 2* to North Sea tugboats. The Royal Fleet Auxiliary provided sixteen cargo transports, bringing the total number of ships sustaining the convoy to eighty-four. The nineteen warships of Task Force 317 required all of these vessels to sustain the force for six weeks of operations in the South Atlantic.³⁹ These eighty-four Ships Taken Up from Trade (STUFT) provided vital logistical support for the task force and is it unlikely the operation would have succeeded without this effort. Logistics, the extension of operational reach, and risk all factored into the initial employment of British combat power to re-take the Falkland Islands.⁴⁰

The first major elements of the British task force, the carriers *Hermes* and *Invincible*, set sail from Portsmouth on 5 April 1982. On 7 April 1982, Great Britain declared a Maritime Exclusion Zone (MEZ) of 200 nautical miles from the Falkland Islands, effective on 12 April 1982. The emphasis was on speed, since these highly publicized sailings had the additional effect of signaling British resolve to re-take the islands from the Argentineans. Because of this rushed, largely *ad hoc* deployment, loading of personnel and equipment was often chaotic and haphazard. The actual assembly of the task force did not occur until mid-April 1982, as ships rendezvoused in the Georgetown Road off Ascension Island, a 3,000-foot volcanic island strategically located midway between Great Britain and the Falklands.

³⁸ Prince, “British Command and Control in the Falklands Campaign,” 340.

³⁹ Freedman, *War and Diplomacy*, 25.

⁴⁰ Vego, *Operational Warfare at Sea*, 89–90.

Ascension Island in the mid-Atlantic soon became crucial to the British as a forward base. Ascension Island was the task force's intermediate staging base as supplies, ships, troops, and aircraft deployed to that tiny island and its oversized jet-bomber capable airfield.⁴¹ The Wideawake airfield quickly became the world's busiest airport as the British deployed additional aircraft, intelligence, and logistics units to support Operation Corporate.⁴² The stop at Ascension was essential since it enabled the British to organize not just the shipping within the task force, but also to establish a chain of command, determine support relationships, and formally develop an operational plan to re-take the Falkland Islands.

These initial actions by the British to deploy and stage their forces prior to the forcible entry operations into the Falklands and South Georgia illustrate the JOAC precepts of seizing the initiative and employing a variety of basing options to maintain strategic and operational flexibility.⁴³ Admiral Lewin's decision to alert the task force for deployment prior to the Argentinean invasion of the Falklands and Admiral Fieldhouse's decision to retain operational control of the nuclear submarines also address the principle of simultaneously ensuring access based on the requirements of the broader mission while also designing subsequent operations to lessen access challenges. The British political leadership—Prime Minister Thatcher, Ambassador Parsons, and the Foreign Office—employed diplomatic and informational elements of national power to prevent export of anti-access and area denial weapons and technology to the Argentines. This preparation of the operational area by the British leadership facilitated access during the early stages of the conflict and ensured the task force retained its freedom of action during the 8,000-mile operational maneuver from the United Kingdom into the South Atlantic.

⁴¹ R. N. Whittaker, "Combat Logistics: The South Atlantic," *Air Force Journal of Logistics* (Fall 1984): 6; Freedman, *War and Diplomacy*, 62–65. During World War II, the United States built a 10,000-foot long runway for anti-submarine aerial patrols. Following the war, Pan American Airways operated the airfield while the United States government developed a large petroleum storage facility on the island.

⁴² Badsey, Havers, and Grove, eds. *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years On*, 221–22.

⁴³ Department of Defense, "Joint Operational Access Concept," 17–18.

Establishment of the Maritime Exclusion Zone

The first contact between British and Argentinean forces since the seizure of Port Stanley on 2 April 1982 occurred on 21 April 1982 as an Argentinean Boeing 707 conducting a surveillance mission flew within twelve miles of the task force before aircraft from the *Hermes* intercepted it.⁴⁴ The Sea Harriers did not engage the Argentinean aircraft since the Rules of Engagement did not permit them to engage unarmed airliners. However, the Rules of Engagement issued on 25 May 1982 allowed the use of lethal force against hostile aircraft; the Argentines kept their distance after they received the updated directive. British Special Air Service infiltrated South Georgia on 21 April 1982, only to suffer exposure from the extreme weather conditions and require helicopter evacuation the next day. Additional units from the task force arrived at South Georgia on 23 April 1982 to recover South Georgia from the Argentines.

It became increasingly clear that a diplomatic settlement of the conflict was unlikely, and the British War Cabinet further committed to a military option on 23 April 1982 by landing forces back on South Georgia. In a joint operation, these units forced the surrender of the Argentinean garrison by 25 April 1982. Simultaneously, combat in the Maritime Exclusion Zone (MEZ) increased in scope and intensity as the Argentinean Navy sortied three task groups from its bases with the intention of destroying the Royal Navy's aircraft carriers. The British responded by engaging and forcing the Argentinean submarine *Santa Fe* to run aground in South Georgia and established a Total Exclusion Zone (TEZ) of all air and sea routes within 200 nautical miles of the Falkland Islands on 30 April 1982.⁴⁵ The following day Britain initiated the first Black Buck

⁴⁴ Bruce W. Watson and Peter M. Dunn, eds. *Military Lessons of the Falklands Islands War: Views from the United States* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984), 146.

⁴⁵ Watson and Dunn, *Military Lessons of the Falklands Islands War*, 7.

missions—Royal Air Force (RAF) Vulcan bombers targeting the airfield at Port Stanley—causing limited damage to the runway itself.⁴⁶

On 2 May 1982, the British made what might have been their most significant political blunder of the war when the War Cabinet authorized the sinking of the Argentinean cruiser *General Belgrano* 35 miles outside the Total Exclusion Zone. The moral support London built among the international community as the aggrieved party in the Falklands crisis was now in jeopardy.⁴⁷ However, the questionable legality of the British attack faded into the background following the successful Argentinean Air Force Exocet attack on the *Sheffield* two days later. Although one missile of two fired that hit the British frigate did not detonate, the fire that engulfed the ship forced its abandonment within five hours. Also noteworthy was that Argentina had now expended forty percent of their pre-war inventory of five Exocet missiles.⁴⁸ More importantly, following the loss of the *General Belgrano*, the two remaining Argentinean naval task groups retired to their ports and reduced the overall threat to the British task force.

These actions are examples of the cross-domain synergy mentioned in the JOAC. The British exploited advantages in their nuclear submarines to disrupt and defeat the Argentinean Navy's surface fleet. The employment of the British nuclear submarines exemplified the surprise attained through stealth and ambiguity to complicate the Argentinean targeting efforts against the task force. Although the RAF Black Buck missions failed to completely disrupt operations at the Stanley airfield, the Argentines did not employ it as an advanced base for their high-performance jet aircraft after the first Black Buck mission on 1 May 1982. This allowed the

⁴⁶ Freedman, *The Origins of the Falklands War*, 280–81; Peter R. March, *The Vulcan Story* (London: Sutton Publishing, 2006), 69. In this regard the BLACK BUCK raids were designed to render the Stanley airfield inoperable so neither advanced jet aircraft with the dreaded Exocet missiles nor heavy transport aircraft could use the field. In addition, the British hoped that the Argentinians would worry about a potential British escalation of the Vulcan raids to include Argentinian mainland bases, causing them to divert some of their limited fighters to air defense.

⁴⁷ Arthur Gavshon and Desmond Rice, *The Sinking of the Belgrano* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1984): 97–114.

⁴⁸ The Sunday Times of London Insight Team, *War in the Falklands*, 167–75.

British task force to operate closer to the Falkland Islands due to the reduced Argentinean capabilities.⁴⁹

Once the British established the MEZ, interdicted Stanley airfield, and defeated the Argentinean surface fleet, the task force created an area of local superiority that allowed them to penetrate the enemy's defenses. Although the Argentinean air force mounted a series of aggressive attacks, their restricted operating range reduced their sortie rate and effectiveness against the British task force. While the Argentinean air force posed a credible threat, the Royal Navy retained limited air superiority during the shaping operations prior to the landings on East Falklands.

Amphibious Operations

Once the Argentinean navy retired to its ports, the British task force continued operations to attain air and sea control and began ground and naval surveillance to gather updated intelligence for potential landing sites in the Falklands. These operations combined with detailed knowledge of the Falklands within the task force allowed the amphibious commanders to agree on a landing site. This location provided a sheltered anchorage, lightly defended by the Argentines, surrounded by low hills that provided good protection from air attacks, and was accessible from both north and south through Falkland Sound.⁵⁰ The amphibious operations began on 21 May 1982, with the British conducting assault landings at San Carlos at the western end of East Falkland Island. The two remaining amphibious assault ships in the Royal Navy, *Fearless* and *Intrepid*, were critical to the initial success of the landings at San Carlos due to their ability to rapidly transition troops from landing craft to the assault beaches.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Marcus Elmhirst, "Operational Shock in the Falklands: How Britain Surprised its Way to Victory," (Defense Research Paper, Joint Services Command and Staff College, 2011), 24.

⁵⁰ Anderson, *The Falklands War 1982*, 45; Vego, *Operational Warfare at Sea*, 147–48.

⁵¹ Watson and Dunn, *Military Lessons of the Falkland Islands War*, 56.

While the Argentinean resistance on the ground was minimal, and while the Argentinean Navy adopted a tactic of non-engagement vis-a-vis the Royal Navy, the Argentinean Air Force aggressively attacked the British shipping at San Carlos and Falkland Sound. During the brief period of daytime visibility, the battle between the Argentinean Air Force and the British air, sea, and ground forces raged over the San Carlos anchorage. It was not a clear-cut victory for either side. What was clear was that the British did not have control of the air, or even command of the sea, two conditions the task force required before launching the amphibious assault.

The following day, 22 May 1982, the Argentines mounted only limited air attacks, and British forces capitalized on the opportunity to build up logistics and deploy additional troops ashore. The British brigade ashore, 3rd Commando Brigade (3 CDO), took no offensive action, seeking instead to prepare defensive positions for the anticipated enemy counterattack, which was expected to heavily outnumber the British forces. However, the attack did not come. Brigadier Thompson took the opportunity to secure the bridgehead and conduct limited probing attacks to determine the disposition of the Argentinean forces to the south and east.

The Argentinean Air Force reappeared in force and the battle of attrition continued throughout 23–25 May 1982. Both sides suffered significant losses; many of the Argentinean aircraft were destroyed by ground-based air defense systems or carrier-launched Sea Harriers in air-to-air combat. Because of the sustained bombardment by the Argentinean air force the Royal Navy lost four ships sunk, crippled, or abandoned. In response, Admiral Woodward redeployed his remaining warships to provide cover for his aircraft carriers and attempt to intercept the Argentinean Air Force before they were able to attack the amphibious task force ships at San Carlos.⁵² Additionally, the Argentinean Air Force attacked and sank the *Atlantic Conveyor* on 25 May 1982. The loss of the *Atlantic Conveyor*, with its critical cargo of Chinook helicopters and winter equipment, created an operational dilemma for the task force commander since

⁵² Woodward and Robinson, *One Hundred Days*, 290–93.

reinforcements arriving from Great Britain would now have to land closer to Stanley instead of employing rotary aviation assets to reposition forces for the final attack.

Meanwhile, political pressure and public opinion in Great Britain continued to increase the demand for a successful ground operation and by 28 May 1982, Brigadier Thompson ordered a British Army infantry battalion—2nd Battalion, Parachute Regiment—to seize Goose Green, ostensibly to provide a southern flank guard for the main attack against Port Stanley. In hindsight, this mission was operationally useless as it failed to isolate the southern part of East Falkland and diverted combat power from the main effort against Port Stanley.⁵³ While 2nd Battalion, Parachute Regiment secured the surrender of over 1,200 Argentineans around Goose Green and Darwin, two Royal Marine infantry battalions (42 and 45 Commando, respectively) marched from San Carlos to seize the northern end of East Falkland and secure forward positions on the way to Port Stanley. However, these two actions supported General Moore’s concept of operations that stressed achieving moral dominance over Argentinean forces with an early victory and the requirement to seize Stanley prior to the onset of the South Atlantic winter season.⁵⁴ Brigadier Thompson later related “that the narrow margin of success [at Goose Green] resulted from his failure to assign sufficient of the (sic) available tactical resources, rather than from a lack of total assets.”⁵⁵

At this point, the second major ground element of the British force, the 5th Infantry Brigade (5 BDE), arrived off the coast of East Falkland. The lack of tactical mobility and the requirement to posture the unit to support the attack on Port Stanley resulted in a risky

⁵³ Hastings and Jenkins, *Battle for the Falklands*, 237.

⁵⁴ Prince, “British Command and Control in the Falklands Campaign, 343; Elmhirst, “Operational Shock in the Falklands,” 28–29.

⁵⁵ Prince, “British Command and Control in the Falklands Campaign,” 343; Elmhirst, “Operational Shock in the Falklands,” 29; Freedman, *War and Diplomacy*, 576.

amphibious landing at Fitzroy and Bluff Cove from 5–8 June 1982.⁵⁶ Both Admiral Fieldhouse and General Moore judged the overall risk worthwhile based on Argentinean reactions to earlier maneuvers and the requirement to husband the Landing Platform, Docks (LPDs) against “any possible counter-attack or continuance of the campaign after the fall of Port Stanley from West Falkland.”⁵⁷ The Argentinean air force attacked the vulnerable landing ships at Bluff Cove and inflicted heavy casualties on the British forces, sinking the Logistic Landing Ships *Sir Galahad* and *Sir Tristram* while killing or wounding over 200 British sailors and soldiers. It was the worst single disaster of the war for the British.⁵⁸

Nonetheless, the Argentinean junta soon realized it could not win the war. As early as 29 May 1982, Major General Menendez, commander of the Argentinean forces in the Falkland Islands, sent a message to Buenos Aires stating he could not defeat the British and retain the islands.⁵⁹ Throughout the campaign, Argentinean ground forces did not conduct an aggressive defense of the Port Stanley area, despite the fact that they had superior weaponry and heavily outnumbered the attacking British forces. Only in the closing hours of the attack into Port Stanley did Argentinean forces conduct local counterattacks to retain key terrain.

By 12 June 1982, virtually all the key terrain around the capital was under British control, which began a program of ground, air, and naval bombardment in concert with limited visibility ground attacks to secure final assault objectives. Additionally, the Royal Navy’s Sea Harriers increased their dominance in aerial operations as Argentinean air attacks dwindled and finally ceased on 12 June 1982. “Ultimately”, Prince writes, “the garrison and its commander felt isolated not just physically but also psychologically from its national resources and command.”⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Hastings and Jenkins, *Battle for the Falklands*, 273–74.

⁵⁷ Prince, “British Command and Control in the Falklands Campaign,” 343.

⁵⁸ Hastings and Jenkins, *Battle for the Falklands*, 277–82.

⁵⁹ Watson and Dunn, *Military Lessons of the Falklands War*, 160.

⁶⁰ Prince, “British Command and Control in the Falklands Campaign,” 344.

On 14 June 1982, General Menendez surrendered his forces after the British brigades enveloped and seized Stanley after a dawn attack. The fighting for the Falkland Islands was over.

Operational Approach Development and Adaptation

Although an awareness of a relationship between military and political action is complex and interrelated, understanding the way in which strategy, operations, and tactics are intertwined defines the essence of operational art and operational design. The Falklands campaign provides a concise case study on the interdependence between the elements of national power, the wisdom required establish an effective interaction, and the costs of failing to design a campaign that incorporates flexibility, redundancy, and innovation.

Britain's decision to withdraw the arctic protection ship *Endurance*, her plans for the retirement of the aircraft carrier *Hermes*, sale of the aircraft carrier *Invincible* to Australia, and early disposal of the only two amphibious ships left in the Royal Navy inventory, *Fearless* and *Intrepid*, reinforced Argentinean miscalculations during November 1981–March 1982.⁶¹ While London took precautionary steps after the mid-March incidents on South Georgia by dispatching a task force as early as 5 April 1982 from Portsmouth, she clearly failed to signal her resolve to the junta at Buenos Aires.⁶² Great Britain's strategic vacuum and Argentina's strategic oversimplification now compelled both nations to hastily devise operational campaigns to compensate for their lack of strategic vision.

Although the British hoped for a political solution to the problem, the Argentinean refusal to withdraw their forces from either the Falklands or South Georgia by early May made military action inevitable. British campaign planning and the development of an initial operational approach began in March 1982, but the realities of the Argentinean invasion of the Falkland Islands quickly invalidated many of the earlier planning assumptions. The key assumption that

⁶¹ Anderson, *The Falklands War 1982*, 12; Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War*, 10.

⁶² Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War*, 62–67.

Great Britain would retain the Falkland Islands as a base during a crisis was erroneous. As a result, the operational planners at Northwood undertook radical revision to their operational concept in the initial stages of the crisis.

The political and military leaders of Great Britain quickly grasped the central role of naval power in the forthcoming operations. The essence of that operational concept, codified by the procurement of the necessary ships, required the British government to “requisition for Her Majesty’s service any British ship and anything on board such ship wherever the ship may be.”⁶³ Eventually almost seventy vessels, classified as Ships Taken Up From Trade (STUFT), augmented the nineteen combat ships of the task force. From the outset, the military planners at the Northwood headquarters and the politicians in Whitehall agreed that naval projection was the key to an invasion of the islands. Freedman comments that the task force “had to look capable in principle of retaking the islands.”⁶⁴ The deployment of the task force was an unequivocal decision for war that generated political and military momentum, making the possibility of war a real outcome.

What was equally evident was the value of having staffs that knew what was required in an amphibious operation. Without the STUFT augmentation to the task force, British planners and commanders could not have contemplated an amphibious landing to retake the Falkland Islands. Only through years of experience in maritime operations did the staffs arrive at the process of staging, integrating, and deploying the components of the task force. Under NATO planning factors, the British allocated six days to land a two-battalion force with sufficient logistic support over roll-on, roll-off terminals and a friendly infrastructure. The problem for the task force planners required them to land a brigade of seven battalions and fifteen smaller units

⁶³ Special Report, “A Surprise Attack And an Astonishing Response,” *Making Waves*, Summer 2007, 1.

⁶⁴ Lawrence Freedman, “War of the Falkland Islands, 1982,” *Foreign Affairs* 61, no. 1 (Fall 1982): 201.

with weapons, ammunition, equipment, and other classes of supply in the same time with fewer helicopters, but more landing craft. Thompson recalls the adaptability of the landing force and amphibious force to accomplish this task within the allotted time, although conditions were marginal at best.⁶⁵ Air superiority was doubtful and there were no roll-on, roll-off terminals, docksides, or friendly host nation support to facilitate amphibious operations.

During an amphibious operation, the Royal Navy provides the sea transports, as well as escorts, minesweepers, landing craft, support helicopters, the air support and air defense assets. Additionally, the Royal Navy task force can expect to fight a maritime and air battle before any landing can occur, and continue to engage in such battles while the amphibious operation is underway. Finally, the landing force is vulnerable during the initial establishment of the lodgment due to lack of prepared defensive positions and logistical support. Therefore, overall command of the amphibious operation during Operation Corporate fell most naturally to a naval officer.

The planning of an amphibious operation is rarely a purely naval effort, although the naval component is the supported command. In order to prevent additional friction it is usual for the landing force commander to be of equal rank to the naval commander and have an equal voice in the planning. In the case of Operation Corporate, the three task group commanders reported to the task force commander located at the Northwood headquarters in the United Kingdom. As a result, command relationships were not clearly established and each task group commander established a communal understanding of their roles and responsibilities during the operations.

Admiral Fieldhouse initially assigned Admiral Woodward as “Senior Task Group Commander” —the equivalent of a two-star officer—while the others were one-star officers. In practice, Admiral Fieldhouse always assumed that Admiral Woodward was senior to Commodore

⁶⁵ Badsey, Havers, and Grove, *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years On*, 85.

Clapp and Brigadier Thompson.⁶⁶ Woodward writes of the confusion concerning the command and task organization changes that exacerbated the friction between the task group commanders but ultimately determines “someone must be ‘in charge’ in the South Atlantic.”⁶⁷ Badsey observes that the relationship between the tactical commanders should have clarified “that Woodward was what we would term now [as] the joint force commander.”⁶⁸

The three-week operational pause at Ascension Island allowed the commanders and staffs of the task force to conduct conceptual planning for the deployment and initial landing of the land component force. Unit training, combat loading of supplies and equipment, and maintenance also prepared the task force for the inevitable fight with the Argentines. The task force sailed from Ascension Island on 7 May 1982 and finalized their tactical plans on 11 May 1982. On 12 May 1982, the task force commanders and staffs received the updated mission to repossess the Falkland Islands as quickly as possible. Detailed planning for the establishment of the Maritime Exclusion Zone, employment of special operations forces, and an amphibious landing plan soon followed while the task force sailed southward to the Falklands.

An interesting situation developed when Major General Moore joined the task force on 20 May 1982 with additional directives from Admiral Fieldhouse. The task force commander forward deployed his former deputy commander to assume command of the land component on 28 May 1982 and further develop operations for the recapture of the Falkland Islands. Both Brigadier Thompson and Commodore Clapp expected General Moore to assume the role as an in-theater overall commander who would spend his time visiting units to determine their capabilities, maintain a clear operational concept, and guide the overall tactical actions in the area

⁶⁶ Freedman, *War and Diplomacy*, 198; Prince, “British Command and Control in the Falklands Campaign,” 340.

⁶⁷ Woodward, *One Hundred Days*, xxxiii–xxvi.

⁶⁸ Badsey, Havers, and Grove, *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years On*, 32; Joint Doctrine Publication 01, JDP 01, *Campaigning*, (Swindham, UK: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 2008), 4-1.

of operations while shielding his subordinate commanders from directive control by the headquarters at Northwood.⁶⁹ Freedman also mentions this as a potential shortcoming in the command relationship, resulting in a lack of prioritization and increased interference from the operational headquarters in the United Kingdom.⁷⁰

Admiral Fieldhouse viewed Northwood as the only place that could effectively control the geographically dispersed elements of the task force “particularly given the limited ‘flag’ facilities on the ships and the difficulties of communication in the South Atlantic.”⁷¹

Unfortunately, the secure communications system failed and there were several critical times during the subsequent operation when the land component commander, the amphibious group commander, or the task force commander at Northwood could not effectively communicate.⁷² These communication failures exacerbated the lack of an in-theater overall commander, leading to misunderstandings and conflicting guidance regarding tactical actions and the ultimate objective of the campaign.

Although the Argentinean Navy sortied from its bases with the goal of destroying the British aircraft carriers, the sinking of the *General Belgrano* caused a major revision in concept by the Argentinean military junta.⁷³ From this point forward, the Argentinean Navy played a largely passive role, although the Argentinean naval air forces redeployed ashore and continued to prosecute an aggressive series of strikes against the British task force. Although the Royal Navy could not claim command of the sea (it never gained superiority in the air above it), the

⁶⁹ Cordesman and Wagner, *The Lessons of Modern War*, vol. III, 280–81; Badsey, Havers, and Grove, *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years On*, 33–34.

⁷⁰ Freedman, *War and Diplomacy*, 30.

⁷¹ Prince, “British Command and Control in the Falklands Campaign,” 340.

⁷² Badsey, Havers, and Grove, *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years On*, 91.

⁷³ Woodward, *One Hundred Days*, 163–64; Middlebrook, *Operation Corporate*, 151–52; Freedman, *War and Diplomacy*, 295–96.

complete lack of a viable surface threat allowed the British commanders to reposition critical assets for the upcoming amphibious operation.⁷⁴

By this time, the British developed an intermediate staging base at Ascension Island, built up logistical supplies and forward deployed RAF assets to maintain pressure on the Argentinean forces on the Falkland Islands.⁷⁵ Despite the sufficiency of resources, any dramatic combat loss would politically affect Great Britain's ability to pursue the war. Throughout the campaign, Admiral Fieldhouse continually balanced risk and opportunity to achieve his operational objectives. Freedman observes the time pressure imposed on the British as they grappled with the need to employ the task force prior to May based on logistical and personnel issues. On the basis of a 14-day passage from Ascension Island to the Falklands, Admiral Fieldhouse decided the amphibious task group would need to leave Ascension by mid May."⁷⁶The British concluded that air superiority was one of two prerequisites for a successful amphibious invasion of the Falkland Islands. The Royal Navy attained the second prerequisite, sea command, following the withdrawal of the Argentinean Navy to its territorial waters.

In retrospect, this was an unreasonable objective. The only aircraft capable of an air superiority role was the Sea Harrier, and husbanding every one they could muster a grand total of twenty airframes prior to 18 May 1982, of which three were lost prior to reinforcement.⁷⁷ During the ensuing aerial battles, the British depended heavily on their ground and sea-based air defense

⁷⁴ Charles W. Koburger, Jr., *Sea Power in the Falklands*, (New York: Praeger, 1983), 13–34.

⁷⁵ Privatsky, "Britain Combat Service Support During the Falklands War," 10; Whittaker, "Combat Logistics," 6.

⁷⁶ Freedman, *War and Diplomacy*, 200–201.

⁷⁷ Ethell and Price, *Air War South Atlantic*, 232–33; Badsey, Havers, and Grove, *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years On*, 271–73. A total of twenty-eight Royal Navy Sea Harriers deployed with the task force while Royal Air Force deployed fourteen GR3 Harrier for close-air support during Operation Corporate.

systems to equalize the Argentinean preponderance as well as a 14–15 May 1982 Special Air Service raid on Pebble Island to destroy a number of Pucara ground-attack aircraft.⁷⁸

The invasion and land operation on East Falkland were the culminating events of the Falkland Islands campaign. No matter what course the air and naval operations took, possession of the Falklands fell to those who dominated on the land. Accordingly, the British developed an operational approach that sought cross-domain asymmetry against the defending Argentinean forces. The two critical decisions facing the British were what the ultimate operational objective was to be, and where to come ashore. The objective was clearly the Argentinean forces at Stanley, but in the preoccupation with the landing site, Admiral Fieldhouse did not express this in his operational vision.⁷⁹

The choice of San Carlos was the cautious approach, but in hindsight the proper one. Properly gauging the capabilities of their soldiers, the British leaders concluded that the march from San Carlos to Stanley was not beyond their capability, and that although it might meet with prepared defenses along the way, such an approach was safer than an all or nothing landing near Stanley. Although the Royal Navy never explicitly acknowledged it to the landing forces, they had failed to gain mastery of the air.⁸⁰ The waters between East and West Falkland compensated for this by negating the dreaded Exocet anti-ship missile, which British intelligence feared might reach Argentina from other Latin American sources. Nevertheless, the narrow waters also limited the air defense capabilities of the British who had to wait for the enemy to approach to close range before reacting. Their equalizer—once again—was the Sidewinder-equipped Sea Harrier

⁷⁸ Hastings and Jenkins, *Battle for the Falklands*, 187.

⁷⁹ Freedman, *War and Diplomacy*, 201–207; Prince, “British Command and Control in the Falklands Campaign,” 342–43.

⁸⁰ Hastings and Jenkins, *Battle for the Falklands*, 183.

aircraft, which they were able to keep on station throughout the duration of the operation and exacted a heavy toll on the Argentines.⁸¹

Most important, the landing sites at San Carlos were only lightly defended, a fact confirmed by the SBS and SAS reconnaissance teams landed earlier in the month.⁸² Accordingly, San Carlos was the location where the British could come ashore with minimum risk, and that fact became their primary operational concern.⁸³ What they were to do once they came ashore was barely considered in the rush of detailed planning for the amphibious landing; it was not specifically addressed until after the British established their East Falkland lodgment.⁸⁴ This issue, combined with the absence of a land component commander, resulted in increased tension between the political leaders in London and Brigadier Thompson at San Carlos Bay.⁸⁵

The political nature of the war dictated that prudence override military directness. Other landing areas, such as Berkley Sound due north of Stanley, allowed for a direct thrust on Stanley, but also hazarded a more catastrophic blow to British maritime forces. If the British failed to secure their landing sites prior to the expected Argentinean counterattack, the political and military consequences of a defeat on the task force would have forced the British to suspend their campaign indefinitely. The enormity of that risk came into sharp focus when *Sir Galahad* and *Sir Tristram* were hit at Fitzroy while landing the 5th Infantry Brigade, causing the single heaviest loss

⁸¹ Ethell and Price, *Air War South Atlantic*, 104–107.

⁸² Hastings and Jenkins, *Battle for the Falklands*, 181.

⁸³ Freedman, *War and Diplomacy*, 461–62. Admiral Fieldhouse ordered a significant alteration to the combat loading plan by reducing the number of troops in each individual ship in order to reduce the risk of a catastrophic loss during the invasion.

⁸⁴ Watson and Dunn, *Military Lessons of the Falkland Islands War*, 85.

⁸⁵ Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War*, 365; Freedman, *War and Diplomacy*, 548–50. There is conflicting information concerning the role of General Moore during the Falklands campaign. Although initially assigned as the deputy task force commander under Admiral Fieldhouse, General Moore did not assume the role of commander land forces until 28 May 1982, following the landings at San Carlos Bay on 21 May 1982. During the amphibious landings and the establishment of the lodgment, operational control remained with Admiral Woodward as senior task group commander. Although Moore is charged with developing operations for the recapture of the Falkland Islands, communications limitations prevented effective coordination between Thompson and Moore.

of life to the British task force during the war.⁸⁶ Unfortunately, the overriding concerns and requirement for prudent risk taking obscured the ultimate objective of the campaign.

Even as Brigadier Thompson, commander of the ground troops ashore, complied with higher headquarters directives to improve the lodgment, senior political leaders became alarmed at the lack of progress in the ground campaign.⁸⁷ Political pressures emanating from the Labour Party, in the press, and among the public at large demanded a positive media headline. On 26 May 1982, the order came to seize Port Darwin and Goose Green, an objective that seemed too illogical to the military commanders at Northwood and in the Falkland Islands. As ill considered as this was, it shook the military commanders out of their lethargy and spurred them on to the proper objective: the Argentines at Port Stanley.

As the British advanced across the rugged terrain toward Stanley, the Argentines displayed a shocking degree of passivity to the approaching threat. The Royal Marines and Parachute Regiment infantry battalions advanced virtually unopposed all the way to the high ground dominating Stanley, despite the preponderance of Argentinean forces and the adequacy of their supplies.⁸⁸ The only obstacles along the routes were unguarded minefields, rugged terrain, and harsh weather. At the final ring of high ground around Stanley—Mount Longdon, Mount Harriet, Two Sisters, and Wireless Ridge—the Argentines fought hard from well-prepared defensive positions, but failed to prevent the loss of the dominant terrain to the attacking British forces. Once the British secured the high ground controlling Port Stanley, all the Argentines could do was wait for the inevitable surrender.

⁸⁶ Hastings and Jenkins, *Battle for the Falklands*, 271–81.

⁸⁷ Watson and Dunn, *Military Lessons of the Falkland Islands War*, 85; Freedman, *War and Diplomacy*, 550–52.

⁸⁸ Ministry of Defense. *The Falklands Campaign: The Lessons*. December 1982, 10–12; Watson and Dunn, *Military Lessons of the Falkland Islands War*, 73–79.

Although the British correctly sequenced their tactical actions during the campaign, it was not without mistakes and miscalculations. In the end, they received much praise for their leadership, morale, and fitness, but it could have gone much harder on them if only the Argentinean leadership had developed a campaign plan beyond the initial invasion of the Falkland Islands. The British paid heed to the interwoven fabrics of strategy, operations, and tactics although their initial operational approach focused more on the deployment of forces instead of their employment. The experience of the commanders, professionalism of the force, and fusion of political and military objective mitigated the deficiencies in joint doctrine, equipment, and command relationships.

Lessons Learned from the Falklands Campaign

Regarding the character of Operation Corporate, it remained a case of maritime power projection from inception to conclusion.⁸⁹ Nothing in the land campaign, or indeed the landings, would have been possible without surface, sub-surface, and air operations in all their forms. This began with the taking of South Georgia on 25 April 1982, and the enforcement of the Total Exclusion Zone in 1 May 1982. Throughout the war, maritime power projection made possible movements of troops and supplies, of which the amphibious movements to San Carlos and Fitzroy were but two of many. Sea-based logistics required the Royal Navy to establish sea command, but without the STUFT vessels supporting the task force, there would have been no logistics to sustain Operation Corporate. It is clear that in 1982, Great Britain was at the edge of its capability to project force beyond the North Atlantic for out of area operations.

As Britain withdrew its forces from the empire to focus on predominantly NATO tasks, NATO subsumed the many of joint commander's command and control functions. Indeed, by 1982, with the exception of a few small garrisons, Britain's forces were all committed to

⁸⁹ Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, 294–98.

domestically based, single-service command structures and combined NATO commands.⁹⁰ The priority of combined regional scenarios directed British forces' focus and force structure, something very much reinforced by the 1981 Defense Review.

For the Royal Navy, this led to the concentration of anti-submarine warfare in the North Atlantic and reduction of capital surface warfare ships, with *Invincible* slated for sale to Australia and the remaining amphibious shipping scheduled for decommissioning. This review also questioned the need for the Joint Services Staff College and Joint Warfare School and announced the closure of both.⁹¹ It envisioned that non-NATO contingencies, or "out of area operations," as the responsibility of whatever single service headquarters appeared most appropriate, utilizing forces normally assigned to NATO and with the assumption that such operations would be either combined or small-scale.⁹²

As an island nation, all Britain's military operations have had a joint dimension. Without a robust joint perspective, Britain's military fails to achieve its objectives in support of a strategic end state. For over 300 years, the British mounted numerous joint expeditionary operations over much greater distances than Operation Corporate. During the early twentieth century, the British pioneered joint doctrine, albeit with mixed results. Deficiencies in joint doctrine were a significant cause of misfortune at Gallipoli in 1915–1916; and a comparison of the Falkland and Gallipoli campaigns makes a fascinating study in the evolution of joint doctrine. In 1982, Great Britain had only recently withdrawn from east of Suez, and retained a substantial legacy of equipment and experience well suited to contingency operations and forcible entry operations in

⁹⁰ Prince, "British Command and Control in the Falklands Campaign," 335. Within Britain the headquarters were HQ Lands Forces (Wilton), HQ RAF Strike Command (High Wycombe) and HQ Commander-in-Chief Fleet (Northwood).

⁹¹ Gibran, *The Falklands War*, 125–29.

⁹² Prince, "British Command and Control," 335.

particular.⁹³ There was not actually much published joint doctrine, and the very idea of doctrine was treated with deep suspicion in some quarters, yet despite that, the Falklands campaign achieved its objectives.

Doctrine is that body of knowledge disseminated through officially approved publications, school curriculums, and textbooks that represents an army's approach to war and the conduct of military operations. Doctrine offers a distillation of experience, providing a guide to methods that have generally worked in the past and retain some enduring utility.⁹⁴ It provides a common orientation, language, and conceptual framework; doctrine helps military professionals navigate through the fog of war. The main difference between the state of British military doctrine in 1982 and now is that they have formalized the process, in both the written word and the structures that produce it. The Higher Command and Staff Course instituted in the late 1980s under Field Marshall Bagnall played a critical role in this as it advocated joint doctrine as an integral part of professional military education.⁹⁵ In this instance, the British military achieved a broader and more educated consensus among its leadership at all levels of best practice and where the advantage may lie in complex situations; this is a valuable achievement in its own right.

There was an understandable reluctance within the Royal Navy to establish an inflexible approach to operations. Innovation, adaptation, and individual initiative characterized the essence of the naval profession. Yet, if we think that the Royal Navy lacked a corporate body of thought, there was a doctrine at various levels from the tactical to the strategic. However, it was not consolidated into a comprehensive or integrated product. The First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Jock Slater put in his foreword to the 3rd edition of BR 1806, *British Maritime Doctrine*: "There has always been a doctrine, an evolving set of principles, practices and procedures that has provided

⁹³ Freedman, *War and Diplomacy*, 20.

⁹⁴ JDP 0-01, *British Defense Doctrine*, iii.

⁹⁵ Sir John Kiszely, "Thinking About the Operational Level," *RUSI Journal* 150, no. 6 (Autumn 2005): 41.

the basis for our actions. This doctrine has been laid out somewhat piecemeal in various publications and there has never been a single unclassified book describing how and why we do our business.”⁹⁶

Previous attempts to codify a doctrinal approach to joint operations failed to provide the necessary intellectual framework. The only British document available to provide guidance to the joint force was the *Manual of Joint Warfare Volume 1: Concept, Planning, and Control of Operations*, 1970. Elmhirst remarks how this manual focused more on the organization and roles within a joint force, but little on methodology or operational concepts.⁹⁷ In fact, Grove observes that during his time as lecturer of strategic studies at the Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, there was never an expectation that the officers under training would receive a comprehensive education on contents of the BR 1806, *Naval War Manual*.⁹⁸ Without a basic grounding in the fundamental Royal Navy operating doctrine, education was at best a haphazard and unsystematic business.

There is a need for staffs trained in all aspects of maritime force projection operations, including amphibious operations.⁹⁹ The role of a unified joint doctrine provides a frame of reference when dealing with diverse operational contexts.¹⁰⁰ The maritime force must control the area from the open ocean must to support operations ashore and provide direct support to the area inland from the sea establishes the relationship between naval, maritime, and land forces. It stressed the attributes of maritime forces that make them uniquely valuable for maneuver warfare in this context and the utility of task groups variously configured to engage in such operations.

⁹⁶ United Kingdom. Ministry of Defense. BR 1806, *Fundamentals of British Maritime Doctrine*, (London, UK: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1995), 5.

⁹⁷ Elmhirst, “Operational Shock in the Falklands,” 13.

⁹⁸ Eric Grove, “The Discovery of Doctrine,” in *The Development of British Naval Thinking: Essays in Memory of Brian McLaren Ranft*, edited by Geoffrey Till (London, UK: Routledge, 2006), 183.

⁹⁹ Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, 298–301.

¹⁰⁰ Joint Doctrine Publication 0-01 (JDP 0-01), *British Defence Doctrine*, page, 4-3, paragraph 406.

This requires both experience and education for staffs and leaders at all levels to cope with an environment once described as “an impenetrable mystery surrounded by sea sickness.”¹⁰¹

Thirty years after the fact, what applicability remains of the lessons learned from the Falkland Islands campaign—and more importantly—what should the American military adopt to further refine its Joint Operational Access Concept? Inevitably the most obvious changes have been in equipment, and consequently in capability. Nevertheless, the requirement to gain and maintain access against armed resistance remains an enduring capability for a joint force, as does the necessity for relevant doctrine to guide the employment of a joint force.

As of 2011, the Royal Navy stated the intention to operate a single aircraft carrier—although without fixed wing capability until 2020—to support expeditionary operations and the Maritime Warfare Center has taken major strides in developing joint maritime doctrine.¹⁰² Currently, the British military has a much-reduced merchant fleet from which to take up ships from trade—seventy vessels supported the task force in 1982. The requirement for roll-on, roll-off shipping and for an amphibious capability remains enduring, yet the Royal Navy lacks the capacity to undertake another Operation Corporate due to lack of vessels and crews.

Implications for Joint Operational Access

It is noteworthy that the campaign in the Falkland Islands was prosecuted just as a rebirth in study of the operational level of war was taking place within the American military. It was almost as if an instant war arrived to test the tenets of operational art espoused in the U. S. Army’s new field manual on operations, FM 100-5. The Falkland Islands campaign offered all the time-tested variations of classical warfare: including in its scope operations on land, air, and

¹⁰¹ Julian Thompson, review of Sir Lawrence Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign*, vol. I: *The Origins of the Falklands War*, vol. II: *War and Diplomacy*, by Sir Lawrence Freedman, *The Journal of Strategic Studies* vol. 29, no. 3 (June 2006): 544; Attributed to Admiral of the Fleet ‘Jacky’ Fisher, First Sea Lord 1904–06 and 1914–15.

¹⁰² “Navy Will Be Too Small for Two Carriers.” Defensemanagement.com, November 25, 2011. http://www.defencemanagement.com/news_story.asp?id=18127 (accessed December 11, 2011).

sea; related its military operations directly to the political concerns governing them; and offered a close look at the importance of maritime operations. It is worthwhile, therefore, to reflect on theoretical and doctrinal foundations of operational art as they pertained to the Falkland Islands campaign. The United States military's JOAC is of particular importance since it envisions how joint forces achieve operational access in the face of armed opposition much like the Falklands campaign.

Future United States joint forces must retain the ability to project military force into any operational area in the face of armed opposition. Commanders should take steps to create conditions for cross-domain synergy through the application of asymmetric capabilities such as air power to defeat anti-ship weapons, naval power to neutralize air defenses. This is especially critical when attempting to defeat a multi-domain anti-access or area denial capability. However, this cross-domain synergy is difficult to achieve in a degraded command and control environment evident during Operation Corporate. Finally, the enduring requirement for redundancy among systems and capabilities requires a critical balance between organic capabilities and those attained through external support. The British commanders often operated at the margins of prudent risk and military gamble given the limited resources and environmental conditions during the campaign.

Conclusions

Tragic as the Falkland Islands campaign was for many of the participants, it is a case study for the application of operational art in contingency operations. The importance of these lessons is easy to overstate and military professionals must maintain a careful perspective in this regard. The Falkland Islands campaign was characterized by combat on a limited scale and under unique conditions, and it was a war that neither side was prepared to fight. The conflict was also one in which each side's ability to innovate was ultimately more important than its prewar plans and capabilities.

Although the British did not make full use of the potential synergy of joint or maritime operations, their campaign ultimately secured the Falkland Islands and achieved the strategic end state. The challenges dictated by terrain, geographic distance, and logistics forced the British to fight at the limit of her power projection capability, in an area that did not support mechanized warfare, and under conditions that limited air power to a small number of relatively unsophisticated Sea Harriers. British performance otherwise reflected an understanding of joint operations, effective training, and high military professionalism engendered by long-serving, experienced leaders at all levels. Although circumstances forced the British to improvise extensively, it was able to develop effective links between its services and supporting agencies.

The British consistently demonstrated the ability to innovate, improvise, within an *ad hoc* joint operating construct while the Argentinean air force bore the brunt of the fight against the task force. In fact, the key lesson of the Falklands War is not one of tactics or technology; it is the importance of both military professionalism and institutionalizing that professionalism through the development of joint doctrine and the education of leaders about joint operations. Shifts in tactics or technology might have altered the outcome, but Britain's superior training, readiness, and leadership did decide the outcome of the war. This is a critical lesson to bear in mind in assessing future contingency operations and the nature of any conflict fought under unique or improvised conditions. Regardless of force numbers and weapons, professionalism and innovation will often be the decisive force multiplier.

Another lesson of the conflict is that the British reinforced their professionalism with a unified command and with a heavy emphasis on joint operations and inter-service cooperation. The value of such an approach to managing modern war has been a key lesson of every conflict since the beginning of World War II. Virtually any command barrier or problem in creating an effective command and capability for joint operations leads to major military problems, whether the barrier is an inter-service barrier or one within a given service. Similarly, the Falkland Islands campaign demonstrates that although central management of basic policy decisions affecting a

conflict can occur from a capital or remote central command, a headquarters that is physically separated from the actual area of operations cannot actually “fight” a war.

The United States military’s Joint Operational Access Concept articulates the need to retain freedom of movement within the global commons and conduct forcible entry operations against an enemy equipped with multi-domain anti-access or area denial capabilities. Gaining and maintaining operational access involves two interrelated tasks. The first is the task of defeating the enemy’s anti-access and area denial capabilities through the application of combat power. The second is moving and sustaining the required combat power over operational distances. A key method to mitigate the degrading effects of distance is the establishment of forward bases in the anticipated operational area. The JOAC clearly categorizes this need as a primary concern for United States political and military leaders due to the “decreased support abroad for an extensive network of United States military bases around the globe.”¹⁰³

Underpinning this new concept is the importance of command and control during distributed operations at operational distances. Joint forces deploy and maneuver independently from multiple bases along multiple lines of operations. Combat operations “may commence immediately upon deployment and could span multiple areas of responsibility” creating the need for a unified campaign or operational approach.¹⁰⁴ This, in turn, requires the United States military to review command relationships, methods, and timing for establishing a joint task force. Decentralized command and control through mission command enable subordinate commanders to act independently in accord with the higher commander’s intent especially in conditions that could degrade command and control systems and capabilities.

While this new concept provides a framework to seize and retain the initiative in the face of improved anti-access and area denial capabilities, the concern that it is unrealistic or infeasible

¹⁰³ Department of Defense, “Joint Operational Access Concept,” 11.

¹⁰⁴ Department of Defense, “Joint Operational Access Concept,” 2829.

requires revision or modification to the concept as a whole. The reliance on precision strikes and self-contained logistics presents significant hurdles to overcome based on time factors and changing national policy. In this regard, Operation Corporate serves as a guide to effective civil-military relations concerning the formulation of a unified strategic end state and operational concept. Finally, forcible entry operations must account for higher casualty levels and an acceptance of higher levels of calculated risk to the joint force. A force conditioned to avoid risk develops dangerous habits and operating procedures that leave it vulnerable to an enemy who employs asymmetric capabilities and is more willing to accept risk in prosecuting an anti-access or area denial operation.

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