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ARGENTINA'S GAMBLE: A NATION'S MISSTEPS THAT BROUGHT THEM INTO THE JAWS OF THE LION

By Lieutenant-Commander Jason E.P. Knowles

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Master of Defence Studies

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*****MASTER OF DEFENCE STUDIES – MAÎTRISE EN ÉTUDES DE LA DÉFENSE

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THAT BROUGHT THEM INTO THE JAWS OF THE LION**

By Lieutenant-Commander Jason E.P. Knowles

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ABSTRACT

1982 was ‘The Year of Las Malvinas’ in Argentina. The country’s military Junta government had set their sights on peeling the island territory away from Great Britain and ‘returning it to its rightful owners.’ Argentine political and military leadership gambled that Great Britain would not respond militarily; they were wrong. This paper examines the chain of errors that unfolded leading up to and during the Falklands campaign that led to the embarrassing Argentine defeat to a numerically inferior British force.

In order to establish the basis for the examination, a comprehensive background of both Argentina and Great Britain, as it relates to the state of their armed forces and the Falkland Islands, sets the stage. Just War Theory is used to determine if Argentina and Great Britain had proper justification for committing to use armed force and if they conducted a ‘just war’ once hostilities had begun. The Cohen and Gooch model for organizational failure is then used to determine where and to what severity the different levels of Argentine leadership failed as it related to their primary objective during the conflict: defend Las Malvinas from the British. Three specific tasks are analyzed in detail: planning and coordination, establishing and maintaining sea control, and establishing and maintaining air superiority. Finally, an analysis of British forces is conducted to compare them to Argentine forces and to determine if their success was as a result of military excellence, or simply just luck.

The analysis will show that Argentina’s unjust reasoning, as well as their poorly planned and executed campaign for Las Malvinas were the necessary ingredients needed for them to fail. Britain’s smaller, yet better force, was able to leverage their military will and some luck, to oust the larger Argentine force and keep the Falklands British.

INTRODUCTION

Argentina is not willing to renounce its historical rights over the islands and withdraw from what is hers the armed forces who are and represent the people of our nation.

- *President Leopoldo Galtieri, New York Times, 4 April 1982*

With those words, Argentina announced on the world stage its intention to continue with their occupation of the Falkland Islands, repelling any British attempt to retake the territory. Thus, the two nation's forces would become embroiled in a deadly contest over the remote archipelago deep in the South Atlantic. Argentina had long viewed the islands, which it refers to as Las Malvinas, as sovereign Argentine territory, which had been ceded by France to Spain, and by extension to Argentina, in 1774. Following a series of colonial era treaties, the Falklands became a British overseas territory in 1833 and was recognized as belonging to Great Britain. When years of diplomatic attempts failed to resolve the territory's future, Argentina's military Junta government decided to settle their claim by force.

The Falklands conflict was fought between the armed forces of Great Britain and Argentina over a period of one hundred days. The pitched battles saw land, sea, and air forces bring modern weapons to bear against each other in one of the first conflicts of the 'missile age'. Following losses of ships, aircraft, and soldiers on both sides, British forces prevailed over the numerically superior defenders, accepting capitulation of the occupying Argentine force and regaining control over the entire territory.

The Falkland Islands are approximately 8,000 miles from Great Britain and lie approximately 300 miles to the East of the Southern coast of Argentina and are connected to the

South American mainland by an undersea plateau.¹ The territory includes the main Falkland Islands, containing the territory's capital, Port Stanley, as well as the islands of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands chain which lie approximately 750 and 1,000 miles respectively to the East of the main Falklands Islands. Prior to the 1982 conflict, the territory had seen little in the way of military activity, save for the famed First World War naval battle of the Falkland Islands which saw the Royal Naval (RN) avenge their losses and save face following a defeat at the Battle of Coronel. This contest saw destruction of a German Pacific squadron of light cruisers and reinforced the British regional presence in the South Atlantic.² Nearly 70 years later, a very different looking RN would be back in those same frigid waters, again postured against a powerful enemy in hopes of saving face and asserting their presence in the region. As in 1914, Britain's victory in 1982 was far from guaranteed.

To better understand the conflict, justifications for the conflict as well as the failures that ultimately led to its outcome will be analyzed. Prior to the analysis, a comprehensive background will be provided to frame how both nations arrived at the conflict and what motivated them to risk lives over the remote territory. Following this, Just War theory will be used to analyze both the reasoning for beginning the conflict, as well as the actions undertaken during the conflict. *Jus Ad Bellum* principles will be used to examine Argentina's justifications for resorting to armed conflict as a means of obtaining their goal and equally examine whether Britain was justified in responding with force. *Jus In Bello* principles will be applied to the actions both nations took during the conflict to determine if they conducted a 'just war', or not. Following the Just War

¹ Barry M. Gough, *The Falkland Islands/Malvinas: The Contest for Empire in the South Atlantic* (London: Atlantic Highlands, 1992), 1.

² *Ibid*, 132.

theory analysis, a thorough examination will be conducted to determine what major factors led to the Argentine loss in the conflict.

Failure is an inevitable outcome for one side in a conflict. Argentina's failure to defend their occupying position in the Falkland Islands against the numerically inferior British force has been studied by military analysts for decades. In order to succeed, Britain hastily assembled a Task Force, sailed it over 8,000 miles, battled through the lines of the Argentine navy and powerful Argentine air force, landed thousands of troops into hostile territory and fought a dug in enemy from a position of vulnerability; all the while relying on minimal air cover and a supply chain that stretched to the other side of the world. The odds were most definitely in Argentina's favour, at least so it seemed. So, how did they lose? The Cohen and Gooch model for the analysis of organization failure will be applied to the Argentine forces and their attempt to defend Las Malvinas. The model examines the overall main failure, in this case the failure of Argentina to successfully defend Las Malvinas, by cross analyzing the critical tasks needed to complete the mission against different layers of command. The model allows for the determination of what types of failures were made, and why. The analysis will draw out specific actions, or lack thereof, by Argentine political and military leadership during the campaign.

As conflict ultimately boils down to the troops that fight in them. A comparison between the fighting efficiency of Argentine and British forces will be conducted in order to determine its impact on Argentina's defeat. The comparison will focus on British forces, as the victors, drawing out contrasts with the Argentine forces. Was it British military excellence that defeated the defending Argentine forces, or were they simply lucky?

Much has been written on the topic of the Falklands conflict. These accounts often take one side or the other, shading the narrative towards Great Britain or Argentina's perspective.

Many books are historical in nature, providing a chronicle of the conflict, focusing on military analysis of certain battles or interactions. Certain articles, such as *The British Resort to Force in the Falklands/Malvinas Conflict 1982: International Law and Just War Theory* by Christopher Bluth, seek to create an understanding of why the conflict happened in the first place, as well as to analyze if it was indeed justified. The article takes the position that Britain was not entirely justified in its military campaign to re-take the Falklands, citing the termination of negotiations with Argentina and the sinking of the Argentine cruiser *General Belgrano* as having been contrary to the conditions of Just War theory.³ Another examination of the conflict which uses Just War theory was done by Major G. Whiteley. In *The "Just War" Tradition and the Falklands Conflict*, Maj. Whiteley establishes a historical context for both Just War theory and the sovereign ownership over the Falklands, as this was the main factor that led to the conflict. Following this, the article weighs in on both claims, insinuating that while Britain had opened the door to Argentina's claims in the years leading up to the conflict, that Britain still found itself in a position of 'self-defence' following the invasion and was completely justified in their use of force.⁴ Conflicts, like the armed forces that fight in them, often take time to mature and develop. This was most certainly the case for both Argentina and Great Britain. The following books examine what was happening domestically in both nations in the lead up to the conflict and provide insight into how the conflict was viewed, and fought, uniquely by both belligerents.

In his book, *Sea Change: The Battle for the Falklands and the Future of Britain's Navy*, Sir Keith Speed, the former Parliamentary Undersecretary of State for Defence, also known as

³ Christopher Bluth, "The British Resort to Force in the Falklands/ Malvinas Conflict 1982: International Law and Just War Theory," *Journal of Peace Research* 24, no. 1 (March 1987): 5–20, <https://journals-sagepub-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/doi/abs/10.1177/002234338702400102>.

⁴ G. Whiteley, "The "just War" Tradition and the Falklands Conflict," *Rusi* 131, no. 4 (Dec 01, 1986): 33, <https://search-proquest-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/scholarly-journals/just-war-tradition-falklands-conflict/docview/1305569945/se-2?accountid=9867>.

the 'Navy Minister,' presents a comprehensive and detailed background of the significant changes underway within Great Britain's Ministry of Defence in the years prior to the conflict. He lays out how those changes shaped the force that was available at the time the Falkland's crisis began. Given his rather abrupt departure from cabinet following the vocalizing of his concerns regarding the planned cuts from the 1981 Defence Review, Sir Keith is rather critical of Great Britain's apathy towards its navy and the government's willingness to divest certain capabilities, namely the amphibious and arctic survey capabilities. Additionally, the book addresses the significance of certain Argentine threats, specifically the Exocet missile, posed to British forces throughout the campaign, leading the reader back to the conclusion that the author's stance regarding the defence cuts was justified. As the book was written with the benefit of hindsight, in that it was written following Great Britain's victory in the Falklands, the tone is reflective of an author who was closely connected with the forces that participated in the battle, ensuring that the RN comes off in the best light possible.⁵

British war author Martin Middlebrook provides a different view of the conflict from the Argentine side in his book *The Fight for the 'Malvinas'*. Middlebrook travelled to Argentina following the conflict in order to capture the uniquely Argentine perspective through a series of interviews with officers and servicemen who served during the campaign. These interviews tell the story of an armed forces heavily divided down elemental lines, however, unified in their pride at having been part of the operation to 'liberate Las Malvinas.' The book covers all major aspects of the campaign including its political roots, poorly understood planning objectives, missions (both successes and failures), leading up to the capitulation and repatriation of

⁵ Keith Speed, *Sea Change: The Battle for the Falklands and the Future of Britain's Navy* (Bath: Ashgrove Press, 1982).

Argentine forces. Beyond the military campaign, through the words of the interviewed Argentines, readers can understand that despite the realities of war, British and Argentine servicemen had an underlying respect for one another, reinforcing that it is people who ultimately fight the battles that politicians cannot solve.⁶

As war often boils down to human factors, the book *Mates & Muchachos: Unit Cohesion in the Falklands/Malvinas War* by Nora Kinzer Stewart, conducts a thorough analysis of the significant human factors that motivated and impacted both sides of the Falklands conflict. Dr. Stewart, a former US Army sociologist, dissects the backgrounds and motivations of Argentine and British servicemen as they fought over the windswept territory deep in the South Atlantic. The book discusses in detail the differences between volunteer and conscript forces and how they actually perform under the stress of combat. In addition to examining the people who were involved in the conflict, Dr. Stewart delves into the history and traditions of the militaries of the two respective belligerents. Through a fulsome understanding of the differences between both the Argentine and British armed forces and the soldiers, sailors, and aviators that served in them at the time of the Falklands conflict, *Mates & Muchachos* provides insight of the human perspective into why Great Britain so easily prevailed over the numerically superior Argentine forces.⁷

The 1982 conflict in the South Atlantic over the Falkland Islands stemmed from a century's old sovereignty dispute over the territory. Despite many advantages in terms of regional military superiority and numbers, Argentina's bid to take back the Falkland Islands

⁶ Martin Middlebrook, *The Fight for the 'Malvinas': The Argentine Forces in the Falklands War* (London: Viking, 1989).

⁷ Nora Kinzer Stewart, *Mates & Muchachos: Unit Cohesion in the Falklands/Malvinas War* (Riverdale, N.J: Brassey's, 1991).

proved a failure because the military operation was unjust and poor in planning and execution. British will and military forces prevailed in the face of a weak response from Argentina to actually hold onto the contested territory. Argentina chose a military solution but did not follow-through politically nor with enough military resolve to achieve their objective.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND

In 1982, few international relations experts foresaw that one of the permanent five members of the United Nations Security Council would become embroiled in a military struggle, 8,000 miles from home, in which victory was uncertain. The intense conflict pitted two modern, well-equipped militaries against each other in a regional showdown over a disputed island territory off the coast of South America. Indeed, people around the world watched in wonder as Argentina and Great Britain fought in a far corner of the world, unsure of who would prevail. These two modern nations engaged in the conflict for very different reasons, much of the justification is drawn from their historical involvement/claims to the Falklands.

Argentina

Argentina is an independent state and former European colony that emerged out of revolution and violence. In between periods of civil war and military dictatorships, Argentines tried to create a modern democratic state. By the mid-1970s, a military Junta government controlled Argentina. Outwardly, the military provided a bulwark against anti-communist sentiment and action in Latin America, but inwardly it oppressed large segments of the Argentine population and ruthlessly suppressed any opposition to the new government.⁸ The Junta government adopted a strong stance towards curtailing the spread of socialism which placated the United States (US). Prior to assuming the presidency of Argentina through yet another coup d'état, General Leopoldo Galtieri visited the US, and met several senior

⁸ Isobel Hilton, "General Leopoldo Galtieri," *The Guardian*, 13 January 2003, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2003/jan/13/guardianobituaries.argentina>.

administration officials describing him as a ‘majestic general.’⁹ The two nations during this period enjoyed a close relationship leading to a false sense within Argentina that the US would side with the South American nation over a European one.

Notwithstanding support from the US and an increasingly strong hand on the populace governed by fear, the Junta was losing legitimacy in Argentina and its tenuous grip on power. By the time General Galtieri came to power through the so-called the Nation Reorganization Process, the official political title given to the Junta government, his government confronted mounting public opposition from people in the country in the context of an economic crisis. By the 1980s, Argentina’s economic situation was worsening “with growing public debt and inflation . . . Argentines who had supported the military’s intervention in 1976 increasingly came to disapprove of the regime’s economic policy and human rights record”.¹⁰ Consequently, Galtieri and the other members of the Junta sought to distract the public from domestic problems by appealing to their patriotism.¹¹ Given the overwhelming support that Galtieri received immediately following this invasion, the Junta’s was correct in this regard.

Beyond distracting the public, the Junta also needed to appease the military. It was rumored that Admiral Anaya, the most senior member of the Junta, made the conquest of Las Malvinas a pre-condition to his support for General Galtieri to become president.¹² As the Junta

⁹ History Learning Site, “General Leopoldo Galtieri,” last modified 26 May 2015, <https://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/modern-world-history-1918-to-1980/the-falklands-war-1982/general-leopoldo-galtieri/>.

¹⁰ Olga Onuch, *Mapping Mass Mobilization: Understanding Revolutionary Moments in Argentina and Ukraine* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), <https://link-springer-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/content/pdf/10.1057%2F9781137409775.pdf>, 94.

¹¹ Luis L. Schenoni, Sean Braniff, and Jorge Battaglino, "Was the Malvinas/Falklands a Diversionary War? A Prospect-Theory Reinterpretation of Argentina's Decline," *Security Studies* 29, no. 1 (2020): 34-63.

¹² Martin Middlebrook, *The Fight for the 'Malvinas': The Argentine Forces in the Falklands War . . .*, 1.

were pro-military, Argentina decided to use the military in pursuance of foreign policy objectives. Troops deployed to Latin American hot spots to stamp out the proliferation of communism were well supported, often with American equipment, signaling the US's support of Argentina's junta.¹³ Beyond the threat of radical socialism, Argentina was also cognizant of its neighbour to the West, Chile. Relations between the two nations remained tense following a border dispute known as the Beagle conflict. Argentina had refused to acknowledge a binding international agreement in which certain strategically important islands were ceded to Chile. The dispute nearly led to war between the two nations in 1978, finally being resolved through Papal intervention.¹⁴ Before the Falklands War, Argentina added to its air force and navy modern European built or designed ships, aircraft, weapons, and equipment. Consequently, just prior to the invasion of Las Malvinas, Argentina possessed one of the most modern and technologically advanced air forces in Latin America, geared towards offensive strikes using existing munitions and recently acquired air launched Exocet missiles.¹⁵ Argentina's navy was a mix of American and European equipment with the aircraft carrier *Veinticinco de Mayo*, a pair of eight-year-old, Type 209 diesel-electric submarines, and a mix of modern and dated warships, some of which, including the cruiser *General Belgrano*, were fitted with Exocet missiles.¹⁶ On paper, Argentina fielded an impressive military force, sufficient to take and possibly hold Las Malvinas if Great Britain chose to respond militarily. Tables 2.1 and 2.2 below provide an overview of the Argentine air and major naval forces that were available to the Junta during the conflict.

¹³ Paul Eddy, Magnus Linklater, Peter Gillman, and Sunday Times of London Insight Team, *War in the Falklands: The Full Story* (Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1982), 63.

¹⁴ Peter van Aert, "The Beagle Conflict," *Island Studies Journal* 11, no. 1 (05, 2016): 307-314, <https://search-proquest-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/scholarly-journals/beagle-conflict/docview/1953814965/se-2?accountid=9867>.

¹⁵ Santiago Rivas, *Wings of the Malvinas: The Argentine Air War Over the Falklands*, (Manchester, UK: Hikoki Publications, 2012), 126.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 348-352.

Table 2.1 – Argentine Military Aircraft

Role	Type	Number
Multi-role fighter	Daggers	27
Air superiority fighter	Mirage III	17
Strike fighter	Super Étendards	5
Strike fighter	A2 Skyhawk	56
Ground support	Pucara	42
Light bomber	Canberra	10
Anti-submarine	Tracker	6
Reconnaissance	Boeing 707	3
Reconnaissance	P2 Neptune	2
Transport/ Reconnaissance	C130 Hercules	10
Transport/ Reconnaissance	Fokkers Friendship/Troopship	18
Anti-submarine	Sea King	5
Anti-submarine/Anti- surface	Lynx	2
Transport/Utility	Bell UH1H	25
Transport/Utility	Bell 212	9
Transport/Utility	Puma	9
Transport/Utility	Agusta	9
Transport/Utility	Chinook	4

Source: Rivas, “Wings of the Malvinas: The Argentine Air War Over the Falklands.”

Table 2.2 – Argentine Naval Units

Type	Role	Number
Aircraft carrier	Anti-submarine warfare (ASW) and strike	1
Cruiser	Anti-surface warfare (ASuW) and naval gunfire support (NGS)	1*
Destroyers	ASuW and NGS (4), anti-air warfare (2)	6*
Corvettes	ASuW and NGS	3*
Submarines	ASW and ASuW	3
* equipped with Exocet anti-ship missiles		

Source: Rivas, “Wings of the Malvinas: The Argentine Air War Over the Falklands.”

Great Britain

As a colonial and imperial power, Great Britain was on the wrong side of history. A decline that started in the 1920s progressed irreversibly until the last decades of the 20th century. Most former colonies became fully independent commonwealth nations. Others like Gibraltar, and the Falklands, due to their strategic value, remained under British control. In the Second World War, Great Britain ceded leadership of the global commons to the US and pursued greater ties to Europe. Despite being a shadow of its former self, Great Britain was determined to retain global presence and influence. This was done by maintaining a relatively strong, nuclear armed, military force. The Royal Navy (RN) played a critical role during the colonial era, projecting British power where needed to prop up the interest of the Commonwealth. However, following abandonment of the East of Suez policy and overall reduction in overseas territories, maintaining a large navy was no longer needed.¹⁷ Given East vs West tensions during the Cold War, Great

¹⁷ Edward Longinotti, "Britain's Withdrawal from East of Suez: From Economic Determinism to Political Choice," *Contemporary British History* 29, no. 3 (2015): 318-340.

Britain focused on relations with the US and inside of NATO. Defence of Western Europe and sea lines of communications to North America against the Soviet threat took precedence in British defence policy and the posture of its naval forces.

Great Britain in its procurement activities demonstrated the same struggles faced by many other Western nations. It balanced economic with social and defence needs. The British military saw wide-ranging reductions in strength and capability, including continuous debates over resource allocations and which service would bear the cost of the nation's nuclear deterrent. Even with these cuts, however, the RN managed to maintain a relatively capable, if small, carrier aviation and amphibious force, able to continue to project British power. By the early 1980s, even that force was much reduced and facing more deep cuts from the 1981 Defence Review.

The 1981 review sought to free funds in order to upgrade the Polaris submarine launched ballistic missile (SLBM) to the Trident SLBM, in line with a similar upgrade to US capabilities. Prime Minister Thatcher's Conservative Government gave priority to maintaining and updating Great Britain's nuclear deterrent.¹⁸ By maintaining themselves as a nuclear power, Great Britain would continue to have a global voice and influence, separate from that of the US. Because the nation's nuclear deterrent was operated by RN submarines, it was determined that the entirety of the multi-billion-pound project would come out of the RN portion of the defence budget, thus necessitating dramatic reductions in other capabilities in order to afford it.¹⁹ Secretary of State for Defence John Nott, in charge of the review, used this issue to take aim at the rest of the RNs budget.

¹⁸ David K. Boren, "Britain's 1981 Defence Review" (doctoral thesis, University of London, Kings College, 1992), <https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/files/2925275/245765.pdf>, 173.

¹⁹ Edward Hampshire, "Strategic and Budgetary Necessity, Or Decision-Making 'Along the Grain'? the Royal Navy and the 1981 Defence Review," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 39, no. 7 (2016), <https://www-tandfonline-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/doi/full/10.1080/01402390.2016.1220365>, 956-978.

As Nott began his analysis ahead of the review his ignorance and possibly disdain for the RN was becoming clear. He was quoted making passing statements such as “why do we want surface ships?” and even more unknowingly towards the vital amphibious ships *Fearless* and *Intrepid*, “what are those even for?”.²⁰ As had been expected by the British armed services, when the cuts came, it fell hard on the RN. The carrier force was to be reduced by one and the amphibious capability was to be paid off without replacement.²¹ Several other dramatic reductions in capability were also announced, including the closure of dockyards, sale of surface ships, and retirement of specialty vessels such as the ice survey vessel *Endurance*.²² The scale of cuts caused much debate in Parliament and indeed around the country, even leading to the Junior Navy Minister Keith Speed, speaking out and consequently being asked to resign.²³ The review garnered much attention from across the Atlantic, both from the US, who worried that a primary partner in NATO was reducing naval power to an unacceptable level, as well as from Argentina who were counting on Great Britain’s reduced naval capability as part of their planning to *liberate* Las Malvinas from British rule.²⁴ But, despite the opposition, the review was accepted, and the cuts were to begin.

The direct impact of the defence cuts to the Falklands was the pending loss of the RN’s only ice survey ship, *Endurance*, which was planned to be paid off. The ship was the only semi-permanent RN presence in the South Atlantic and was seen by the Islanders as “an important

²⁰ David K. Boren, “Britain’s 1981 Defence Review” . . . , 252, 283.

²¹ *Ibid*, 283.

²² *Ibid*, 305.

²³ "Sir Keith Speed: Naval Officer and Conservative Minister Who Clashed with Margaret Thatcher Over Defence Cuts," *The Daily Telegraph*, Jan 23, 2018, <https://search-proquest-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/newspapers/sir-keith-speed/docview/1989890744/se-2?accountid=9867>.

²⁴ Edward Hampshire, "Strategic and Budgetary Necessity, Or Decision-Making 'Along the Grain'? the Royal Navy and the 1981 Defence Review," . . . , 956-978.

indicator of Britain's willingness to defend the region".²⁵ That being said, long before the cuts planned in 1981, the RN had conducted an analysis to determine if Great Britain would be able to intervene should Argentina attempt to invade the Falklands. The answer was simple: it was impossible.²⁶ Beyond the military issues with defending the Falklands, the government had demonstrated a waning interest in maintaining possession of the islands.²⁷ In fact, throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, the British government was engaged in a discussion with the Argentine government about the prospect of transferring sovereign control of the islands to Argentina.²⁸ However open Great Britain may have been to a future diplomatic solution regarding the territory, once Argentina committed to the use of force, Great Britain was forced to respond accordingly. British pride and honour bound commitment to defend, or in this case liberate, the loyal British inhabitants from the grip of 'invaders' became paramount. Despite looming defence cuts, when Prime Minister Thatcher gave the order to ready forces to retake the Falklands, Great Britain's military quickly, readied and deployed the largest British Task Force since the Suez Crisis. Tables 2.3 and 2.4 below provide an overview of British front-line naval and air forces that saw active service in the South Atlantic up until the Argentine capitulation on June 14th, 1982. Not included are the valuable ground support and transport helicopters lost with *Atlantic Conveyor*.

²⁵ Exequiel Mercau, *The Falklands War: An Imperial History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University 2019), https://www-cambridge-org.cfc.idm.oclc.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/4D2902DEAF07F891D3DC6FFE9C01786B/9781108483292c2_38-70.pdf/dream_island.pdf, 67.

²⁶ Sandy Woodward and Patrick Robinson, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander . . .*, 55.

²⁷ Francisco Fernando de Santibañes, "The Effectiveness of Military Governments during War: The Case of Argentina in the Malvinas," *Armed Forces and Society* 33, no. 4 (2007): 616, <https://journals-sagepub-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/doi/abs/10.1177/0095327X06291848>.

²⁸ Exequiel Mercau, *The Falklands War: An Imperial History . . .*, 38.

Table 2.3 – British Military Aircraft

Role	Type	Number
Strike fighter	Sea Harrier	28
Strike fighter	Harrier	10
Strategic bomber	Vulcan	4
ASW	Sea King	24
Transport/Utility	Sea King	15
ASW/ASuW	Lynx	7
ASW	Wessex	2
Transport/Utility	Wessex	54
ASuW	Wasp	9

Source: Rivas, “Wings of the Malvinas: The Argentine Air War Over the Falklands.”

Table 2.4 – British Naval Units

Type	Role	Number
Aircraft carrier	ASW, ASuW, AAW, Strike	2
Destroyer	AAW, ASuW, NGS	7
Frigate	ASW, AAW, NGS	10
Submarine	ASW, ASuW	3

Source: Preston, “Sea Combat off the Falklands.”

Islanders

Living at the far extremes of not only the British Empire, but in fact the world, inhabitants of the Falkland Islands had established a quiet life that well suited their isolation. At the beginning of the 1980s, most of the island’s approximately 2,000 residents were of Anglo-Saxon origin. Beyond cultural links to Great Britain, the Falklands strived to maintain awareness

for their islands in the fore of the British parliament.²⁹ Had there been any question regarding the future that the Islanders wanted for themselves, they were answered when Lord Chalfond, on a mission to determine the future of the Falklands, visited the territory in 1968. He was greeted on the Port Stanley pier by Islanders chanting 'Keep the Falklands British' and 'Chalfont Go Home'³⁰. Quite simply, they wanted to remain British.

Despite this desire, relations between the Falklands and Argentina were cordial. Given the proximity of Argentina to the Falklands compared to any other nation or territory, some 400 miles, certain dependencies were established. The 1971 *Communication's Agreement* between Argentina and Great Britain reinforced that relationship through several initiatives including having Argentina establish regular passenger air travel and support other services such as postal, medical, and educational.³¹ Further to the elements of the *Communication's Agreement*, Argentina's national oil company established "a monopoly over fuel supplies" to the territory.³² In spite of this working relationship between the Islanders and the Argentines, when an invasion was imminent, local workers sabotaged the airport's navigation beacon system in hopes of confusing the navigation systems of Argentine military aircraft.³³ These actions were sanctioned by the local governor, demonstrating the resolve of the locals to resist their invaders and maintain their sovereign link to Great Britain.

²⁹ Francisco Fernando de Santibañes, "The Effectiveness of Military Governments during War: The Case of Argentina in the Malvinas" . . . , 616.

³⁰ Exequiel Mercau, *The Falklands War: An Imperial History* . . . , 38.

³¹ British Embassy, *1971 AGREEMENT ON COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THE FALKLAND ISLANDS AND ARGENTINA* (Buenos Aires: 1971), <https://www.fiassociation.com/shopimages/pdfs/2.%201971%20Anglo-Argentine%20Joint%20Statement%20on%20Communications.pdf>.

³² Exequiel Mercau, *The Falklands War: An Imperial History* . . . , 44.

³³ Timothy C. Winegard, "Canadian Diplomacy and the 1982 Falklands War." *International History Review* 35, no. 1 (2013): 162-183.

Previous Disputes

While the Falklands War of 1982 between Great Britain and Argentina most certainly formed the high-water mark of the long-standing dispute over sovereign ownership of the islands, the region was no stranger to Anglo-Argentine sabre rattling. The question of sovereignty over the Falkland Islands ranges back to the first Spanish and British settlements in the 1700s and 1800s. In 1850, Argentina and Great Britain signed the Arana-Southern Treaty, following which the issue of the Falklands laid dormant for nearly a century.³⁴ Sensing the weakened position of Great Britain on the international stage in the latter half of the 1900s, Argentina began to reassert claims over the islands. The issue was first raised at the United Nations (UN), leading to adoption of UN General Assembly Resolution 2065 (XX) which had the aim of seeking a diplomatic solution to the Falklands question.³⁵ This resolution drew its foundation from UN General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV) which was adopted in 1960 with a view to further the process of de-colonization throughout the world.³⁶ While there had been some interest on the part of Great Britain in the idea of divesting the Falkland Islands, they stood behind the rights of the Islander self-determined desire to remain British citizens.

In the years between the adoption of UN resolution 2065 (XX) and the Falklands conflict three incidents reflecting tensions between Great Britain and Argentina came close to open conflict. In 1966, an Argentine passenger flight was hijacked by a group of Argentine nationals and forced to divert and land on the Falkland Islands. The nationals took several hostages and

³⁴ Roger Lorton, *Falkland Islands: South Georgia, & the South Sandwich Islands - The History* (2013), <https://web.archive.org/web/20140419020942/http://falklandstimeline.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/falklands-history.pdf> 196.

³⁵ United Nations, “The United Nations and Decolonization: Falkland Islands (Malvinas)”, last modified 15 May 2019, <https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/content/falkland-islands-malvinas>.

³⁶ United Nations General Assembly, *Resolution 1514 (XV) Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries around the world* (United Nations: 1960), [http://undocs.org/A/Res/1514\(XV\)](http://undocs.org/A/Res/1514(XV)).

raised the Argentine flag over Port Stanley in hopes of asserting Argentina's sovereignty claim over the territory. The incident lasted less than 48 hours and saw all the hostage takers surrender and return to Argentina for trial, albeit trials that resulted in very lenient sentencing.³⁷ The incident proved to be an embarrassment for the government of Argentina and led Great Britain to bolster its Royal Marine (RM) detachment on the island.³⁸ A decade later, in 1976, Argentina established a small base on the isolated island of Southern Thule in the South Sandwich Islands. Although over 1,000 miles from the Falklands, the island was part of the Falklands territory. Great Britain elected not to eject the Argentines, effectively ignoring the incident, despite military pleas to send the RMs to Southern Thule.³⁹ Finally, in 1977, in the most serious of the pre-conflict incidents, Argentina cut off the fuel supply for the Falklands airport. This action was thought to be a potential pre-cursor to Argentina seizing more territory as it had in Southern Thule and therefore saw the British government deploy several RN units, including a nuclear submarine to the region which managed to defuse the tensions, if only temporarily.⁴⁰ Despite these low-level interactions, neither nation developed a fulsome understanding of the other's capabilities and intentions as it related to the Falklands as they continued their collision course for 1982.

³⁷ "Argentina celebrates 45 years of the "Condor Operation" landing in Falklands," *Merco Press*, 29 September 2011, <https://en.mercopress.com/2011/09/29/argentina-celebrates-45-years-of-the-condor-operation-landing-in-falklands>.

³⁸ Exequiel Mercau, *The Falklands War: An Imperial History* . . . , 20.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 53.

⁴⁰ Roger Lorton, *Falkland Islands: South Georgia, & the South Sandwich Islands - The History* (2013) . . . , 289.

CHAPTER 2

JUSTIFICATION ANALYSIS

War is the continuation of politics by other means.

- Clausewitz, *On War*

Clausewitz's statement regarding the root cause of war has been widely disputed over the years. Many nations can draw their reasoning for their participation in conflict as a result of failed diplomatic efforts. For example, Great Britain made several attempts to negotiate with Nazi Germany in an effort to avoid another generation killing continental war, when the diplomatic efforts failed to prevent the invasion of Poland, war became the only course of action available.⁴¹ More recently, the NATO-led bombing in Kosovo was an action taken by the Alliance following several failed attempts to negotiate a peaceful settlement and avoid the unfolding humanitarian crisis.⁴² These two examples have a shared political root. The decision made to enter a state of war, or conflict, was made by a democratically appointed government or alliance, which implies that decisions had support of the people and thus the nation. When non-democratic nations, such as military dictatorships, engage in war, the legitimacy of the conflict as having political roots, and thus the backing of the people, becomes more tenuous, such as Argentina's political situation when they embarked on their mission to claim Las Malvinas.

One of the tools used to measure the justification for going to war and conduct within war is Just War theory, which comprises two main principles: *Jus Ad Bellum* and *Jus In Bello*. These principles date back to ancient Greek and Roman philosophers, with some historians making

⁴¹ In *'Munich,' Neville Chamberlain Gets the Best of Hitler*, (Washington, D.C.: NPR, 2018), <https://search-proquest-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/other-sources/munich-neville-chamberlain-gets-best-hitler/docview/2409038838/se-2?accountid=9867>.

⁴² Daniel R. Lake, "The Limits of Coercive Airpower: NATO's "Victory" in Kosovo Revisited," *International Security* 34, no. 1 (2009): 83-112, <https://direct.mit.edu/isec/article/34/1/83/11962/The-Limits-of-Coercive-Airpower-NATO-s-Victory-in>.

links as far back as ancient Egyptian society.⁴³ In a more modern context, Just War theory can be linked to the attributes of the International Law of Armed Conflict (ILOAC), which has been inculcated into the four treaties that make up the Geneva Convention.⁴⁴

For a nation to begin a war or conflict following Just War theory principles, they must meet the conditions detailed in *Jus Ad Bellum*. These conditions are just authority, just cause, just intention, probability of success and last resort. Once war or conflict has commenced, the *Jus In Bello* conditions take over. These conditions are proportionality, discrimination, and military necessity.⁴⁵ Tables 3.1 and 3.2 below provide an overview of the *Jus Ad Bellum* and *Jus In Bello* with short definitions.

Table 3.1 – Jus Ad Bellum Definitions

Jus Ad Bellum	
Just Authority	Also referred to as competent or proper authority, speaks to the need for war to be initiated by a political authority within a political system that fairly represents its people and allows distinction of justice.
Just Cause	Addresses the justification for going to war, including self-defence and the defence of an ally against an aggressor.
Just Intention	Also referred to as right intention, speaks to the limits of the war, ensuring that a just war is limited to the pursuit and securing of a just cause.
Probability of Success	This insinuated that if none of the just and serious ends could be realized or fulfilled through war, a nation should reconsider, put more simply, if there is no chance of success, a conflict should not be sought.

⁴³ Rory Cox, "Expanding the History of the just War: The Ethics of War in Ancient Egypt," *International Studies Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (2017): 371-384.

⁴⁴ International Committee of the Red Cross, *The Geneva Convention and their Commentaries*, accessed February 2021, <https://www.icrc.org/en/war-and-law/treaties-customary-law/geneva-conventions>.

⁴⁵ James F. Childress, "Just-War Theories: The Bases, Interrelations, Priorities, and Functions of their Criteria," *Theological Studies (Baltimore)* 39, no. 3 (1978): 427-445.

Last Resort	The condition which requires the exhausting of all other avenues, political and diplomatic, before resorting to war.
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Source: Childress, “Just-War Theories: The Bases, Interrelations, Priorities, and Functions of their Criteria.”

Table 3.2 – Jus In Bello Definitions

Jus In Bello	
Proportionality	Speaks to use of force, specifically measuring the degree of force required in order to obtain a military objective against the force required to correct the just cause and limited by just intention.
Discrimination	Addresses the need to differentiate between combatants and non-combatants during a war or conflict. In a modern context, this particular condition is heavily linked to the tenants of the Geneva Convention.
Military Necessity	Speaks to the notion that all attacks must be directed towards legitimate military objectives.

Source: Childress, “Just-War Theories: The Bases, Interrelations, Priorities, and Functions of their Criteria.”

In recent years a third aspect of just war theory has emerged, *Jus Post Bellum*. This aspect of the theory addresses the actions of belligerents following the end of a conflict, dealing with issues such as peace treaties, reconstruction and reparations.⁴⁶ *Jus Ad Bellum* and *Jus In Bello* from both Argentine and British perspectives, leading up to and during the conflict over the Falklands, demonstrate the respective nation’s justifications for engaging in the conflict, and to what degree they may impact the outcome. The factors leading to a determination of a nation’s justifications and conduct are found in the *Jus Ad Bellum* and *Jus In Bello* principles and conditions, therefore *Jus Post Bellum* will not be discussed because it’s principle and conditions are focused on the period following conflict.

⁴⁶ Thom Brooks, *Just War Theory*, Vol. 4 (Boston: Brill, 2013) 187.

Argentina's Case

The Argentine war in the Falklands was the outcome of a long-standing colonial-era sovereignty dispute. Las Malvinas, it was argued, was rightfully Argentine territory and if Great Britain was not going to negotiate some form of formal sovereign transfer, then it was Argentina's right to retake the islands by force.⁴⁷ Or at least that is how the Junta justified the conflict to the Argentine people. Referring to Clausewitz's statement regarding military action linked to political ends, Argentina's case for engaging a 'just war' began to fall apart.

The Argentine government of the early 1980s was a military Junta government. This government was not formally elected through any type of recognized democratic process and very tenuously kept its grip on power through fear and intimidation.⁴⁸ The first element of *Jus Ad Bellum* requires that an appropriate authority, i.e., the government, be responsible for initiating a war. However, that government must be part of a political system that allows for distinction of justice.⁴⁹ The Argentine Junta government had constructed a form of political support system through the Nation Reorganization Process, but the distinction of justice was absent. During this era, the Argentine government engaged in widespread killing of left-wing activists, or any other groups opposing their rule, giving this point in Argentine political history the unenviable label of the *dirty war*.⁵⁰ Given that the Junta was not formally elected by the Argentine people and used fear and intimidation to exercise power, it can be concluded that they did not meet the *Jus Ad*

⁴⁷ Paul Eddy, Magnus Linklater, Peter Gillman, and Sunday Times of London Insight Team, *War in the Falklands: The Full Story* . . . , 65.

⁴⁸ Isobel Hilton, "General Leopoldo Galtieri," *The Guardian*, 13 January 2003, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2003/jan/13/guardianobituaries.argentina>.

⁴⁹ James F. Childress, "Just-War Theories: The Bases, Interrelations, Priorities, and Functions of their Criteria" . . . , 427-445.

⁵⁰ Adam Scharpf, "Ideology and State Terror: How Officer Beliefs Shaped Repression during Argentina's 'Dirty War,'" *Journal of Peace Research* 55, no. 2 (2018): 206-221.

Bellum criteria for ‘appropriate authority’. When measured against definitions used by the Global Democracy Index, the Argentine government of 1982 would have been considered an Authoritarian Regime, defined as:

State political pluralism is absent or heavily circumscribed. Many countries in this category are outright dictatorships. Some formal institutions of democracy may exist, but these have little substance. Elections, if they do occur, are not free and fair. There is disregard for abuses and infringements of civil liberties. Media are typically state-owned or controlled by groups connected to the ruling regime. There is repression of criticism of the government and pervasive censorship. There is no independent judiciary.⁵¹

The Junta’s motivation for war, while on the surface was based in a historical sovereignty claim, was more likely linked to a need to create a distraction from the economic despair they had allowed their nation to slip into.⁵² Despite years of the so-called *dirty war* the Argentine people were still a proud people and thus the Junta believed that they could use this pride to galvanize support from the populace for what they had deemed a noble cause. While President Galtieri may have enjoyed a temporary bump in public support for the invasion at home, this does not satisfy the *Jus Ad Bellum* criteria of making this a ‘just cause’. Argentina’s invasion of the Falklands was not done in self-defence, nor to assist in the defence of an ally. Neither could they claim to have been intervening on the side of the residents of the Falklands in order to free them from the yoke of colonial overlords. The Islanders were proud Britons and wanted to stay that way.

The intentions of Argentina were clear. They viewed the Falkland Islands as sovereign Argentine territory. The Junta intended to use its powerful military in order to oust the British

⁵¹ The Economist, *Democracy Index 2015* (New York: The Economist, Intelligence Unit), <https://www.yabiladi.com/img/content/EIU-Democracy-Index-2015.pdf>, 46.

⁵² Paul Eddy, Magnus Linklater, Peter Gillman, and Sunday Times of London Insight Team, *War in the Falklands: The Full Story . . .*, 64.

authorities and assert Argentine control over the islands. The US invasion of Afghanistan following the deadly terror attacks of September 2001 was judged to have been a war started with the right intentions. In that case, although the US was not necessarily under imminent threat of attack from the Afghan government, in order to correct the wrong suffered wrong in the attacks in the US, US forces needed to be in Afghanistan in order to root out terrorists and bring them to justice. In the case of the Argentine invasion of the Falklands, the Junta claimed to have been correcting a wrong suffered as well, in that their nation had been denied its rightful claim to the territory for far too long. However, in Afghanistan, the US action was backed by several UN Security Council resolutions, giving their actions just cause.⁵³ Argentine actions lacked just cause and thus could not meet the requirements for 'just intention' of *Jus Ad Bellum*.

Prior to engaging in any conflict likely to lead to loss of life and serious economic hardships, a nation should ensure they have a high probability of success, thus not wasting lives and national wealth on a hopeless cause. As a rule of thumb in military planning, a defender possesses a 3:1 advantage over an attacking force, thus requiring the attacker to amass copious quantities of forces in order to overcome the defender's advantage.⁵⁴ Although Argentina hoped to avoid a military confrontation with Great Britain, the South American nation, on paper, presented a formidable military foe to any long-distance mission launched to contest their actions. The imbalance between Argentine and British forces presents a clear picture of Argentina's probability of success. One need only look at the disproportionate air forces that could be used to contest the islands. Argentina was able to bring nearly all its air forces, including naval aviation, to bear in a defence of the islands against British attack. They

⁵³ United Nations Security Council, *UNSCR 1386* (New York: UN, 2001), [https://undocs.org/S/RES/1386\(2001\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/1386(2001)).

⁵⁴ John J. Mearsheimer, "Assessing the Conventional Balance: The 3:1 Rule and Its Critics," *International Security* 13, no. 4 (1989): 54-89, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2538780?seq=1>.

possessed over 300 aircraft, nearly half of which were combat aircraft, including several modern Mirage IIIs and Super Étendards.⁵⁵ These aircraft could be operated from air bases on the Argentine mainland, several bases on the Falkland Islands themselves, as well as from their aircraft carrier *Veinticinco de Mayo*.⁵⁶ Given the extreme distances at which the British would be operating, they would be forced to rely on aircraft carriers for all their air support. Even if Great Britain had been able to deploy all three carriers in service at the time of the conflict, they would have fewer than 35 combat aircraft available for service in the South Atlantic. When the invasion started, one of the carriers was unavailable and thus the RN could only send 19 aircraft with the initial Task Force to face off against 300 Argentine aircraft.⁵⁷ Even though the Junta did not desire open conflict with British over the wind-swept Falkland Islands, they had good reason to believe that if the invasion did trigger a military response from Great Britain, that they would likely prevail, thus satisfying the criteria of ‘probability of success’.

The final condition of *Jus Ad Bellum* to examine on the Argentine side is ‘last resort’. The criteria for this condition require that the nation exhaust all alternative avenues prior to engaging in conflict. In the years leading up to the Argentine invasion, the governments of Argentina and Great Britain had engaged in fitful discussions regarding the future of the islands, including the possibility of a transfer of sovereign authority to Argentina. While these talks stalled in the early 1980s, the UN still actively sought a peaceful solution through General Assembly Resolution 2065 (XX) and was therefore a forum open to Argentina to make a claim to the territory.⁵⁸ Even inside the British government, some authorities were willing to concede a

⁵⁵ Santiago Rivas, *Wings of the Malvinas: The Argentine Air War Over the Falklands*. . ., 29-30, 34.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 54.

⁵⁷ Antony Preston, *Sea Combat Off the Falklands* (London: Willow Books, 1982), 36.

⁵⁸ United Nations, “The United Nations and Decolonization: Falkland Islands (Malvinas)”, last modified 15 May 2019, <https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/content/falkland-islands-malvinas>.

transfer of sovereign control of the territory had conditions been favourable. Given that Argentina had not fully exhausted all potential political and diplomatic avenues, nor did they formally declare their intentions to invade and occupy the Falklands, they failed to meet the criteria for 'last resort'.

Both during the invasion, as well as during the subsequent battles with British forces, Argentine forces conducted a proportional and discriminate campaign, focusing attention principally on targets of military necessity. Despite the unavoidable disruption to the lives of the civilian population of the Falklands, they were never deliberately targeted by Argentine forces, nor were any Geneva convention violations committed such as the use human shields. In fact, Argentine Forces imposed certain rules aimed at reducing potential harm towards the Islanders, such as forcing them to drive on the right-hand side of road to reduce the risk of vehicle collisions with the occupying forces.⁵⁹ All told, only three residents of the Falklands lost their lives during the campaign, rather tragically to friendly fire from the forces sent there to liberate them rather than at the hands of the occupying force.⁶⁰ Beyond the civilian population, the Royal Marines stationed in the Falklands, following a dogged defence, causing several Argentine casualties, were treated accordingly as prisoners of war.⁶¹ Given their treatment and actions towards the Islanders and the defending Royal Marines, Argentine forces met the *Jus in Bello* criteria for 'discrimination'.

⁵⁹ Martin Middlebrook, *The Fight for the 'Malvinas': The Argentine Forces in the Falklands War* . . . , 44.

⁶⁰ The Falklands Campaign 1982, "Falkland Islands Roll of Honour – Royal Air Force & Others," last modified 1 October 2004, <https://web.archive.org/web/20090321125256/http://www.raf.mod.uk/falklands/rafetcroll.html>.

⁶¹ Sebastian Murphy-Bates, "Revealed: Heroism of Royal Marines unit who fought their way through Argentinian assault during the Falklands War despite being heavily outnumbered," *Daily Mail*, 7 February 2018, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5362427/Heroism-Royal-Marines-fought-Falklands-attack.html>.

Argentine efforts were focused outwardly off the island towards the British Task Force. As such, little to no destruction of civilian property occurred on their part, thus meeting the criteria for conducting a ‘proportional’ campaign.⁶² And, while the tactics of the Argentine forces may have been questionable, the attacks against British forces can be seen as having supported the ‘military necessity’ of preventing an amphibious operation to re-take the island. Even the sinking of the non-combatant merchant ship *Atlantic Conveyor* meets the criteria of military necessity “when, by their nature, location, purpose or use they effectively contribute to the enemy's war-fighting or war-sustaining capability and when their total or partial destruction, capture, or neutralization would constitute a definite military advantage to the attacker.”⁶³ Argentina’s efforts as it related to non-combatant and non-military targets were in line with the tenants of ILOAC.

Despite having a probability of success based on its military strength, Argentina did not satisfy any other conditions of *Jus Ad Bellum*, and thus unable to claim that they started a Just War. Once the war had begun with the invasion and subsequent battle for the island, Argentine forces, either through training, pride, or fear of widespread international condemnation, conducted a Just War, meeting all three criteria of *Jus in Bello*.

Great Britain's Case

Great Britain was initially on the defensive in this war. Indeed, they found themselves scrambling to react militarily to a surprise attack against their sovereign territory. Measuring the

⁶² Martin Middlebrook, *The Fight for the 'Malvinas': The Argentine Forces in the Falklands War . . .*, 229.

⁶³ Ashley Roach, review of *U.S. Policy on Targeting Enemy Merchant Shipping: Bridging the Gap Between Conventional Law and State Practice*, by n H. B. Robertson, *International Law Studies*, Vol 65: 364-366, <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1746&context=ils>.

British actions against the conditions for *Jus Ad Bellum* and *Jus in Bello* will determine whether they did, or to what level, conduct a ‘just war’ with Argentina.

Once word of the Argentine invasion reached 10 Downing Street, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher called for a Saturday session of Parliament, the first such session since the Suez crisis in the 1950s.⁶⁴ She used this session to announce that British territory was under foreign occupation and that she intended to deploy a Task Force to the South Atlantic to protect the rights and freedoms of the British citizens on the Falklands. This announcement saw no argument from the opposition.⁶⁵ This open forum in which elected officials could have publicly questioned, or even opposed, the government's decisions is a hallmark of what is needed in order to meet the *Jus Ad Bellum* criteria for ‘appropriate authority.’ A democratically elected body within a political system which allows for the distinction of justice. Again, using the Global Democracy Index, Great Britain, which has the same political structure that it did in 1982, ranks as a Full Democracy which is defined as:

Countries in which not only basic political freedoms and civil liberties are respected, but also tend to be underpinned by a political culture conducive to the flourishing of democracy. The functioning of government is satisfactory. Media are independent and diverse. There is an effective system of checks and balances. The judiciary is independent and judicial decisions are enforced.⁶⁶

In Great Britain’s case, the just cause and just intention conditions of *Jus Ad Bellum* were intrinsically linked. As the nation was attacked, its reasoning for engaging in armed aggression would have been considered defensive in nature, with the limited aim at re-capturing territory seized by an enemy. Great Britain possessed several weapons systems that would have been able

⁶⁴ Paul Eddy, Magnus Linklater, Peter Gillman, and Sunday Times of London Insight Team, *War in the Falklands: The Full Story . . .*, 98.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 99

⁶⁶ The Economist, *Democracy Index 2015* (New York: The Economist, Intelligence Unit), <https://www.yabiladi.com/img/content/EIU-Democracy-Index-2015.pdf>, 45.

to reach targets throughout Argentina and could have crippled the nation's military and government. However, Great Britain's military operations, which can be seen as a limited war, without exception, were focused entirely on Argentine forces actively occupying and/or defending the Falkland Islands. Additionally, the Exclusion Zone around the Falklands clearly established British intent prior to their forces arriving in the South Atlantic.⁶⁷ Demonstrating the limited focus of their efforts to correcting the wrong of having had their territory invaded, Great Britain met the conditions for 'just cause' and 'just intention'.

It can certainly be assumed that Great Britain emotionally reacted to the Argentine invasion of the Falklands. The great British Empire that built the modern world was well into a state of decline by the late 1900s, however, did not want to be seen as unable to defend its sovereign territory. This emotional sentiment rings true in the response given by the First Sea Lord, Admiral Leach, to the Prime Minister when she asked why it was necessary to recapture the islands, ". . . because if we do not, or if we pussyfoot in our actions and do not achieve complete success, in another few months we shall be living in a different country whose word counts for little."⁶⁸ Emotion, however, cannot win wars alone, and at the outset of this conflict, a British victory was far from assured. Even with the looming defence cuts, Great Britain still possessed one of the most modern and powerful militaries in the world in 1982. However, what part of that powerful military could be projected 8,000 miles into the South Atlantic was a different question. Given the assumed state of preparedness of Argentine forces, Great Britain mustered whatever forces were ready and available and dispatched them towards the Falklands. Regardless, Great Britain was unable to respect the 3:1 planning ratio for attacking a defending

⁶⁷ Sandy Woodward and Patrick Robinson, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander . . .*, 81.

⁶⁸ Rowland White, *Vulcan 607* (London: Bantam, 2006), 43.

force, on land or in the air, and in doing so was not abiding by the *Jus Ad Bellum* criteria needed for 'probability of success'.

A military response was one of two options that Great Britain explored following Argentina's invasion of the Falklands. Tandem to the Prime Minister's order to deploy a Task Force to the South Atlantic, the Foreign Office undertook intensive diplomatic efforts in an attempt to avoid a military confrontation.⁶⁹ While no direct talks took place between London and Buenos Aires, two noteworthy efforts were made by third parties. Initially, Alexander Haig, then US Secretary of State, acted as an intermediary conducting shuttle diplomacy between Argentina and Great Britain in the weeks between the invasion and arrival of the Task Force off the Falkland Islands. These negotiations failed to make significant headway and the US blamed Argentina for their failure, ultimately backing Great Britain throughout the crisis⁷⁰. Peruvian President Fernando Belaunde Terry made a valiant last-ditch effort to avoid a conflict by working with Switzerland. However, Argentina withdrew from the talks following torpedoing of *General Belgrano*, the single most deadly event of the war.⁷¹ Following the Peruvian attempt to attain peace no more diplomatic efforts were made leaving the future of the Falkland Islands to be determined militarily. Despite issuing an emergency resolution condemning Argentine actions and calling for a peaceful resolution to the crisis, the UN did not become directly involved in any of the diplomatic efforts, likely owing to the fact that Great Britain held veto power over any unfavourable UN resolutions. While Great Britain did not directly engage in diplomatic efforts to stave off combat, they remained open to the options as presented to them by the various

⁶⁹ Paul Eddy, Magnus Linklater, Peter Gillman, and Sunday Times of London Insight Team, *War in the Falklands: The Full Story* . . . , 132.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 143.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 179.

intermediaries; however, as Argentina had outright refused to end its occupation of the islands, the primary British condition for a peaceful outcome, conflict seemed inevitable. Even while the Task Force steamed south, Great Britain continued to exhaust all possible diplomatic solutions to the crisis, thus satisfying the criteria of the condition of 'last resort'. However, as Argentina was unwilling to change its position regarding the occupation, Great Britain was forced to employ force to achieve their objectives.

Similar to Argentine forces, once the conflict began, British forces conducted both a proportional as well as a discriminate war. At no time did British forces target or attack Argentine civilians or civilian infrastructure. An example of the vigilant effort exercised to distinguish targets was seen early in the conflict. Following several probing overflights by Argentine surveillance aircraft, Admiral Sandy Woodward aborted a missile engagement on what turned out to be a civilian airliner.⁷² Additionally, the publicly announced establishment of an Exclusion Zone around the Falklands, gave clear warning to any aircraft or vessels in the area that if they were inside the zone that they would be considered hostile.⁷³ This was meant to make a clear distinction between belligerent and neutral contacts in order to avoid unintended attacks against neutral ships or aircraft. Ultimately, the only civilian deaths during the campaign were on the British side. Throughout the campaign, Argentine prisoners of war were treated as required by the Geneva Convention, including over 12,000 soldiers who surrendered to British forces following the fall of Port Stanley. Indeed, combat operations rapidly turned to what may have seemed like humanitarian operations once Argentine forces capitulated as the weather rapidly deteriorated and the British found themselves needing to house and feed thousands of prisoners

⁷² Sandy Woodward and Patrick Robinson, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander . . .*, 103.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 81.

with relatively sparse supplies.⁷⁴ Many of the Argentine soldiers were returned to Argentina onboard *Canberra*, one of the converted liners that had been used to land British troops in San Carlos Waters.⁷⁵ To that end, Great Britain, like their Argentine adversaries, met the criteria for the *Jus In Bello* conditions of ‘proportionality’ and ‘discrimination’.

What is military necessity? This is often a question asked following a one-sided attack and would likely have been asked both before and after the British submarine *Conqueror* torpedoed and sank the Argentine cruiser *General Belgrano*, killing 323 crew members. Following the sinking of the cruiser, some controversy arose as to whether or not she had been a legitimate threat to the British Task Force and thus whether or not she was a legitimate target. The controversy dragged on for many years after the war, including an attempt to prosecute a British civil servant who was accused of leaking intelligence regarding government knowledge of the vessel’s movements.⁷⁶ However, in 2003, the *General Belgrano*’s, Captain Hector Bonzo, admitted publicly that he had in fact been under orders to attack the British Task Force.⁷⁷ This confirmed what Admiral Woodward had suspected, that the cruiser was part of an Argentine ‘pincer movement’ designed to trap the British fleet, thus proving that she had been a legitimate target.⁷⁸ Military necessity is driven by the action of limiting attacks to legitimate targets. The RNs attack on *General Belgrano*, but not her escorting destroyers, who became involved in the efforts to rescue the doomed ship’s crew, is one of many examples throughout the conflict that demonstrate that Britain met the criteria of the *Jus In Bello* condition of ‘military necessity’.

⁷⁴ Martin Middlebrook, *The Fight for the 'Malvinas': The Argentine Forces in the Falklands War . . .*, 277.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 279.

⁷⁶ Shona McKay, “Thatcher’s War on Government Leaks,” *Maclean’s*, 22 October 1984.

⁷⁷ Peter Beaumont, “Belgrano crew 'trigger happy',” *The Guardian*, 25 May 2003, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2003/may/25/uk.world>.

⁷⁸ Sandy Woodward and Patrick Robinson, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander . . .*, 149.

Comparison

The conditions for *Jus Ad Bellum* and *Jus In Bello* were analyzed for both belligerents in order to determine whether each was justified in going to war and whether they conducted a ‘just war’. Table 3-3 below provides a side-by-side comparison between Great Britain and Argentina drawing from the conclusions reached through the analysis above.

Table 3.3 – Just War Theory Condition Comparison

	Great Britain	Argentina
<u>Jus Ad Bellum</u>		
Just Authority	Met	Not Met
Just Cause	Met	Not Met
Just Intention	Met	Not Met
Probability of Success	Not Met	Met
Last Resort	Met	Not Met
<u>Jus In Bello</u>		
Proportionality	Met	Met
Discrimination	Met	Met
Military Necessity	Met	Met

Source: Childress, “Just-War Theories: The Bases, Interrelations, Priorities, and Functions of their Criteria.”

Both nations conducted a ‘just war’, having both met all of the conditions for *Jus In Bello*: proportionality, discrimination, and military necessity. At no time did either belligerent violate the tenants of ILOAC in the conduct of their military operations (excluding of course the illegal occupation of the islands in the first place). In doing so, both sides maintained a healthy respect for each other and fought honourably, likely a key factor in the two nations eventually re-establishing diplomatic relations.

Looking at the justifications for going to war, the conditions of *Jus Ad Bellum* (just authority, just cause, just intention, probability of success, and last resort) both nations were unable to meet all conditions. As Argentina provoked the conflict in conducting a surprise attack on a British territory, regardless of their internal rationale, they almost immediately failed to meet any of the criteria for most of the conditions. Whereas not only was Great Britain the aggrieved, or wronged party, they also made several attempts to resolve the conflict through diplomatic means before resorting to military action. Where the tables were turned in *Jus Ad Bellum* was in the condition of probability of success. Argentina, knowing its plans better than anyone else, was well prepared militarily for the invasion of the island and on paper appeared to have the forces necessary to defend them. Conversely, Great Britain had to pull together ships that were bound for the scrapyard to form the fleet that sailed 8,000 miles just to be in place to attempt the impossible. Indeed, the admiral who commanded that fleet had done a study a few years earlier which had drawn the same conclusion, the Falklands could not be defended. Ultimately, despite the proper conduct by Argentine forces during the conflict, their campaign to re-take Las Malvinas can be seen as an 'unjust war', which was a likely component of their eventual defeat.

CHAPTER 3

FAILURE ANALYSIS

Argentina, like any other nation that engages in armed conflict, meant to succeed. But, they did not. How can their failure be measured? The Cohen & Gooch model for organizational failure is a tool that weighs several factors against one another to determine the root causes of the failure and to what degree they impacted the operation. In the case of the Falklands conflict, actions proceeding commencement of hostilities and leading up to the amphibious landings in San Carlos Water involving the Royal Navy's (RN) pitched battles against the combined Argentine naval and air forces provide the necessary data points needed to measure Argentina's failures. The reason for this focus of this analysis is best summed up by General Jeremy Moore, senior British land force commander during the Falklands campaign, who routinely reminded the Admiral Sandy Woodward that "only the land forces could win the war, but the Navy could *always* lose it".⁷⁹ Using his logic, it was up to the Argentine air and naval forces to beat the RN.

Cohen & Gooch Model

The Cohen and Gooch model is intended as a model by which current and future commanders can learn how to achieve success through the proper understanding of what went wrong in previous situations. In their book, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War*, Elliot A. Cohen and John Gooch, detail their model that dissects military failures in order to understand what happened and why.⁸⁰ The model uses a matrix to weigh several factors against each other to determine where system and organization failures and/or critical failures

⁷⁹ Sandy Woodward and Patrick Robinson, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander . . .*, 104.

⁸⁰ Elliot A. Cohen and John Gooch, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War* (New York: Free Press, 2006).

occurred. In order to determine the factors, several deductions need to be made. The analysis begins with the identification of the main mission or objective, which is also the main failure. Following the identification of the mission, the critical tasks, which are those tasks that were most important in order to succeed at the mission, are identified. These critical tasks are cross compared against different layers of command. From this, the failures can be classified, or grouped, as failures to learn, failures to anticipate, and/or failures to adapt, leading to a conclusion that an aggregate or catastrophic failure occurred during the battle in question.

In the case of the Argentine campaign in the Falklands the main failure was not properly defending the territory from the British attempt to re-take the it. More simply, the mission of the Argentine forces was to defend the islands that they had seized. This was seemingly a simple mission; however it was not the mission that Argentine leadership had been initially charged with executing, and therefore had not fully planned for.⁸¹ Having misjudged their initial actions, Argentine leadership set their forces down a path towards a military encounter for which they were completely unprepared. The operation the Argentines should have undertaken, the robust defence of their newly acquired territory, would have taken on several aspects, forming critical tasks.

The critical tasks needed to support a robust defence of the islands included proper planning and coordination, achieving and maintaining sea control, and achieving and maintaining air superiority. Planning and coordination speak to a military's ability to properly envision a campaign or mission through preparations, war gaming, and risk analysis, followed by a logically coordinated execution across all elements involved. For example, in Canada, the

⁸¹ Martine Middlebrook, *The Fight for the 'Malvinas': The Argentine Forces in the Falklands War . . .*, 3.

operational planning process is designed to articulate a military plan, based on the desired end-state and present several courses of action. A commander will then coordinate execution of the plan across the elements, ensuring proper coordination and sequencing. Sea control is defined in *Advantage at Sea*, the United States's (US) maritime strategy, as "the condition in which one has freedom of action to use the sea for one's own purposes in specified areas and for specified purposes of time and, where necessary, to deny or limit its use to the enemy".⁸² Sea control guarantees freedom of movement for military and merchant traffic throughout the area, a particularly important objective when defending an island territory. Finally, air superiority is a level of control in which "dominance in the air battle of one force over another which permits the conduct of operations by the former and its related land, sea and air forces at a given time and place without prohibitive interference by the opposing force".⁸³ Given the impact aircraft can have on land and naval combat, the side the achieved air superiority will enable great freedom of maneuver for their forces. Effectively planning and executing any military strategy requires effective leaders and planners at all layers of command.

Argentine forces had a layered span of control ranging from strategic/political to tactical. President and General Galtieri, who was also the head of the Argentine Army, and the other members of the military Junta government, Admiral Anaya head of the Argentine Navy and Brigadier General Dozo, head of the Argentine Air Force, formed the strategic/political level. Next, at the high command level were the chiefs of operations of the Argentine navy, army, and air force, Vice Admiral Lombardo, General Garcia, and Brigadier General Plessl respectively. Following these admirals and generals were their immediate subordinates at the operational

⁸² Department of the Navy, *Advantage at Sea* (Washington: Department of Defense, 2020) 27.

⁸³ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *NATO GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND DEFINITIONS OF MILITARY SIGNIFICANCE FOR USE IN NATO App-6* (Brussels: NATO Standardization Agency, 2011), <https://web.archive.org/web/20120303201526/http://nsa.nato.int/nsa/zPublic/ap/aap6/AAP-6.pdf>, 2-A-11.

command layer and the highest-ranking military members making decisions in the field or at sea. Vice Admiral Allara, Commander in Chief Fleet, Brigadier General Crespo, Commander South Air Forces and in charge of all Argentine air force and naval air units that would participate in the conflict, and Brigadier General Menendez, the Argentine military governor of the Falklands, responsible for the ground defences of the Islands.⁸⁴ The final level is tactical, made up of individual ground units, ships and aircraft/squadrons that participated in the conflict. These layers of command have both distinct and complimentary roles in ensuring a campaign is properly executed.

With both the critical tasks and the layers identified, the next stage of the Cohen and Gooch model analysis calls for the comparison of the factors against each other in a matrix. Table 4.1 below shows the comparison. With the layered factors identified, the next stage is to determine whether a failure existed and if so whether it was a critical failure. A failure is an action or inaction that was incorrect but may not have been detrimental to the overall outcome, whereas a critical failure is an action or inaction that was both an incorrect and detrimental to the overall outcome.

⁸⁴ Martine Middlebrook, *The Fight for the 'Malvinas': The Argentine Forces in the Falklands War* . . . , 4.

Table 4.1 – Argentine Failure Matrix

	Planning & Coordination	Sea Control	Air Superiority
1. Strategic/ Political	1.1 Miscalculated international response to invasion.	1.2 Not applicable.	1.3 Not applicable.
2. High Command	2.1 Did not create an adequate plan to defend the Falklands once they were captured.	2.2 Did not possess sufficient capabilities to create Sea Control conditions.	2.3 Did not possess correct capabilities to create Air Superiority conditions.
3. Operational Command	3.1 No properly coordinated attacks mounted.	3.2 Incorrect targets to achieve mission objectives.	3.3 Incorrect tactics to achieve mission objectives.
4. Tactical	4.1 Defensive forces on the Islands.	4.2 Attack profiles needed to achieve objectives.	4.3 Not applicable.

Source: Cohen and Gooch, “Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War.”

1.1 Miscalculated international response to invasion.

The Junta made two very important planning assumptions when they began down the path that ultimately led to the invasion of the Falklands. They had assumed Great Britain would not militarily contest their actions and that the US would support what Argentines viewed as a liberation of a territory from a colonial power. Unfortunately for Argentina, in both cases they were wrong.

Indeed, Argentina had had good reason to believe that Great Britain may not respond militarily in the South Atlantic, as they had demonstrated through their unwillingness to re-take Southern Thule. Following the Argentine occupation of the small, isolated islands, over 1,000 miles to the East of the main Falkland Islands in 1976, the British government objected

diplomatically; however, did nothing to remove the foreign troops.⁸⁵ The lack of decisive action, combined with the well-known deep cuts to the RN that had been announced, including divestment of *Endurance*, gave the Junta confidence to wager that the British would remain largely uninterested in the South Atlantic.⁸⁶

Beyond hopes to not engage Great Britain militarily, the Junta had believed that the US would stand behind a Pan-American ally. Argentina had carefully cultivated a close military relationship with the US, working together to stem the advance of Communism in Central America.⁸⁷ In addition, Argentina viewed the US commitment to the Organization of American States, which draws its roots from the Monroe Doctrine, as a signal of support to de-colonization of the Western Hemisphere.⁸⁸ The US had indeed invoked the Monroe Doctrine several times throughout the 1900s in order to fend off European interference in the affairs of Pan-American states, in particular those situations where colonial powers attempted to manipulate former colonies.⁸⁹ Great Britain had also used the Monroe Doctrine “as a license of convenience” when looking to divest responsibility for costly overseas dependencies, a situation the Argentines had hoped would have happened with the Falklands.⁹⁰ Had the US supported Argentina, or even more simply, not supported Great Britain, the outcome would likely have been very different. Argentina, however, misjudged the closeness of the Anglo-American relationship, forged through two world wars and a powerful partnership as NATO allies. US support to British

⁸⁵ Exequiel Mercau, *The Falklands War: An Imperial History* . . . , 53.

⁸⁶ Marin Middlebrook, *The Fight for the 'Malvinas': The Argentine Forces in the Falklands War* . . . , 5.

⁸⁷ Francisco Fernando de Santibañes, "The Effectiveness of Military Governments during War: The Case of Argentina in the Malvinas" . . . , 616.

⁸⁸ Nora Kinzer Stewart, *Mates & Muchachos: Unit Cohesion in the Falklands/Malvinas War* . . . , 66.

⁸⁹ Juan Pable Scarfi, "Denaturalizing the Monroe Doctrine: The Rise of Latin American Legal Anti-Imperialism in the Face of the Modern US and Hemispheric Redefinition of the Monroe Doctrine," *Leiden Journal of International Law* 33, no. 3 (2020): 541-555.

⁹⁰ Barry M. Gough, *The Falkland Islands/Malvinas: The Contest for Empire in the South Atlantic* . . . , 156.

military efforts was essential to success in the Falklands conflict. The Americans provided equipment, such as the highly effective side-winder missiles which were responsible for a large number of downed Argentine aircraft. In addition, the use of US facilities at Ascension Island as a forward logistics staging area was invaluable, as it was much closer to the area of operations than any British base.⁹¹ Argentina had hoped to avoid a military clash with Britain. They also had hoped for US support to their cause, but in turn saw the US support their adversary. Given these political/strategic miscalculations, the Junta can be seen to have failed at this task.

2.1 Did not create an adequate plan to defend the Falklands once they were captured.

It should be a natural thing that once a territory is conquered with force, that it is expected that force may be used to re-conquer that same territory. Thus, there is a strong need for a defensive plan in order to keep what had been gained. Nazi Germany understood this very well regarding Western Europe, which is why they constructed the *Atlantic Wall*, intricate and heavily fortified defensive positions all along the coasts of the territories they had conquered.⁹²

Defensive operations, like offensive ones, require planning, to ensure success. Argentina planned a successful offensive action during the Falklands campaign, but stopped short of the detailed planning needed to hold onto their newly acquired territory.

When President Galtieri made the decision to ‘liberate’ Las Malvinas, he gave instructions to Admiral Anaya to have his naval staff begin necessary planning and preparations as he envisioned the operation to be mostly naval in nature.⁹³ Anaya then tasked the newly appointed Argentine Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), Vice Admiral Lombardo with

⁹¹ Antony, Preston, *Sea Combat Off the Falklands* . . . , 117.

⁹² Christopher Sterling, *Atlantic Wall*, 2018, 32.

⁹³ Marin Middlebrook, *The Fight for the 'Malvinas': The Argentine Forces in the Falklands War* . . . , 1.

responsibility for planning the campaign. In the brief conversation, Anaya informed the CNO that he was to “take the islands but not necessarily keep them”.⁹⁴ In fact, at the time military planners believed that they were planning for a contingency, should diplomatic efforts fail, one for which they believed they had the better part of the year to plan.⁹⁵ However, Galtieri ordered a rapid advancement in the schedule as a result of the incident on South Georgia involving Argentine scrap metal dealers. He used the incident as pretext to move the invasion from September up to March, not wanting to lose any initiative achieved from the South Georgia incident, with little to no consideration of the planning ramifications.⁹⁶ The compressed timeline, combined with the confused initial orders, meant senior Argentine military leadership had to substitute planning for improvisation. In doing so they likely either skipped or wholly abbreviated planning for the possibility that Great Britain may use force to re-take their territory.

Planning processes for military operations, especially complex military campaigns such as the Argentine campaign to take the Falklands, require thorough analysis including making deductions regarding the potential courses of action (COA) that the adversary may take. In the Canadian context this is called analyzing the ‘adversary's most likely COA’ and ‘adversary’s most dangerous COA’.⁹⁷ In doing so planners attempt to get in the mindset of their adversary to determine what action they may take at various stages in a campaign. Had Argentine planners had the necessary time and/or began with the intent to defend the Falklands, they likely would have war gamed out different scenarios allowing for development of a more robust defensive plan. However, whether it was lack of time, or an honest belief that the British would not

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 6

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 13.

⁹⁷ Department of National Defence, *The Canadian Forces Operational Planning Process B-GJ-005-500/FP-000* (Ottawa, 2008), 4-10.

respond militarily, the high command level of the Argentine force failed to plan for the proper defence of Las Malvinas.

2.2 Did not possess sufficient capabilities to create sea control conditions.

As stated earlier, sea control conditions allow for own force freedom of movement while also denying an adversary force freedom of movement. The high command level of leadership is responsible for ensuring that subordinate forces have equipment needed to fulfill missions. While sea control has traditionally been achieved through numerical superiority in ships and submarines, the Second World War demonstrated the importance of aircraft, whether carrier or shore based, in setting the conditions that allow for freedom of movement in a particular area. Argentina began the conflict with many modern combat aircraft that could engage ships and therefore play a potential role in creating sea control conditions around the Falklands.

The modernization of Argentina's naval air arm began in 1970s with addition of the Dassault Super Étendards.⁹⁸ This highly capable, European manufactured, aircraft was designed to carry the Exocet anti-ship missile, the weapon that caused anxiety throughout the British Task Force.⁹⁹ The Argentine Navy had been planning to stockpile the formidable weapons in order to have a sufficient quantity for a late-1982 or beyond invasion, but with the rapidly advanced timeline for the operation, only five missiles were available at the time the action began.¹⁰⁰ It has been suggested that the Argentine government attempted to persuade French technicians, who were in Argentina assisting with the assembly and preparation of the missiles, to remain in Argentina once hostilities had commenced to allow for a greater number of weapons to be made available.

⁹⁸ Santiago Rivas, *Wings of the Malvinas: The Argentine Air War Over the Falkland . . .*, 33.

⁹⁹ David Hart Dyke, *Four Weeks in May: The Loss of HMS Coventry: A Captain's Story* (London: Atlantic Books, 2007), 88.

¹⁰⁰ British Aviation Research Group, *Falklands - the Air War* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 2006), 34.

The French government, however, sided with their European ally, and ensured that no more direct aid was given to Argentine forces following the Great Britain's declarations to re-take the islands.¹⁰¹

This left Argentina with precious few weapons with which they could truly establish sea control, and thanks to the French, the British knew it. Had the stockpile of Exocets been greater, or other equally capable weapons been available, the RN may have been unwilling to sail its Task Force within range of those threats given their lack of airborne early warning.¹⁰² As it stood, however, the British took a calculated risk that their system of layered defence would be able to defeat at least some of the limited Exocet missiles, rapidly exhausting the Argentine stocks and thus eliminating the threat. Given the ultimate success that Argentina experienced with the Exocets, sinking both *Sheffield* and *Atlantic Conveyor*, as well as damaging the destroyer *Glamorgan*, it can only be imagined how different the situation may have been had they had access to even more.¹⁰³ However, without sufficient quantities of missiles, or other highly capable area denial weapons like ocean-going submarines, Argentina's High Command failed to create the necessary condition to allow for proper sea control.

2.3 Did not possess correct capabilities to create Air Superiority conditions.

Obtaining and maintaining air superiority is largely dependent on having sufficient quantities of the correct aircraft available. In Argentina's case, the military high command had acquired the Mirage III, an advanced European fighter designed to clear the skies of an enemy's aircraft allowing for unimpeded attacks on ground and naval targets. Argentina began the

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Keith Speed, *Sea Change: The Battle for the Falklands and the Future of Britain's Navy* . . . , 125.

¹⁰³ Sandy Woodward and Patrick Robinson, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander* . . . , 223.

conflict with 17 of these recently acquired aircraft. This should have been more than sufficient, especially when combined with the dozens of slightly older, but still highly capable, Mirage Daguers, to create conditions for air superiority against the numerically inferior, and much slower, Sea Harriers deployed to the South Atlantic by the British.¹⁰⁴

Unfortunately for Argentine forces, the high command had not considered two factors that led to the Mirage IIIs not playing a significant role during the campaign, both of which were linked to the aircrafts limited range. Firstly, the aircraft were forced to operate from the Argentine mainland for the duration of the conflict. It had been hoped that they would be able to operate from the Port Stanley airfield, greatly increasing their ability to control the skies over the battle zone. However, the runway itself was too short to allow for safe takeoff and landing of the high-performance aircraft.¹⁰⁵ It would likely have been a moot point had the high-performance fighters been able to have been based on the island as long-range RAF Vulcan raids heavily targeted the Port Stanley airfield, cratering the runway several times.¹⁰⁶ The Mirages also weren't equipped for in-flight refueling. Even with added under wing fuel tanks, time in the air over the Falklands and supporting the strike aircraft was limited to approximately five minutes, less if they were engaged by the Harriers.¹⁰⁷ Thus, despite having the correct aircraft for the role, the Argentina high command failed to create the conditions necessary to allow for proper air superiority, meaning that strike aircraft remained vulnerable to British attacks throughout the conflict.

¹⁰⁴ Santiago Rivas, *Wings of the Malvinas: The Argentine Air War Over the Falklands*, . . ., 30.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 54.

¹⁰⁶ Marin Middlebrook, *The Fight for the 'Malvinas': The Argentine Forces in the Falklands War* . . ., 77.

¹⁰⁷ British Aviation Research Group, *Falklands - the Air War* . . ., 144.

3.1 No properly coordinated attacks mounted.

Once the high command level of leadership had laid out their plans, it fell to the operational level to translate those conceptual plans into actual military operations. Much can be said about how a military coordinates under the pressures of war by examining historical conflicts they participated in. Unlike Great Britain, whose principal role in both World Wars cemented an already well-established military machine, Argentina had not been at war for over one hundred years.¹⁰⁸ None of the decision makers, in particular those at the operational level charged with reacting to the moves of the adversary, had any relevant combat experience whatsoever. Whereas on the British side, the First Sea Lord, and other senior officers, had seen active service in the Second World War.¹⁰⁹

With the area of operations centered around the island archipelago, coordination between all three services should have been key for both offensive and defensive operations. Given the dramatic numerical superiority the invading Argentine forces had over the token defence force of Royal Marines, the offensive operations, should have happened smoothly. Poor planning, however, was evident even in these early phases, with confused orders between different units, ultimately leading to the death of an Argentine officer.¹¹⁰ The defensive operations that followed were even worse. This can be seen in the Argentine navy's nearly complete unwillingness to participate in the defence of the territory following the loss of *General Belgrano*.¹¹¹ Despite the loss of the cruiser, the Argentine navy was still able to threaten the British Task Force with the

¹⁰⁸ Nora Kinzer Stewart, *Mates & Muchachos: Unit Cohesion in the Falklands/Malvinas War* . . . , 56.

¹⁰⁹ Sandy Woodward and Patrick Robinson, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander* . . . , 59.

¹¹⁰ Marin Middlebrook, *The Fight for the 'Malvinas': The Argentine Forces in the Falklands War* . . . , 31.

¹¹¹ Patrick S. Baker, "Sink the Belgrano," *Military History (Herndon, Va.)* 35, no. 6 (2019): 40, <https://search-proquest-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/docview/2159622686?pq-origsite=summon>.

aircraft from *Veinticinco de Mayo* as well as a handful of ships that carried Exocets. However, no attempt was made to concentrate both air and naval assets in a coordinated attack against the British, a scenario that almost certainly would have overrun the razor thin defensive screen of the Task Force exposing the vulnerable carriers. A key principle of war, concentration of force, states that “is it essential to concentrate overwhelming force . . . to achieve decisive results”.¹¹² It cannot be denied that certain elements of the Argentine force put up a dogged defence, the air forces in particular, but had the efforts of the services been more coordinated and concentrated, both prior to and even following the British amphibious landings, the outcome may have been quite different. Despite the efforts of a few heroic pilots, the failure of the operational level leaders to properly coordinate their efforts can be seen as a failure on the part of the Argentine forces.

3.2 Incorrect targets to achieve mission objectives.

When planning out a mission, determining which targets are a priority is an essential element to success. Operational planners set those priorities based on overall mission objectives and then pass them onto the tactical level operators, pilots for example, who conduct the actual attacks. An example of this was Japan’s surprise aerial attack on Pearl Harbor. While the Japanese pilots scored what appeared to have been several impressive hits on large capital ship, they ended up concentrating much of their efforts on sinking a handful of obsolete battleships. It is well known that Japan had hoped to damage or sink several American aircraft carriers during the raid. However, had the secondary targets been the oil storage facilities in Hawaii vice the elderly battleships, they would have all but halted US navy operations for months, including US

¹¹² Department of National Defence, *Land Operations* B-GL-300-001/FP-001 (Ottawa), 3-7 [http://armyapp.forces.gc.ca/SOH/SOH_content/B-GL-300-001-FP-001%20\(2008\).pdf](http://armyapp.forces.gc.ca/SOH/SOH_content/B-GL-300-001-FP-001%20(2008).pdf) 3-7.

carrier operations. Like the Japanese, during the Falklands conflict, the Argentine forces demonstrated several times that they were more focused on the targets of opportunity, instead of important strategic targets.

The British made their objectives very clear, when Prime Minister Thatcher announced to Parliament that they were “determined to see the islands free from occupation”.¹¹³ The only way in which they would be able to accomplish that objective would be to land troops on the Falklands and expel the Argentines. Aerial assaults and blockade are no guarantee of victory. The British center of gravity, the most important aspect of their entire operation, was the amphibious landing that would deliver the necessary troops onto the islands. These troops were making their way into the battle zone in a mixture of purpose designed assault landing ships, such as *Fearless*, as well as merchant passenger vessels pressed into military service, such as the cruise liner *Canberra*.¹¹⁴ During the critical initial British landings in San Carlos Water, many of these ships anchored close into shore, including *Canberra*, to minimize the distance the soldiers and marines would need to traverse in their landing craft to get ashore. In doing so they exposed themselves to potential Argentine air attacks. Those attacks did in fact materialize, so much so that the waters around the landing zone became known as ‘Bomb Alley’. However, remarkably, none of the landing or support ships were seriously damaged during the operation, allowing over 5,000 troops to make it safely ashore.¹¹⁵ Throughout the landing, the Argentine pilots made several aggressive attacks in the landing zone; however, they focused on attacking RN warships

¹¹³ Joseph W. Grigg, “War fleet set to sail for Falklands,” *UPI*, 4 April 1982,

<https://www.upi.com/Archives/1982/04/04/War-fleet-set-to-sail-for-Falklands/3174418127192/>.

¹¹⁴ Sandy Woodward and Patrick Robinson, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander . . .*, 241.

¹¹⁵ Keith Speed, *Sea Change: The Battle for the Falklands and the Future of Britain's Navy . . .*, 129.

as opposed to the vulnerable and far more valuable ships that were landing troops. So successful were their attacks that they managed to sink two RN frigates, *Ardent* and *Antelope*. However, the landings themselves were left largely unmolested and therefore proceeded with relative ease, despite the looming threat.¹¹⁶ In this instance, Argentine forces failed to establish ‘local control’ of the battlespace as per the strategies of famed naval theorist Sir Julien Corbett.¹¹⁷ By this mistake in setting the incorrect target priorities for their pilots, Argentine operational level military leaders allowed the British to establish a beachhead on the Falklands. This critical failure was the beginning of the end of Argentine rule of Las Malvinas.

3.3 Incorrect tactics to achieve mission objectives.

As with amphibious assault forces, the limited British Harrier aircraft with the Task Force in the South Atlantic had an equally vital role in defending the force from the air. The Harriers quickly proved their worth against the Argentine forces that probed and attempted to attack the Task Force. Accounting for over 25% of Argentine aircraft losses, these slow, but highly maneuverable aircraft were absolutely invaluable to the British, despite limited numbers.¹¹⁸ Given their importance, they should have been a priority target for Argentine operational level planners. A loss of just a few Harriers would open large gaps in the British defensive screen, tipping the balance of air superiority in favour of Argentina.

A comparison of air-to-air losses between the British and Argentine forces makes it clear that the Harrier was the superior aircraft and thus gave the British the edge. Harriers accounted for 27 kills while Argentina failed to score even one kill in air-to-air combat.¹¹⁹ Argentine

¹¹⁶ Marin Middlebrook, *The Fight for the 'Malvinas': The Argentine Forces in the Falklands War . . .*, 157.

¹¹⁷ Julien Stafford Corbett, *Principles of Maritime Strategy* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004), 337.

¹¹⁸ British Aviation Research Group, *Falklands - the Air War . . .*, 189-235.

¹¹⁹ Keith Speed, *Sea Change: The Battle for the Falklands and the Future of Britain's Navy . . .*, 126.

soldiers, however, successfully shoot down two Harriers using ground based anti-aircraft weapons.¹²⁰ This proved that the Harriers did have weaknesses, a weakness that should have been exploited in an attempt to level the battlefield. Had operational leaders changed their strategy of trying to use stealth or speed to approach the Task Force and instead lured the Harriers to within range of the anti-aircraft batteries on the islands, more may have been taken out of the fight, giving the Argentines an opportunity to reduce British air cover. The failure to do so meant that Argentina was not able to effectively neutralize British relative air superiority throughout the campaign, which prevented Argentine strike aircraft from being able to deal a decisive blow to the enemy.

4.1 Defensive forces on the Islands.

Reinforcing a defensive position with a numerically superior force should have been enough to hold the Falklands. Even if the British had been allowed to land, given their numbers, the defender should have been able to drive them back into the sea. However, ineffective planning on how to distribute and employ available Argentine forces meant that once the British had landed and secured a beachhead, it had been a 'fait accompli'.

While amphibious landings are fraught with risk and danger, the American experience in the Second World War, during the Pacific campaign against Japan, demonstrated that once a toehold can be established, held, and reinforced, that the outcome was inevitable, in particular when facing a poorly supplied enemy. Poor tactical level coordination, coupled with ineffective logistical support, meant that the Argentine troops defending the Falklands were unable to properly carry out their duties.

¹²⁰ Antony Preston, *Sea Combat Off the Falklands* . . . , 55, 94.

The generals charged with defence of the Las Malvinas had an overwhelming large force at their disposal. Prior to the arrival of the British Task Force, over 13,000 soldiers and marines were deployed to Las Malvinas.¹²¹ These forces had had over a month to reconnoiter the ground, prepare defensive positions, and plan out how to defeat an attempt by the British to land. The Argentine leadership believed that the British would land in or near Port Stanley, thus focused much of their defensive efforts around the island's capital. The remainder of the territory was defended by poorly trained conscripts, distributed into small patrols throughout the islands. Many of the soldiers defending these positions had had only one month's training and were deployed to the island in the summer uniforms, completely unprepared to face the oncoming South Atlantic winter.¹²² The logistical system had failed to such an extreme level that despite the stockpiling of large amounts of food, poor distribution led many Argentine soldiers claim they suffered from malnutrition.¹²³ As the British objectives were clearly known to the defending forces, their critical failure of the tactical level leadership in not properly preparing, coordinating and supporting those forces, led to the inevitability of a successful British landing.

4.2 Attack profiles needed to achieve objectives.

The analysis done above showed that the Argentine sea control strategy had been to attack RN warships. Although an incorrect strategy for achieving sea control in hopes of staving off a British landing, Argentine pilots began this contest with an advantage. They had an excellent understanding of one of the RNs most important ships, the Type 42 destroyer. The Argentine navy operated two Type 42 destroyers, one of which was built in Great Britain and the other domestically in Argentina.¹²⁴ These vessels undertook the same role in safeguarding the

¹²¹ Marin Middlebrook, *The Fight for the 'Malvinas': The Argentine Forces in the Falklands War . . .*, 63.

¹²² Nora Kinzer. Stewart, *Mates & Muchachos: Unit Cohesion in the Falklands/Malvinas War . . .*, 140.

¹²³ Marin Middlebrook, *The Fight for the 'Malvinas': The Argentine Forces in the Falklands War . . .*, 169.

¹²⁴ Santiago Rivas, *Wings of the Malvinas: The Argentine Air War Over the Falklands . . .*, 348.

Argentine fleet as they did for the British Task Force. They acted as long-range anti-aircraft pickets, detecting and engaging air threats as far from the main body as possible.¹²⁵ As such, the Argentines understood their weaknesses, in particular their inability to properly track and engage very low-level targets with their main armament, the Sea Dart long range anti-air missile system.¹²⁶

As the RN Task Force lacked airborne early warning aircraft, accompanying Type 42 destroyers were even more heavily relied upon. Employed up-threat toward the direction the enemy was expected, they providing the first level of a layered defence for the more valuable aircraft carriers and eventually amphibious landing ships.¹²⁷ The ship's long-range radar made them ideally suited to both provide early warning, as well as direct the highly effective Harriers towards any incoming air raids. Argentine pilots, armed with the knowledge of the ship's weaknesses, were able to approach undetected and put two of the original three Type 42s of the Task Force out of action. *Glasgow* was damaged, being forced to limp home and *Coventry* was sunk. *Sheffield*, the third British Type 42, was the first major RN casualty of the campaign, having been hit by an Exocet missile shortly after the Task Force arrived in the South Atlantic.¹²⁸ It is unknown if the Argentine's specifically targeted the Type 42s because of their knowledge of the ship's weakness, or because they recognized how crucial these ships were to the overall defence of the Task Force. Regardless, the attacks against these highly capable ships demonstrated that Argentina's tactical level operators, in this case pilots, knew how to deliver

¹²⁵ Antony Preston, *Sea Combat Off the Falklands* . . . , 62.

¹²⁶ Keith Speed, *Sea Change: The Battle for the Falklands and the Future of Britain's Navy* . . . , 138.

¹²⁷ Antony Preston, *Sea Combat Off the Falklands* . . . , 62.

¹²⁸ Sandy Woodward and Patrick Robinson, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander* . . . , 289.

effective blows towards their enemy, which had the result of reducing, for a time, the defensive capabilities of the Task Force.

Analysis

Argentina's misfortunes during the Falklands campaign arose from failures and critical failures at all layers. From the Junta at the strategic/political level right down to the commanders in the field, Argentina was inadequately prepared to counter a British military expedition aimed at evicting them from the Falklands. Table 4.2 below identified the failures (F) and critical failures (CF) and demonstrates their connection both vertically and horizontally across the factors.

Table 4.2 – Path to Argentine Failure

	Planning & Coordination	Sea Control	Air Superiority
1. Strategic/ Political	1.1 Miscalculated international response to invasion. (F)	1.2 Not applicable.	1.3 Not applicable.
2. High Command	2.1 Did not create an adequate plan to defend the Falklands once they were captured. (F)	2.2 Did not possess sufficient capabilities to create Sea Control conditions. (F)	2.3 Did not possess correct capabilities to create Air Superiority conditions. (F)
3. Operational Command	3.1 No properly coordinated attacks mounted. (F)	3.2 Incorrect targets to achieve mission objectives. (CF)	3.3 Incorrect tactics to achieve mission objectives. (F)
4. Tactical	4.1 Defensive forces on the Islands. (CF)	4.2 Attack profiles needed to achieve objectives.	4.3 Not applicable.

The diagram illustrates the path to Argentine failure through a series of failures and critical failures across four levels (Strategic/Political, High Command, Operational Command, Tactical) and three factors (Planning & Coordination, Sea Control, Air Superiority). Solid arrows show vertical connections from higher levels to lower levels within each factor. A dashed arrow shows a horizontal connection from 1.1 to 2.2. Another dashed arrow shows a horizontal connection from 2.2 to 2.3. A solid arrow points from 2.3 down to 3.3.

Source: Cohen and Gooch, "Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War."

The next step in the Cohen & Gooch model is an analysis based on the failures detailed in Table 4.2 aimed at determining whether and where Argentine forces failed to learn, failed to anticipate, and/or failed to adapt. Failure to learn speaks to an organization's ability to learn from past mistakes. As Argentina had little previous military experience on this scale, they would have only been able to learn from the mistakes of others. Learning from the mistakes of others is common to many militaries, when conducting complex operations. In the case of defending the Falklands from a British attempt to re-take them, Argentina could have learned the value of preparing a proper defensive plan from such conflicts as the Suez crisis. Although the British were able to successfully occupy Port Said, it was only possible after having cleared extensive minefields which allowed the amphibious ships to approach the shore.¹²⁹ Had Argentina prepared a proper defensive plan, they would have recognized the potential for San Carlos Waters to be used as a landing zone and mined it accordingly. As the initial British Task Force did not include any minesweepers, effective mining would have held up the landings for weeks or more. Such was Admiral Woodward's concern about mines, that he ordered a frigate, *Alacrity*, to traverse Falklands Sound and San Carlos Waters on the eve of the invasion to check for mines. Had there been mines it would have been a suicide mission for the ship.¹³⁰ However, as the Argentines were wholeheartedly unprepared to properly defend the islands, *Alacrity* survived her harrowing mission and the landings proceeded as planned.

¹²⁹ Michael H. Coles, "SUEZ, 1956: A Successful Naval Operation Compromised by Inept Political Leadership" . . ., 100-118.

¹³⁰ Sandy Woodward and Patrick Robinson, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander* . . ., 203.

The next element, failure to anticipate, speaks to an organization's ability to predict what their adversary is likely to do. In this case, proper war gaming different enemy courses of actions would have led Argentine forces to several possible deductions about potential British military reactions. One such reaction was the rapid deployment of RN nuclear submarines to the South Atlantic ahead of the Task Group. The Argentine navy was well aware of the threat posed by these highly capable silent killers. Great Britain had used submarines in the South Atlantic before in a form of 'Gun Boat Diplomacy' to resolve a much smaller dispute in the Falklands in 1977.¹³¹ The 1982 conflict over the Falklands was much different and Great Britain did not hesitate to immediately deploy two nuclear submarines as soon as Argentina's intentions became clear.

Once the British Task Force arrived in the South Atlantic, most Argentine naval units remained well clear of the Exclusion Zone, thinking that they would be safe from British attack. Fearing the Argentines were massing for an attack, the British submarine *Conqueror* found the Argentine navy's cruiser *General Belgrano* along with escorting destroyers lurking just to the south of the Exclusion Zone.¹³² This powerful Exocet-armed ship posed a serious threat to the Task Force, especially considering that Argentina's other major naval combatant, the aircraft carrier *Veinticinco de Mayo*, had yet to be detected. Given the threat, Admiral Woodward requested and was granted specific permission to fire on the cruiser, even though it was outside the Exclusion Zone.¹³³ The *General Belgrano* proved an easy target for the *Conqueror*, who fired two torpedoes into the old cruiser, immediately putting her out of action. As she had not been within the Exclusion Zone, and therefore not anticipating an attack, neither her, nor her escorting

¹³¹ Roger Lorton, *Falkland Islands: South Georgia, & the South Sandwich Islands - The History* (2013) . . . , 289.

¹³² Sandy Woodward and Patrick Robinson, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander* . . . , 149.

¹³³ *Ibid*, 154.

vessels had been taking even the most basic anti-submarine precautions, such as zig zagging.¹³⁴ This failure to anticipate that the British may target forces outside the Exclusion Zone cost Argentina a cruiser and the lives of over 300 sailors. Following loss of *General Belgrano*, the Argentine navy was effectively out of the fight, offering no significant resistance to the British for the remainder of the conflict.

The final element of this stage of the analysis is failure to adapt. This type of failure speaks to organization's abilities to adapt plans to changing circumstances as presented to them. Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke, Prussian General and army theorist, is quoted as saying "no plan survives first contact with enemy".¹³⁵ His words ring true for nearly every conflict in which neither side immediately surrenders. That is because it must be assumed that both belligerents in a conflict desire victory. If that is the case, the need to adapt to circumstances as they arise will be essential to obtain victory. Those circumstances need not only be those presented by the enemy, but they may also come from analysis of one's own performance during an operation. For Argentina during the Falklands conflict, failure to adapt their weapons led to loss of nearly one third of their combat aircraft without achieving results significant enough to sway the results of the conflict.

While the Argentine pilots had realized a small amount of success in low-level approaches on RN ships, enabling them to be in a position to release their payloads, many of the bombs, despite being delivered on target, did not go off. In fact, several RN ships experienced bomb hits, but no explosion, and were fit to return to active combat duty after the bomb had been

¹³⁴ Antony Preston, *Sea Combat Off the Falklands . . .*, 58.

¹³⁵ Helmuth Moltke, Graf von and Daniel J. Hughes, *Moltke on the Art of War: Selected Writings*, (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1993), 45.

defused.¹³⁶ Due to the extremely low levels at which the bombs were being released, the bombs fuses did not have sufficient time to arm and therefore were not primed to explode when they impacted, or in some case bounced right through their targets.¹³⁷ Tragically for *Coventry*, a BBC report on the ineffectiveness of Argentine bombs likely caused them to modify their fuses, thus increasing their effectiveness.¹³⁸ But it was too little too late. Between ineffective ordnance and having not targeted the correct ships, the Argentine failure to adapt led to sufficient escort vessels remaining available to shepherd the amphibious ships into position to deliver their troops ashore.

These failures to learn, anticipate, and adapt can be linked back to the layered analysis failures and critical failures. Table 4.3 below gives a graphic representation of their overlap.

¹³⁶ Marin Middlebrook, *The Fight for the 'Malvinas': The Argentine Forces in the Falklands War* . . . , 168.

¹³⁷ Keith Speed, *Sea Change: The Battle for the Falklands and the Future of Britain's Navy* . . . , 139.

¹³⁸ David Hart Dyke, *Four Weeks in May: The Loss of HMS Coventry: A Captain's Story* . . . , 139.

Table 4.3 – Argentine Failure Analysis

	Planning & Coordination	Sea Control	Air Superiority
1. Strategic/ Political	1.1 Miscalculated international response to invasion. (F)	1.2 Not applicable.	1.3 Not applicable.
2. High Command	2.1 Did not create an adequate plan to defend the Falklands once they were captured. (F)	2.2 Did not possess sufficient capabilities to create Sea Control conditions. (F)	2.3 Did not possess correct capabilities to create Air Superiority conditions. (F)
3. Operational Command	3.1 No properly coordinated attacks mounted. (F)	3.2 Incorrect targets to achieve mission objectives. (CF)	3.3 Incorrect tactics to achieve mission objectives. (F)
4. Tactical	4.1 Defensive forces on the Islands. (CF)	4.2 Attack profiles needed to achieve objectives.	4.3 Not applicable.

Red = Failure to Learn
Yellow = Failure to Anticipate
Orange – Failure to Adapt

Source: Cohen and Gooch, “Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War.”

The final element of the Cohen and Gooch model for failure analysis combines the results of all previous analyses to determine the overall level of failure regarding the operation. A combination of two types of failures is an aggregate failure, one in which case there would have been a marginal change of recovery. Whereas a combination of three types of failures is a catastrophic failure in which case there would have been no chance of recovery. Figure 4.1 below shows the correlation between the failure elements.

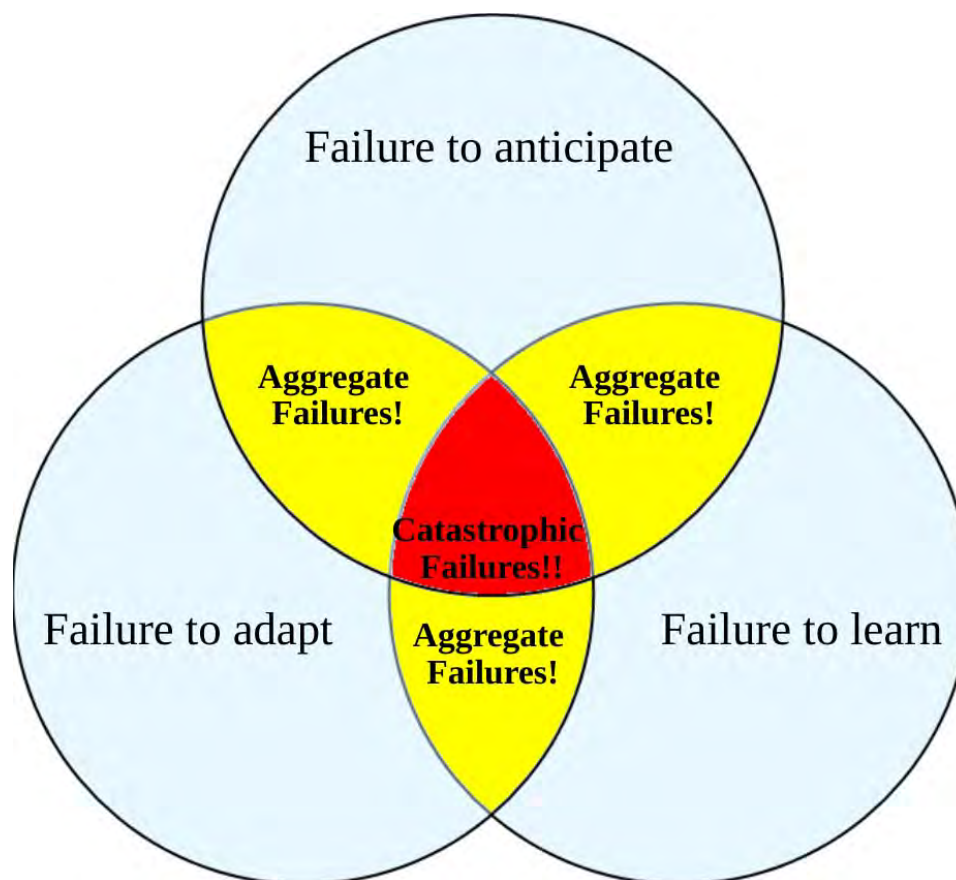


Figure 4.1 – Failure Overlap

Source: Cohen and Gooch, “Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War.”

From the very beginning of the operation to take Las Malvinas, Argentine forces had been set up for failure by the Junta government as well as their senior military leadership who had not properly prepared themselves nor their subordinates for an eventuality where they may have to fight. Without proper inter-service coordination and seemingly no strategy to properly establish sea control and/or air superiority, Argentine forces were unable to stop the British from achieving their objectives. The Cohen and Gooch model analysis accounts for that failure, showing that Argentina failed to learn, anticipate, and adapt prior to and throughout their ill-fated campaign in the South Atlantic. This catastrophic level of failure led to, British victory and Argentine defeat.

CHAPTER 4 EXCELLENCE AND LUCK

For my part, I consider that it will be found much better by all parties to leave the past to history, especially as I propose to write that history myself
- Winston Churchill, speech before the House of Commons

When a conflict ends, traditionally one side will emerge victorious. Winston Churchill's famous words tell us that future generations will understand the conflict through the tone set by the victors, and that the story of the battle told by the losing side will simply fade away. In the case of the Falklands conflict, the British stance was that they engaged in a justified conflict of self-defence and fought to liberate their own citizens from foreign invaders. British forces relied on their superior training, equipment, and leadership, backed up by centuries of military tradition, to prevail over a numerically superior force, all the while fighting at the end of a very long supply chain. Argentina had many opportunities to emerge victorious. However, a series of failures led to an internationally embarrassing defeat. Was British success in the Falklands campaign a result of superior will and military force or simply chance?

Great Britain's Excellence

Her Majesty's British armed forces have a long and proud history forged over generations of operations around the world. While only a shadow of their former empire by the early 1980s, the honour and tradition that motivated young men to fight in conflicts far from home still resonated through the ranks of the British armed services.¹³⁹ Unit battle honours, for ships, air squadrons and army units alike enabled modern soldiers to draw strength from those that had

¹³⁹ Nora Kinzer Stewart, *Mates & Muchachos: Unit Cohesion in the Falklands/Malvinas War . . .*, 57.

fought before them.¹⁴⁰ Given the relative proximate timeline to when the Second World War had ended, nearly every British citizen, serving or not, had a living connection to that war, thus reinforcing the underlying value of service before self. While there had been some initial questions and concerns raised regarding the necessity to engaged in armed conflict on the far side of the world, once decided, Great Britain rallied to the cause. This was plainly visible for all to see, including Argentina, when crowds swelled the docks in Portsmouth to bid farewell to the Task Force, ensuring that the soldiers, sailors and aviators knew the nation stood behind them.¹⁴¹ Great Britain was a nation that drew on its history to provide motivation to its population that when diplomacy fails, their military could be relied upon to provide the answers.

Beyond tradition, the modern British military was a completely volunteer force. Following the Second World War, Great Britain slowly phased out compulsory military service, with conscription finally coming to an end in the 1960s.¹⁴² History has shown that citizens who volunteer to serve their nation often prove to be much more motivated and thus more capable fighters when placed in harm's way compared to conscript forces.¹⁴³ Nowhere was this more evident than during the decade long Vietnam war. The United States (US) military actively used conscription to fill its ranks throughout that conflict, which marked a low water mark for US military morale and efficiency, partly owing to the thousands of soldiers who were forced to

¹⁴⁰ R. W. Knollys, "BATTLE Honours of the British Army and their Anomalies," *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution* 66, (Feb 01, 1921): 580, <https://search-proquest-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/scholarly-journals/battle-honours-british-army-their-anomalies/docview/1305561783/se-2?accountid=9867>.

¹⁴¹ "British Armada Set Sail for War in the Falklands - CBS Evening News - April 5, 1982," YouTube video, 6:36, posted by "Shatner Method," 8 May 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2JUw0JH00iU>.

¹⁴² Imperial War Museum, "What was National Service?" accessed 17 March 2021, <https://web.archive.org/web/20150112133452/http://archive.iwm.org.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.1272>.

¹⁴³ Nora Kinzer Stewart, *Mates & Muchachos: Unit Cohesion in the Falklands/Malvinas War* . . . , 102.

fight in a conflict they did not believe in.¹⁴⁴ In addition to wavering commitment and morale issues, conscript soldiers are rarely trained to the same level as career service members. During the Falklands conflict, Argentine conscripts, who in some cases had had barely a month's training, found themselves battling against career British soldiers who had the benefit of years of training and experience heading into action. While most Argentine conscripts were well-motivated by their pride in having been part of the operation to 'liberate Las Malvinas', their lack of expertise meant that they were often overwhelmed by numerically inferior British forces as happened during the Battle of Goose Green.¹⁴⁵ The imbalance when conscripts are forced to fight career soldiers greatly assisted in leveling the odds for the British.

Leadership is a fundamental tenet of all military operations. Such is its importance that it forms a cornerstone of most modern militaries, in particular volunteer militaries. As volunteers choose to serve, they thus demand competent leadership. If volunteer service members felt they were poorly or incompetently led, possibly resulting in their own grievous injury or death, they would simply choose to no longer be in the armed forces and likely spread their discontent to potential recruits. Given Great Britain's role diplomatically and militarily throughout the world, large numbers of combat veterans also permeated throughout Britain's armed forces. These experienced leaders understood what was needed under the stress of actual combat, a characteristic nearly completely absent from Argentina's military leadership.¹⁴⁶ Additionally, the regimental system, which often saw officers and soldiers working, training and in some cases living together for years, cultivated close bonds between leader and subordinate and vice

¹⁴⁴ William A. Gouveia, "An Analysis of Moral Dissent: An Army Officer's Public Protest of the Vietnam War," *Journal of Military Ethics* 3, no. 1 (2004): 53-60.

¹⁴⁵ Martin Middlebrook, *The Fight for the 'Malvinas': The Argentine Forces in the Falklands War . . .*, 197.

¹⁴⁶ Nora Kinzer Stewart, *Mates & Muchachos: Unit Cohesion in the Falklands/Malvinas War . . .*, 56.

versa.¹⁴⁷ The men of Great Britain's armed forces knew their leaders and therefore knew that they would not gamble the lives of their subordinates without just cause. It should be noted that many instances of exceptional leadership existed on the Argentine side, in particular among the junior tactical level officers, who often lacked training and professionalism, but made up for it with pride and courage.¹⁴⁸ Thus, heading into the conflict, British service members had the added confidence of knowing they were better led, at all levels, than their adversary.

Britain had another critical advantage heading into the Falklands conflict. Its forces were exceptionally well-equipped. Despite the looming defence cuts from the 1981 Defence Review, those British forces that were ready to be deployed to the South Atlantic were armed with some of the most modern equipment available anywhere in the world. Nearly every RN ship sent into combat was bristling with modern, powerful guns and missiles. These ships were supported by the highly effective carrier-based Harrier force, which was armed with the deadly, American provided, sidewinder missiles, responsible for the downing of countless Argentine aircraft.¹⁴⁹ The RN also deployed their 'silent killers', nuclear attack submarines. Able to submerge and remain at high speeds for extended periods of time, these attack submarines presented such a formidable threat to Argentine naval forces that once they had demonstrated their effectiveness in the sinking of *General Belgrano*, the Argentine fleet all but withdrew from the conflict.¹⁵⁰ British sailors did not enjoy a monopoly on cutting edge equipment. Ground forces were supported by Rapier ground to air missiles in their fight against Argentine pilots. Rapiers provided an added layer of protection to the highly vulnerable amphibious landings in San Carlos

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 35.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 61.

¹⁴⁹ Santiago Rivas, *Wings of the Malvinas: The Argentine Air War Over the Falklands* . . . , 121.

¹⁵⁰ Martin Middlebrook, *The Fight for the 'Malvinas': The Argentine Forces in the Falklands War* . . . , 197.

Waters.¹⁵¹ Argentine forces, on the other hand, were not nearly as well equipped. While Argentina possessed a few modern aircraft, such as the Super Étendards, many Argentine aircraft were showing their age. The Skyhawks, for example, so effective in delivering bombs into RN ships, lacked onboard radar, and thus many of the raids turned back without ever having found their targets.¹⁵² Argentina's navy was in much the same situation. While they had a pair of modern Type 42 destroyers, many ships of Argentina's fleet dated back to the Second World War. The two largest and most powerful Argentine ships, *General Belgrano* and *Veinticinco de Mayo* had seen more combat service with their original owners, the US Navy and RN respectively, than with the South American nation.¹⁵³ When examined objectively, based on quality and outcome, the British advantage in equipment more than compensated for Argentina's numerical superiority.

British will and military force played a decisive role in determining the outcome of the Falklands conflict. Hundreds of years of military history and traditions, strong and capable leadership, and a well-equipped volunteer force proved to be the winning combination against an adversary that 'on paper' presented a formidable threat. That victory, however, had been in question for much of the conflict and had Argentine forces managed to land a lucky blow at a critical stage of the operation, all may have been lost for Great Britain.

¹⁵¹ Sandy Woodward and Patrick Robinson, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander . . .*, 171.

¹⁵² Martin Middlebrook, *The Fight for the 'Malvinas': The Argentine Forces in the Falklands War . . .*, 82-83.

¹⁵³ Antony Preston, *Sea Combat Off the Falklands . . .*, 34.

Great Britain's Luck

Argentina's gamble to take Las Malvinas had assumed, falsely, that Great Britain would not militarily contest its actions so far from home. Despite this, Argentine leadership likely took some comfort in the knowledge that they possessed a large military force, with certain highly effective strike capabilities, with which they could defend their new possession. They also knew that British forces would need to operate at the end of a very long supply chain and conduct a highly dangerous amphibious landing in order to re-take the islands. The British were equally aware of these factors, knowing fully that the loss of a carrier or part of the amphibious assault force, would have meant an end to the expedition, either out of military necessity or the loss of public will due to staggeringly high casualties. Regardless, Great Britain understood the stakes, both militarily and politically, and gambled that their forces would prevail.

Naval leadership in Argentina, responsible for the initial invasion, had hoped to deal a decisive blow to the British Task Force shortly after their arrival in the South Atlantic. Despite the age of many of the Argentine ships, some were armed with modern anti-ship Exocet missiles, and its carrier-based aircraft could allow for an airstrike to come from any direction, thus potentially avoiding the Task Force's protective screen.¹⁵⁴ On the eve of the battle, the Argentine fleet had been positioned on the edge of the Exclusion Zone, waiting to spring a pincer movement on the incoming British fleet before they could establish themselves in the region.¹⁵⁵ The Argentines' main targets were the two RN carriers, *Hermes* and *Invincible*. They knew, like the British, if one of these valuable ships were seriously damaged or sunk, Great Britain would

¹⁵⁴ Sandy Woodward and Patrick Robinson, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander* . . . , 149.

¹⁵⁵ Martin Middlebrook, *The Fight for the 'Malvinas': The Argentine Forces in the Falklands War* . . . , 96.

no longer have the aircraft necessary to continue operations.¹⁵⁶ Argentina's admirals were also aware that Britain's submarines were en route, or possibly already in the region; thus an early strike against the RN was key before the Argentine ships were discovered.¹⁵⁷ On May 1st, the day planned for the attack, the British fleet was located using long-range reconnaissance aircraft, the carrier-based strike aircraft were readied, and the ships began to move into position. However, a nearly complete lack of wind, uncommon at this time of year in the stormy South Atlantic, did not allow for the fully loaded Skyhawks to take off, and the entire operation was aborted. Disappointment and bitterness permeated throughout the leadership of Argentina's navy, who had been hoping for a decisive battle with the Task Force, even possibly "the great battle of the war, the Midway of the South Atlantic."¹⁵⁸ With the mission cancelled and RN submarines closing in, Argentine naval units retreated towards the relative safety of the mainland; all but *General Belgrano*, which was sunk trying to make her escape.¹⁵⁹ Admiral Woodward's words from his memories *One Hundred Days* provide some insight into how real this threat had been to the British:

It was clear enough that unless we were extraordinarily lucky we could find ourselves in major trouble here [under attack from *General Belgrano* and *Veinticinco de Mayo* simultaneously] attacked from different directions, by different weapons requiring different responses, all in the half-light of a dawn which would be silhouetting us.¹⁶⁰

However, this first attempted interaction demonstrated that luck, not just military strength, plays an important factor in warfare.

¹⁵⁶ Sandy Woodward and Patrick Robinson, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander . . .*, 100.

¹⁵⁷ Martin Middlebrook, *The Fight for the 'Malvinas': The Argentine Forces in the Falklands War . . .*, 69.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 103.

¹⁵⁹ Patrick S. Baker, "Sink the Belgrano," *Military History . . .* 40.

¹⁶⁰ Sandy Woodward and Patrick Robinson, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander . . .*, 149.

To further bolster their strike capability, Argentina had begun to purchase the Exocet capable Super Étendards. This aircraft and missile combination were specifically designed to target enemy ships in an effort to create sea control conditions.¹⁶¹ As Argentina's military had originally been planning for an invasion of the Falklands in late-1982, they had hoped to build up sufficient stocks of the missiles in order to deter any British action in the region. However, when the conflict broke out in early-1982, Argentina only had five air-launched Exocets in their arsenal.¹⁶² Still, even five of these highly sophisticated weapons posed a serious threat to British operations. Throughout the campaign several Exocet strike missions were planned. However, most were cancelled for one reason or another. In the two missions where the Super Étendards fired their missiles, success was achieved. Early in the conflict *Sheffield* was hit by an Exocet and later sunk. Weeks later, following the amphibious landings, *Atlantic Conveyor* was hit by two Exocet missiles and also sunk. In both cases, these ships were part of the layered screen protecting the valuable British carriers.¹⁶³ Argentina had flawlessly deployed these deadly weapons as designed and by another stroke of sheer luck, a different ship had found itself in between the missiles and their intended target, ensuring the valuable carriers remained safe to continue the fight.

The failure of the Argentine navy and air force, or the British skill, tenacity, and luck in the early stages of the conflict led to the most critical phase of the British operation, the amphibious landings at San Carlos Waters from the 21st to the 23rd of May. This was the riskiest phase of the conflict for Great Britain as a large number of ships would be gathered into a

¹⁶¹ Martin Middlebrook, *The Fight for the 'Malvinas': The Argentine Forces in the Falklands War . . .*, 121.

¹⁶² British Aviation Research Group, *Falklands - the Air War . . .*, 34.

¹⁶³ Sandy Woodward and Patrick Robinson, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander . . .*, 223.

relatively small area, reducing their ability to maneuver and thus defend themselves.¹⁶⁴ The troops would also be heavily exposed, first while onboard the larger ships (which included the defenceless liner *Canberra*), waiting for their turn to load into the landing craft, next during the transit towards the beaches in the uncovered vessels, and finally, once ashore as their limited initial numbers made them extremely vulnerable to a counterattack. Argentine pilots made brave and sometimes suicidal attempts to thwart British operations. However, despite the loss of a handful of RN escort ships, Argentina failed to capitalize on these vulnerabilities during the landing period allowing the entire British landing force to get ashore unscathed.¹⁶⁵ The Argentine army leadership understood how crucial those initial hours were believing that “after the first 48 hours, the British would be too well established ashore for an attack to have any chance of success”.¹⁶⁶ British military luck continued and their operations in San Carlos Waters can be seen as nothing but an unmitigated success.

Great Britain had a better military than Argentina. However, the circumstances of the conflict put them at a disadvantage. British excellence was a decisive factor. Great Britain’s force was better equipped, better led and stood on the shoulders of hundreds of years of national military greatness. Argentina fielded a largely conscript force that had little training and was, with some exception, poorly equipped to meet British forces in battle. To that end, however, Argentina did possess determination and pressed home several attacks against the British in hopes of defending their new possession. Had just one of these attacks been successful, Great Britain may have been forced to withdraw, however, military prowess and luck proved to be on the side of the British.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 241.

¹⁶⁵ Martin Middlebrook, *The Fight for the 'Malvinas': The Argentine Forces in the Falklands War . . .*, 164.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 165.

CONCLUSION

Argentina began the year 1982 with a clear objective in mind. Las Malvinas would be freed from British colonial control and returned to its rightful Argentine owners. Argentina hedged its bets that Great Britain would not respond militarily to an Argentine show of force and invasion of the Falklands. They were wrong. Although beginning an unjust war, Argentina began the conflict with several important military advantages. However, it failed to capitalize on them which ultimately led to their internationally embarrassing defeat.

In examining Just War theory, Great Britain and Argentina's justifications for beginning the conflict and actions taken during the conflict measured against the *Jus Ad Bellum* and *Jus In Bello* conditions were examined and compared. Argentina lacked a clear justification for engaging in military action, meeting only one out of five of the conditions of *Jus Ad Bellum*. Lacking this justification, Argentina found themselves alone with very little international support. Great Britain, on the other hand, met four out of the five conditions of *Jus Ad Bellum*, demonstrating their strong level of justification for answering force with force. While both nations began the conflict with varying levels of justification, their conduct throughout the conflict respected all of the conditions of *Jus In Bello*, demonstrating that the service personnel from both belligerents respected international law as well as each other.

Argentina's poor justifications for starting the conflict were the first of many failures that ultimately led to their defeat. Following their swift successful invasion of the Falklands, the Argentine military appeared poised to vigorously defend their new territory. They had the numbers, the proximate distance to support, the time to prepare a defence, and a smattering of modern weapons at their disposal. However, following an analysis using the Cohen and Gooch model for organizational failure, it can be plainly seen that Argentina squandered those

opportunities. Argentine forces failed to establish sea control or air superiority around the battle space and even more critically, failed to plan or coordinate an actual defence of the territory, believing for far too long that Great Britain would not contest their actions. These failures occurred at all levels of Argentine leadership, starting at the top with President Galtieri and filtering as far down as some of the tactical level units fighting in the field, on the seas and in the air over the Falklands. Argentina's failure to learn, failure to anticipate, and failure to adapt led to an overall catastrophic failure according to the Cohen and Gooch model; the type of failure from which organizations cannot recover.

While Argentina may have failed at several levels in their attempts to hold onto the Falklands, they were defending the territory against a determined foe. British military strength was put into overdrive with the hasty dispatch of a Task Force meant to eject the invaders and repossess the territory. The all-volunteer British Force was better equipped, better trained, better led and was bolstered by generations of British military tradition. Facing the British was a numerically superior Argentine force, most of whom were conscripts with little training, no experience, few modern weapons, and poor leadership. What the Argentines had been hoping for was to land a decisive blow such that the British would be forced to withdrawal and cede the territory permanently to Argentina. The Argentine military attempted several times to land one of these blows against the British Task Force, using its surface fleet and its modern Super Étendards with their deadly Exocet missiles; however, luck favoured the British and these attempts failed to deliver any significant results. A final attempt was made during the critical landing of British troops onto the Falklands when Argentine aircraft buzzed threateningly over the landing zone. However, again the British luck held and not a single soldier was harmed during this risky operation. It is certain that Great Britain had the superior force during the conflict. However,

operating at such vast distances from support meant that they were forced to take certain risks. The lesson for Argentina, and the rest of the world that was closely following the conflict was that “if one wanted to win a modern war, one needs modern weapons”.¹⁶⁷ Had Argentina been able to exploit just one of those risks to their advantage using the few modern weapons at their disposal, the British operation may have come to an end. But British military resolve, and some luck, held out.

The Falklands conflict had several outcomes beyond the decisive British victory. Shortly after Argentina’s defeat, President Galtieri was ousted, and the nation began the process of re-creating a democratic system. Most Argentine service members unceremoniously returned to their pre-conscription lives, with some selective members of the military leadership detained for their role in the embarrassing defeat.¹⁶⁸ On the British side, the soldiers, aviators, and sailors of the Task Force were welcomed home as heroes. A massive victory parade was held in the streets of London in October of 1982. Prime Minister Thatcher saw a remarkable increase in popularity and gained international clout for herself and the nation.¹⁶⁹ Great Britain had shown the world that they were not to be trifled with.

Militarily, Great Britain had demonstrated that modern, well-equipped volunteers could easily defeat a superior force. On their side, Argentina had reinforced the susceptibility of warships to well-planned air attacks and had demonstrated the effectiveness of the deadly Exocet missile under true combat conditions. Argentina’s exploits cost the lives of 655 servicemen with nothing to show for it in the end. Great Britain, who came away from the conflict having

¹⁶⁷ Martin Middlebrook, *The Fight for the 'Malvinas': The Argentine Forces in the Falklands War . . .*, 285.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 281.

¹⁶⁹ Steven Rattner, “London Hails Falkland Victory Anew,” *New York Times*, 13 October 1982, <https://www.nytimes.com/1982/10/13/world/london-hails-falkland-victory-anew.html>.

accomplished what they set out to do, namely liberate the Falklands, paid for the victory with the lives of 255 servicemen and three civilians.¹⁷⁰ Argentina had hoped to simply ‘twist the lion’s tail’ and walk away with Las Malvinas. Instead, they found themselves in the ‘jaw of the lion’ who was chomping for revenge. Revenge in this case was sought with true British honour and subtle humility, captured perfectly by the signal sent following the first success of the campaign: “Be please to inform Her Majesty that the White Ensign flies beside the Union Jack in South Georgia. God save the Queen.”¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Martin Middlebrook, *The Fight for the 'Malvinas': The Argentine Forces in the Falklands War . . .*, 282.

¹⁷¹ Sandy Woodward and Patrick Robinson, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander . . .*, 105.

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