REVIEW ESSAYS

THE MALVINAS WAR OF 1982: An Inevitable Conflict That Never Should Have Occurred

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The reason this essay has been delayed for so long is not merely the author's indolence. Although the first flood of books and articles appeared not long after the shooting stopped, an Argentine defeat on the field of battle suggested the eventual publication of memoirs by Argentine participants or semiofficial leaks to professional journalists that would chronicle the Argentine side of the story in fairly convincing detail. This expectation has not been met, although it is rumored in Buenos Aires that both Nicanor Costa Méndez, the Foreign Minister during the war, and Eduardo Roca, Argentine Ambassador to the United Nations during the conflict, are about to publish books dealing with their roles in the episode. Rather than wait any longer, I will promise to file an update on those items if and when they appear in print. More curious is the fact that no scholar in the United States or Europe has yet published a comprehensive account of the episode. We shall have to make do with what we have—and I cannot claim to have read it all, merely everything that was available.

To deal coherently with such a vast literature and with such a complex subject, I have found it useful to organize the material sequentially according to components or explanatory elements: the historical background and legal antecedents to the conflict; the denouement of the crisis, with particular attention to the differing perceptions of the principal participants and the context in which decisions were made in

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each country; military preparations for the actual conduct of the war; strategic implications of the war; implications of the war for understanding the international system; and, how the conflict might be resolved in the future.

Before launching such a systematic review of the literature, let me indicate my preferences among the volumes on the topic for those who might want to do some reading on their own. The easiest entree to the legal and diplomatic tangle underlying the conflict is the slim volume by Fritz Hoffmann and Olga Mingo Hoffmann, *Sovereignty in Dispute: The Falklands/Malvinas, 1493–1982*. Their account is easy to read, well organized, and never strays from the point. It draws heavily on Julius Goebel's *The Struggle for the Falkland Islands*, still the basic source after nearly sixty years and recently reissued by Yale University Press. The most exciting and complete volume on the hostilities is *The Battle for the Falklands*, by Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins, which also continues to be the best analysis of the British decision-making context, despite its journalistic bent and the speed with which it was published. For the Argentine side, two books are worth reading. Virginia Gamba's *El peón de la reina* offers an excellent analysis of Argentine policy-making, marred only by her disposition to take Costa Méndez at face value (something no other observer does). The best description of the war and the political context in which decisions were made is *Malvinas, la trama secreta*, by Oscar Raúl Cardoso, Ricardo Kirschbaum, and Eduardo van der Kooy, a serious, if somewhat dramatized, account by three journalists who know as much about foreign policy as most professors. While we do not yet have any full-scale professorial analyses of the war, the contributions by Roberto Russell (in *Estudios Internacionales* 1982) and by Alberto Coll in the latter's volume edited with Arend, *The Falklands War: Lessons for Strategy, Diplomacy, and International Law*, are the best that have appeared to date. Although both are quick "think pieces" prepared for conferences convened shortly after the war, they are excellent and will stimulate the reader's thinking. Official reports have been published by Lord Franks for the British and General Benjamin Rattenbach for the Argentines, but they are dry compilations that will interest only specialists. Finally, for those who want to start their doctoral dissertations on the topic, several excellent reviews of the literature exist that are much more comprehensive than this one. The best is the two-part essay published by the late Roberto Etchepareborda in the *Revista Interamericana de Bibliografía*, a tribute to his energy and capacity to organize vast quantities of information to good effect (Etchepareborda 1982).

The war between Great Britain and Argentina over the Malvinas Islands was strange in several respects. Everyone involved saw it coming months in advance, and yet no one could or would stop it; there is a

quality of inevitability about the onset of hostilities that reminds me of the First World War. No one doubted who would win the military phase of the struggle, and yet that knowledge neither helped reduce the level of violence nor caused either party to alter its behavior. Many observers also sensed a laboratory quality to the conflict. Military planners around the world watched the battle with enthusiasm bordering on glee to learn how their latest weapons systems would perform under fire. The battlefield seemed so far away from the normal arena of interstate conflict that many observers felt detached from the fighting, coldly uninvolved, so that the immediate repercussions of the fighting were scarcely felt outside the war zone. Had the war dragged on longer, such geopolitical isolation might have broken down. In sharp contrast to the war in Vietnam, the actual fighting took place off-camera. It was the diplomatic maneuvering instead that was shown on television around the world, with a great deal of the diplomatic bargaining conducted on-camera. Because of the ever-present television crews, both belligerents were exposed as manipulating the information released to their populations, although only the Argentine leadership claimed to be winning the war when the news available to the public indicated otherwise. Finally, the outcome of the struggle thus far has benefited no one, and a solution to the underlying conflict may be as far away as it ever was. That result makes the loss of life even more tragic and senseless.

The diplomatic or historical background to the conflict is long and complicated. Hundreds of books and articles have been published on the various claims to the islands, 99 percent of them by Argentines attempting to show that the islands were, are, and ought to be Argentine and that British occupation of the islands was and is illegitimate. The British have been perversely disinterested in the legal discussion, but then, they have been the occupants of the territory. Etchepareborda's article in the *Revista de Historia de América* provides a good review of the major works (Etchepareborda 1983). A massive, loving description of the islands entitled *Soberanía argentina* was published by the Universidad de La Plata in 1983. As noted, the most persuasive study of the early controversy remains Julius Goebel's recently reprinted *The Struggle for the Falkland Islands*. Goebel's scholarship is exhaustive and his handling of evidence is judicious. Bonifacio del Carril's *El futuro de las Malvinas* and Enrique Ferrer Vieyra's *Annotated Chronology of the Malvinas (Falklands) Islands Controversy* summarize the same documents and events. Given the greater effort expended by Argentine scholars, it should not be surprising that the consensus among those who have taken the trouble to review the antecedents of the conflict is that the Argentine claims to the islands are superior to the British. What is more surprising is that British officials began as early as 1910 to question their nation's claim to the territory and to suggest that some face-saving way

should be found to turn them over to the Argentines. The most outspoken exception to this consensus is Peter Calvert, who has done his scholarly reputation a disservice by writing a lamentable book, *The Falklands Crisis: The Rights and the Wrongs*. His historical summary of Argentine history and policy is embarrassing.

But if the Argentine claims to the islands are superior to the British, they are only slightly better, as Carlos Escudé observed in a recent series of newspaper articles.[1] In no way trying to undermine Argentine claims, Escudé merely wanted to point out that possession of the islands always has been a matter of dispute and that such a relative claim to title should not have been grounds for invading the islands. He is anxious to demonstrate that the notion of a clear and unequivocal title to the islands is one of several myths that have clouded the perception of Argentines for years, a myth that was exploited by the military government to justify their actions. Indeed, most studies of the dispute published by Argentines before 1982 reenforced that myth. Only in the last two years have Argentines been bold enough and reasonable enough to insist on the relative nature of the Argentine claims.

Typical of the Argentine effort to win the legal and diplomatic argument by sheer volume are the three tomes published by the Consejo Argentino para las Relaciones Internacionales (CARI), which deal with the efforts in the United Nations since 1945 to bring the British to the bargaining table. The most comprehensive collection of documents in English is Rafael Perl's *The Falkland Islands Dispute in International Law and Politics*.[2] These studies suggest that several facts might be characterized as beyond dispute: the British took the islands by force; the nature of the Argentine settlement thus dislodged was precarious at best; the islands had no indigenous population; the islands have been run for the past century by a monopoly enterprise known as the Falkland Islands Company; the Argentines never stopped protesting British occupation of the islands; the British government doubted the validity of their claim to the islands; after 1930 the British government became convinced that the islands were not worth holding and that a way should be found to turn them over to the Argentines; and after 1968, when Argentine pressure on the British to negotiate a solution to the dispute became intense, the Falkland Islands Company formed a lobby in London that succeeded in frustrating all efforts by the British Foreign Office to turn the islands back to the Argentines by making the political cost of such a process appear greater than the cost of doing nothing.

Despite all the energy expended, the legalistic arguments strike me as fatuous. The rules of the international game traditionally have been set by the biggest players. Until the principle of universal membership began to transform the United Nations after 1960, international law was a set of rules by which the major nations of the West managed

conflict among themselves. What used to be called the "laws of civilization," or of civilized nations, were rules that legitimized the control of the weak by the more powerful. In the past few decades, because of the concepts of universalism and equal rights among nations, size and power no longer necessarily translate into a nation's capacity to work its will outside its borders. Nevertheless, one cannot say that international law has become stronger. It has been honored as much in the breech as in the practice. In the past few years, the United States, generally the most vehement proponent of principle and law in its foreign policy, refused to accept the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice in a dispute with Nicaragua, and the Soviet Union refused to recognize that court's jurisdiction in the invasion of Afghanistan. We need generally accepted rules of behavior to guide the actions of states, and I am prepared to accept the assertion of several authors in the Coll and Arend collection that the violation of those rules by Argentina contributed to the failure of Third World nations to support Argentina's cause. But those same authors admit that the entire episode demonstrated once again how ineffective international organizations are in preventing or stopping hostilities when the great powers are not in agreement. I concur with Carlos Escudé that a solution to the Malvinas dispute will come only through pragmatic appeals to political interests.

As a study in crisis management, the Malvinas conflict is a nightmare. It is hard to imagine so many errors of judgment being made by so many people. Virginia Gamba does an excellent job of explaining the sequence of Argentine decision making in her first book, *El peón de la reina*, and adds to that a good analysis of the British and U.S. sides of the story in her second, *Estrategia: intervención y crisis*. Dr. Gamba is a fine scholar, trained in Great Britain, who enjoys special access to the military and civilian decision makers formerly and currently responsible for formulating Argentine policy. Her clear and vigorous style makes difficult concepts of strategic analysis accessible to the nonspecialist. *Malvinas: la trama secreta* by Cardoso, Kirschbaum, and Van der Kooy is also splendid in its summary of Argentine policy formulation. The authors strain a little too hard to find scandal and villains, but their professionalism saves them from excesses. All in all, they adopt a remarkably detached position and weave a narrative that holds up in the light of information made public since they published their book. Cardoso's subtle analysis of international affairs can be found each week in the Buenos Aires daily *Clarín*. In sharp contrast, *Diplomacia secreta y rendición incondicional* by Rogelio García Lupo is a trivial pastiche. It contains lots of dark hints about villainous secrets but no substance to support any of the veiled accusations. The book is actually a disjointed compilation of newspaper articles.

Everyone agrees that the Argentine leadership completely mis-

read or miscalculated British resolve and entered the crisis firmly convinced that the British would not and could not mount a military response to the invasion sufficient to dislodge Argentine troops without unacceptable military losses. So convinced were the Argentine leaders of this notion that they never formulated, much less implemented, plans to defend the islands against such a response. To the very end, the junta appeared stunned by the fact that the British fleet had bothered to come all the way into the South Atlantic. This failure to judge the British response correctly was a function of the nature of the regime and the quality of its advisers. As I have discussed elsewhere, the junta never was open to multiple currents of information or opinion.[3] Its decision-making structures were severely restricted, and the press was self-censored, so that no access existed to information that might not be congenial to the leaders. Because of their political isolation, the junta members were getting their advice from amateurs and were making no systematic provision to check that advice. They did not bother to check the advice because it tended to reinforce their view of the world. They firmly believed that they had led their nation to a new, prominent position in world affairs, that their staunch anticommunism and their willingness to fight for the anticommunist cause in Central America had won them a spot among the world's major actors, and that their interests and actions would be considered seriously by the other major actors and their leadership accepted by other Latin American nations. The leaders were supported in this view by the man they appointed to lead their foreign ministry in this crisis, Nicanor Costa Méndez, who convinced them that he understood the British, the Americans, and the ways of international affairs. In the end, he revealed that he understood none of them, and he remains one of the heavies of the drama, despite Virginia Gamba's efforts to defend him. The Cardoso, Kirschbaum, and Van der Kooy work is especially good in describing the delusions of grandeur of the junta members and their isolation from any discussion of world events.

One cause of these gross miscalculations was the fact that the entire decision-making leadership was remarkably ignorant of the U.S. political system and of how decisions are made in the United States. That error led them to take some careless remarks by Senator Jesse Helms's legislative assistant and by Secretary of State Alexander Haig's personal emissary, General Vernon Walters, as ironclad assurances by the U.S. government that in return for support in Central America, the United States would back Argentine efforts to recapture the Malvinas—even if force were necessary—and that the United States would make sure the British did not overreact. When I asked the Argentine participants in those crucial meetings if they had understood where these messengers fit into the complex pattern of U.S. decision making and

what influence they might have been expected to wield over policy formulation, the Argentine response indicated that they viewed the United States as some unitary actor whose representatives pronounce unambiguous declarations as if they were the words of some anthropomorphic being. The Argentine leaders heard what they wanted to hear and did not allow reality to alter their views.

The British are not without blame in the run-up to the conflict, however. Despite the official whitewash performed by the committee of privy counsellors led by Lord Franks,[4] virtually all observers agree that significant failures of intelligence occurred on the British side and that the principal error by the British decision makers was simply ignorance of the background of the dispute and its salience for the Argentines. Even senior civil servants in the Foreign Ministry underestimated Argentine seriousness of purpose in the last years of fruitless negotiations and never applied great pressure on their political masters in the government to force a settlement on the House of Commons. In every case of near-settlement or of a proposal for a settlement after 1968, the Falklands lobby bulldozed the Foreign Ministry and convinced the government to back away rather than risk a storm in the Commons. The foreign policy bureaucrats never raised the ante sufficiently because they were not convinced themselves that the Argentines would ever do more than talk. These officials seriously misread the signals from Buenos Aires in the two years prior to the outbreak of hostilities and were uncharacteristically naive in failing to perceive how the Argentines would read the signals the British had been sending concerning the British attitude toward the conflict and the most likely British response to an act of aggression. Hastings and Jenkins's *The Battle for the Falklands* is quite clear, even sober in its judgments of the British side; and again, it seems that Virginia Gamba has it about right in her analysis in *Estrategia*. Given the low priority placed on the islands and the entire region by various British governments, the question remains as to whether any government would have done anything differently even had it correctly gauged the scope of Argentine fervor and the range of its likely actions. In *Diplomacy, War, and Parliamentary Democracy: Further Lessons from the Falklands, or, Advice from Academe*, Robert Burns (one of the participants on the British side) makes a lovely argument for systematic analysis of foreign policy situations by decision makers, calling for the greater use of theory in defining practice. Burns suggests that had the British engaged in any systematic reflection on the situation in the South Atlantic, they would have realized that they were sending signals to the Argentines that were bound to be read exactly as the Argentines were reading them and that the government was taking a series of decisions implicitly as a result of pressure by the Falklands lobby that they would not have accepted explicitly. The Burns essay is a wonderful piece—dry,

calm, and urbane. I only wonder if the scenario would have worked the way he suggests. His argument seems so obvious, so easy.

Winning does wonders in avoiding domestic recriminations, but the British have drawn some nonetheless. Tam Dalyell, a Laborite member of the House of Commons, fought valiantly to block Margaret Thatcher's headlong course toward war and used every parliamentary device known to bring to light information about the decision-making process in an attempt to force the prime minister to seek a diplomatic solution to the conflict. He was particularly outraged by the sinking of the *Belgrano*, which at the time was seen by most observers as occurring precisely at the moment when the diplomatic efforts of Peruvian president Francisco Belaúnde Terry were on the verge of success. Dalyell published his account under the title *Thatcher's Torpedo*. A subsequent volume by Arthur Gavshon and Desmond Rice, *The Sinking of the Belgrano*, comes to virtually the same damning conclusion.[5]

Dalyell's most telling criticisms are leveled at his own Laborite colleagues, who tried to outjingo Thatcher in their support for the use of force. This aspect is discussed in Dalyell's *One Man's Falklands*. The collection of opinions put together by Cecil Woolf and Jean Moorcroft Wilson, *Authors Take Sides on the Falklands*, makes the same point—that most British citizens were reluctant to criticize their government publicly during the conflict for fear of undermining the effort. Once the hostilities had ceased, however, the critics came out of the closet. The Latin American Bureau and the publishers of the *Latin American Newsletters* both produced volumes that were critical of the British government. In *Falklands/Malvinas: Whose Crisis?*, the bureau tried to define a position for the political left but managed only a weak "plague on both your houses" statement, which does not explain why Dalyell appears to have been alone in fighting to stop the Thatcher campaign for war. Two comments in the Woolf and Moorcroft Wilson collection are worth quoting. The novelist Brigid Brophy said, "There is a cause in which a task force should sail to the Falkland archepelago, namely to protect its indigenous population of whales, fish and birds, together with its imported and exploited slave-class of sheep, from murder" (Woolf and Wilson 1982, 20). The literary critic Penelope Gilliatt took a more pensive approach in observing that a Falkland island "is a small piece of land entirely surrounded by advice" (Woolf and Wilson 1982, 44).

While it would be an exaggeration to say that the United States played an insignificant role in the run-up to the conflict, it certainly did not play a dominant part. Argentina never has been a close ally of the United States, and the foreign policies of the two nations often have appeared at odds with one another. The squabbling within the Reagan administration, especially between UN Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick and Secretary of State Alexander Haig, did not help, and no one bene-

fited from the charade of Haig's exhausting shuttle from Washington to Buenos Aires to London and around again. No one, except perhaps a few of the Argentine leaders who (hanging on to what Vernon Walters may have told them) doubted that, when push came to shove, the United States would side with the British and that the Argentines were doomed to defeat. In fact, Haig spent most of his time after the first round of talks trying to convince the Argentines of the inevitability of such a defeat. David Gompert, who accompanied Haig on his mission, sums the situation up nicely: "It took extraordinarily poor judgment to invade the Falklands, and it is unlikely to happen again. But the fury in Argentina will not go away. . . . If frustration and miscalculation caused the war, rigidity assured that it would run its logical military course" (Coll and Arend 1985, 108–9). The U.S. leaders might have played a constructive role by interpreting the potential combatants to one another as the tension reached dangerous levels, but the United States never has understood Argentina very well, and events in the region have not rated a much higher priority in Washington than in London. Nevertheless, the Department of State set up a special task force to monitor events on 1 April, which served as an effective conduit of information for the U.S. government.

When it comes to describing what happened during the fighting, the British accounts excel. Hastings and Jenkins have put together an engrossing narrative that moves along at a rapid clip while providing more than enough detail to satisfy the general reader. They have done a masterful job of combining their skills of political analysis at home and battlefield reporting. The London *Sunday Times* Insight Team has also put together a handy volume under the title *The Falklands War: The Full Story* (Eddy, Linklater, Gillman et al.). It might even be preferred by some readers because it is not colored by the superior, almost supercilious tone that creeps into the prose of Hastings and Jenkins on several occasions. *The Falklands Conflict*, by Christopher Dobson, John Miller, and Ronald Payne, is unfortunately rife with factual errors, superficial, and "gung ho" in tone. It is a little sad to read a book purporting to chronicle events that does so much virile chest thumping, which would be more appropriate to a campaign document or a war tract.

All of these writers comment on the absence of comparable efforts by Argentine colleagues. Part of the explanation for this dearth reflects the fact that Argentina lost. It also results from the way in which the Argentine military treated the press. Always suspicious of the press, the junta carefully controlled media access to soldiers and consistently treated all information as propaganda. Not only did such efforts highlight the distinction between democracies and dictatorships that became a critical ploy in Thatcher's strategy but they grew patently absurd as the world's television crews descended on Buenos Aires and

conducted live interviews for the benefit of evening news programs in New York and London. As it became obvious that the war was drawing to an inexorable end in Argentine defeat, the efforts of the regime to manipulate information from the war zone appeared pathetic and only heightened the sense of betrayal and bitterness that overwhelmed the Argentine people when the hostilities ended. That abuse of the public and of the press contributed to the speed with which the Galtieri government collapsed at the end of the war.

The majority of works by Argentines dealing with the fighting have been eyewitness accounts, deliberately fragmentary, and devoid of any pretense at analysis. Many of these books are moving accounts told in the words of the combatants themselves (such as Nicolás Kasanzew's *Malvinas: a sangre y fuego*). This foot soldier's point of view has illuminated many aspects of the lack of leadership and logistical failures that undermined the Argentine struggle, aspects later rehashed in greater detail but without new understanding in the official report issued by the Rattenbach Commission. Even more moving is the series of interviews of young Argentine veterans put together by Daniel Kon in *Los chicos de la guerra: hablan los soldados que estuvieron en Malvinas*. These interviews tell as much about the effects of war on individual soldiers as they do about the battles themselves. The Kon book was subsequently made into a movie that has been well received in Buenos Aires.

Another category of eyewitness accounts, less moving perhaps but equally fascinating for what such works reveal about the lack of coordination on the Argentine side, are books like Pablo Marcos Carballi's *Dios y los halcones* and Carlos Turolo's *Malvinas: testimonio de su gobernador*. The former tells the story of the Argentine air force that flew mission after mission against the British task force and that by itself came close to raising the British cost of the mission to unacceptable levels. *Dios y los halcones*, whose tone reminds me of old John Wayne movies, does nothing to lessen general respect for the heroism of the fliers who piloted the aircraft, but it does not disprove the assertion of many military experts that the Argentine air force never coordinated its activities with other branches of the armed forces. Turolo's account of the testimony by General Benjamín Menéndez, the Argentine military governor of the islands and the supposed commander of the armed forces there, is too dry and cautious to add anything to the debate, although reading between the lines produces evidence supporting the arguments that the Argentines were not prepared for the fight they started and that the command structure broke down under stress. General Menéndez is trying to clear his name in these inverviews, but if his account suggests that he was not guilty of malfeasance or gross negligence, he cannot claim to have demonstrated any particular skill or success in the conduct of his duty. His account reaffirms the accusa-

tions made by Kon and Kasanzew that the soldiers were not treated well on the Malvinas and that they often lacked matériel available on the island. The foot soldiers were also the victims of a curious military strategy—or lack of strategy—in which only professional soldiers, or commandos, were sent out to meet the enemy. All of the conscripts, the vast majority of the army, were assigned to fixed positions in the trenches and told to wait there. They knew little or nothing about the developing battle until the enemy began to appear on the horizon. In those critical moments, the absence of experienced leaders was significant.

Argentine geopoliticians have begun to have their say on the conduct of the war. Most of their writings have appeared in highly specialized professional journals published in Buenos Aires by various military groups, such as *Cruz del Sur*, *Boletín del Centro Naval*, and *Revista de la Escuela de Defensa Nacional*, and probably are not accessible to the general public. An exception is the series of *Cuadernos* published under the direction of General José Teófilo Goyret in the journal *Armas y Geoestrategia*. These glossy and profusely illustrated articles convey the Argentine military's message of the heroic resistance put up by the army and the incredible heroism of the special forces and the air force, which were much greater than anything expected by the British and made the encounter a close one. Still, it is clear from these studies (although never stated as baldly as in private conversation with members of the Argentine military or other specialists) that the Argentines lacked leadership on the islands, logistical coordination, tactical clarity in the field, and worst of all, coordination among the service arms. They failed to take the appropriate weapons for the campaign on the islands, never succeeded in installing a communications infrastructure to wage a successful campaign, and were simply unprepared for what transpired. This outcome resulted from the junta's myopic refusal to believe that a war would come. It is only fair to point out, however, that once the *Belgrano* was sunk, the Argentines dared not resupply the islands by ship and were forced to rely on air transport. As a result, they could not get any heavy artillery into play, which cost them dearly.

The air force comported itself nobly but never coordinated its efforts as part of a campaign strategy. Some of the British and U.S. experts note (agreeing with some Latin American military to whom I have spoken) that it would have been more effective had the pilots launched their attacks against the landing forces rather than against the large British ships standing offshore. As for the Argentine navy, the sinking of the *Belgrano* reduced it to a nonparticipant. This fact has been a particularly bitter pill for many Argentines because the navy representative on the junta, Admiral Jorge Anaya, is generally reported to have been the most belligerent member of the junta as well as the most

insistent on escalating the South Georgia incident and, later, on preparing the actual invasion. By contrast, although British execution was nowhere near perfect and their supply lines were dangerously thin, the British were clear in their objectives and professionally efficient in accomplishing them.

One of the bitterest complaints of the Argentines targets the "betrayal" by the United States and, more specifically, the material support given to the British during the conflict. This argument holds that a poor country could not possibly fight against the two strongest democratic powers in the world and that this realization led to a certain defeatist attitude on the part of the nation's leaders. This claim is difficult to sustain, and the only serious author who even implies that it has some validity is Virginia Gamba. Most of the Argentine leaders knew that the United States would not get involved militarily. Furthermore, no evidence exists that the disappointment felt by the military leadership affected their prosecution of the war or even their diplomatic strategy. On the other hand, in fairness to the Argentines it is necessary to reject statements by some British commentators (such as Calvert 1982 and Dobson, Miller, and Payne 1982) that the U.S. aid was insignificant. It may not have amounted to much in military terms, but it was critical to the British cause. The use of U.S. intelligence satellites enabled the British to monitor the movements of Argentine surface vessels. Would the Argentine navy have ventured out of port after the *Belgrano* was sunk if the U.S. satellites had not been monitoring the movements of their vessels? We do not know the answer. The use of Ascension Island certainly speeded the arrival of the British fleet at the war zone. Had the fleet not arrived when it did, it would have had to deal with foul weather in the South Atlantic and might have had to alter its war plan.

The challenge of drawing military and strategic lessons from the Malvinas War has attracted a multitude of authors. Specialists in military affairs have studied the conflict with the cold attention to detail of a pathologist performing an autopsy—this weapon worked well, that one did not—and with the same disdain for the identity of the body being analyzed. Several things are striking about this literature. Most of the authors are convinced that surface ships are here to stay and that the major powers are wrong to cut their expenditures on such forces. The war, for them, was clear proof that the western democracies must increase their defense spending. Yet the same experts argue for a flexible approach to crisis management: each power should have at its disposal forces that can be moved quickly to distant points of crisis to cope with conflicts kept within bounds either by geographic or diplomatic means. Rather than accept the need for choices or for fixing priorities among various objectives, they seem to say that nations must spend more to deal with all possible contingencies. Charles Koburger's *Sea Power in the*

Falklands is the clearest expression of what one might call a neo-Mahan approach. From his perspective, the war was almost fortuitous for the lessons it taught the United States and Great Britain concerning naval forces. It is disturbing that Koburger never asks, even from a navy perspective, why the British would want to keep the Falklands and what political or economic costs might be involved in holding onto them.

Bruce Watson's and Peter Dunn's edited volume, *Military Lessons of the Falkland Islands War: Views from the United States*, is detailed and comprehensive. Although the editors and authors admit that they are examining events from the U.S. perspective, it is disturbing to have the war replayed in this fashion without attention to Argentine sources. One point made in the appendix that I found rather startling was the high proportion of Argentine bombs that never exploded. What might have happened had they exploded? Why did these bombs fail to explode? Virginia Gamba picks up this point and leaves me with the impression that some of the Argentine leaders believe the bombs did not explode because they were defective—another element in the U.S. betrayal of Argentina. One of the military analysts suggests that the nonexplosions may have resulted from launching the bombs too low or too close to the targets, a circumstance forced on the pilots by their need to come in over the tops of the waves to avoid British radar and the Harrier air patrols. After reading all the living-room military experts, I found Peter Dunn's sobering conclusion appealing—he found that there were no military lessons to be learned from the war. All the military technology had been used before; superior soldiers and superior command had won before; air superiority had been critical before. The key lesson for Dunn was that the political will of the British, together with careful interservice coordination, allowed the execution of a coherent strategy. Matched with the comments by Argentine leaders concerning the absence of such coordination and coherence on the Argentine side, these observations are deeply persuasive.

One lesson strangely missing from all these books is found at the heart of a slim volume published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Authors Josef Goldblat and Victor Millan reveal their viewpoint in the book's subtitle, *The Falklands/Malvinas Conflict: A Spur to Arms Buildups*.[6] Their perspective is confirmed by the fact that by the end of 1983, the Argentines had replaced all the hardware they lost in battle.

One of the critical consequences of the war was the mortal blow dealt to the military regime and the inexorable pressure placed on the military to turn the government back to the civilians. Many analysts, at a distance, were tempted to say that—perhaps even with the terrible loss of life—the war had been worthwhile because it rid the nation of

the dictatorship that had taken far more Argentine lives than those lost to British guns. By exposing the military's lamentable lack of professional skill, the war completed the process of public disillusionment begun with the horrific bloodletting of the "dirty war" and deepened by the increasingly obvious failure of the regime's highly touted economic plans, which had been the excuse for many of the harsh repressive measures of the successive juntas. Almost as soon as the fighting stopped, the process of political transition began. But what did the Argentine military learn from the war, and how did they fit the war into their experience of governance during the period from 1976 through 1983?

Most Argentines writing in the immediate aftermath of the war were simply glad to see the military leave power. They were angry and did not question the military's response to the defeat; for these writers, it was the military who had been defeated, not the country. Only Cardoso, Kirschbaum, and Van der Kooy pointed out that the military left power, they were not forced out—they fell, but they were not pushed. Civilian opposition did not have time to coalesce into coherent groups with clear policies. This drawback became clear in the early efforts by the Alfonsín government to prosecute members of the junta for crimes committed during the dictatorship. But mismanagement of the war effort was left to the military itself to judge. Carlos Moneta, who has studied the Argentine military closely for more than a decade, concludes in a recent work that the military leaders appear to have learned nothing from their experience. Not only are they looking forward to the next campaign to liberate the Malvinas, they also consider their so-called political and economic defeats or mistakes merely the result of not having applied their solutions firmly enough or long enough. Judging from the interviews that Moneta conducted with military leaders in 1984 and 1985, their view of the world is just as myopic as it was in 1981 and 1982, and their lack of understanding of world affairs is every bit as pronounced today as it was then. Although never didactic, Moneta underscores his point in an essay that makes chilling reading.[7]

While most Argentines were content to leave the military geopolitical implications to British and U.S. authors, they have displayed intense interest in the implications of the war for the international system and for inter-American relations in particular. Three major works have come to my attention that fit into this category. The special issue of *Estudios Internacionales* and *América Latina y la guerra del Atlántico Sur: experiencias y desafíos*, edited by Roberto Russell, are collections of essays by participants in the RIAL project sponsored by Relaciones Internacionales de América Latina, which is headquartered in Santiago. The third work is an extended essay by Juan Carlos Puig entitled *Malvinas y el régimen internacional*. Professor Puig, who has taught for the last de-

cade in Venezuela, is a prolific writer on international affairs. In this book, he carefully analyzes the existing major paradigms for understanding the international system that dominated the thinking of foreign policy elites in Great Britain and Argentina. These concepts, he argues persuasively, led both sides to the series of disastrous miscalculations detailed in the works previously discussed. He summarizes the predominant international legal, political, economic, and cultural systems and explains the repercussions of each on the Malvinas crisis. Puig's essay is a tightly argued work that is well worth reading. He concludes that Argentina must alter its historically obsessive focus on Western Europe and focus instead both politically and economically on closer ties with Latin America and the rest of the Third World. This view is shared by most of the Latin Americans represented in the other volumes under review, but it is most convincingly asserted in Puig's essay.

All of the Latin American specialists are convinced that the Malvinas episode demonstrates once and for all that the inter-American system does not work, except for the convenience of the United States, and that the future security of Latin America can be guaranteed only through regional organization without the United States, economic integration of the region, and a new economic order. This conviction may be true, but is it politically feasible? I might call some of the commentators excessively optimistic in seeing the Malvinas episode as proving to Latin Americans decisively that the United States cannot be trusted and that they must, and finally will, band together for their own benefit and security. As a consummation devoutly to be wished, this position is beyond reproach. But as a description of the current distribution of forces in the hemisphere, I find it as illusory as the view of the world held by General Galtieri and his colleagues.

Other points reiterated in the collections of essays include these emphases: that authoritarian regimes cannot protect the national interests of Latin American nations—only democratic regimes can because only the latter have intrinsic legitimacy; that the United States should not interpose ideology in its foreign policy because it can only mislead Latin American nations; and that military regimes exacerbate the external vulnerability of Latin American nations. In the case of the Malvinas War, the nature of the Argentine regime and its execrable record on human rights certainly played an important role in the reluctance of other Third World nations to support the Argentine position in crucial moments in the United Nations or to come to Argentina's defense at any time during the war.

What of the future? Did the war in the Malvinas resolve any international issues? I am afraid the answer is no. Argentines remain

deeply convinced of their legitimate right to the islands. The Alfonsín government began to argue its nation's cause before the United Nations almost as soon as it came to power. Not long after, Foreign Minister Dante Caputo met with British diplomats in Geneva to attempt to establish the basis for renewing bilateral negotiations that would ultimately lead to the transfer of the islands to Argentine sovereignty. But the British will not play. It is too soon. The Falkland Islands Company lobby is still powerful enough to throw the House of Commons into a turmoil at the merest mention of a possible peaceful solution to the dispute. Meanwhile, the darkest predictions concerning the exorbitant cost to the British of maintaining a fortress Falklands have come true. The islanders themselves have become increasingly disillusioned, alcoholism is reported to be rising rapidly, outmigration has reached significant proportions, and the economic depression that has gripped the islands since the late 1970s is worse than ever. It is not a sustainable situation from the British point of view. Argentine author Haroldo Foulkes, in his sympathetic, intelligent book on the islanders, *Los Kelpers en las Malvinas y en la Patagonia*, predicts that a diplomatic solution is inevitable and that the islands will be transferred peacefully to Argentina once there is a combination of a democratic regime in Buenos Aires, a Labour government in London, and a Democratic administration in Washington. Only the first of these preconditions has been achieved thus far, so we shall have to wait a few more years.

The fact that many members of the Argentine military elite have not changed their view of the world as a result of the war is cause for alarm. Thankfully, the civilian participants in the decision-making process have changed theirs. Several participants have recognized that their ignorance of the world and their myopic view of it contributed directly to the crisis. Since the return of democracy, no fewer than four centers for the study of international relations have begun work in Buenos Aires. More significant, they talk to one another! They must contribute to a serious, informed discussion of issues by collecting information, examining data, and proposing alternatives and options to a government pledged to open discussion of policy issues. Although democratic government is not by itself a guarantee of peace and no Argentine government—civilian or military, left, center, or right—will be disposed to relax the pressure on the British or in any way diminish efforts to gain control over the Malvinas through negotiations, it is to be hoped that prospects for peaceful resolutions will be better with a democratic government, freedom of the press, and a pluralistic approach to decision making. Such a government will benefit significantly from the improved quality of academic discourse on international questions. The lack of such discourse reinforced what Carlos Escudé called "the myths of Argentine foreign policy." In a recent talk at one of the

new centers for international affairs, former Foreign Minister Oscar Camilión insisted that it was time for Argentines to see themselves as others see them and to come to understand the world, not in order to change or to become as others want them to be but so that they might formulate a reasonable foreign policy that defends their national interests without alienating them from the international community. In that way, and not through military adventures or through arrogance, will Argentina achieve the destiny that has been promised by so many different governments in the past century.

NOTES

1. Carlos Escudé's articles appeared in the *Buenos Aires Herald*, 25 and 17 Nov. 1986.
2. Rafael Perl, *The Falkland Islands Dispute in International Law and Politics* (New York: Oceana Publications, 1983)
3. See *Latin American Nations in World Politics*, edited by Joseph S. Tulchin and Heraldo Muñoz (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984).
4. See *Falkland Islands Review: Report of a Committee of Privy Councellors* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1983).
5. Arthur Gavshon and Desmond Rice, *The Sinking of the Belgrano* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1984).
6. Jozef Goldblat and Victor Millan, *The Falklands/Malvinas Conflict: A Spur to Arms Buildups* (Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 1983).
7. See Carlos J. Moneta, with E. López and A. Romero, *La reforma militar* (Buenos Aires: Legasa, 1985).

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