

# Counterfactual History and the Falklands/ Malvinas Crisis of 1982: Testing an Analytical Tool for the Study of International Crises

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The aim of this article is to assess whether counterfactual history could be used as a means to assess better what might have happened in an international crisis. We do so by taking as a case study the Falklands/ Malvinas Crisis of 1982. We shall pose a series of tightly focused counterfactual questions designed to enquire whether an alternative reality might have been possible or not. It is our contention that a counterfactual question that is based on what actually happened in order to ascertain whether a different scenario might have been possible could be an important analytical tool to analyse international crises.

## *What is Counterfactual History?*

Counterfactual history is based on a series of events that *did* happen and asks a question about something that *might have* happened differently. The variables employed are not *fictional*. The assumptions entertained are not *illusory*.

Counterfactual history is not science fiction. Counterfactual history does not create a reality that never was and could never have been. It does not depict a fictional life that goes well beyond the facts as they were or as they could plausibly have been. An example of science fiction, in this context, would be posing a question such as, 'What if a meteorite had fallen on 20 July 1944 on the Rastenburg's Wolfsschanze field headquarters in East Prussia, killing Adolf Hitler, who was then meeting top military aides?'

On the other hand, an example of a counterfactual question would be: 'What if the plot to kill Adolf Hitler on 20 July 1944, which was carried out by Claus, Count Schenk von Stauffenberg, on the Rastenburg's Wolfsschatze field headquarters in East Prussia, had succeeded in killing rather than wounding him?'

Counterfactual history is not designed to depict a scenario that *could not* have happened, but rather one that *might have* happened. The objective is not to change history, but to understand it better. In other words, counterfactual history is a device aimed at comprehending better the role of the different actors in the story being studied. Also, it is a means to comprehend the importance of chance or accident in human affairs.

Counterfactual history is based on the assumption that events are not preordained and that individuals are not actors playing a role without being aware of it. Decision makers are thought to be, on the whole, free agents and their decisions a corollary of choice.

To be sure, circumstances may limit their scope of decision and constrain their freedom of action. Counterfactual history is not founded on a postulate that decision-makers are omnipotent, operating in an unhindered setting. A clear distinction ought to be drawn in this regard between a non-deterministic assumption of human affairs, which is at the core of the argumentative logic of counterfactual history, and a reality of individual free choice entirely divorced from external constraints, which is not.<sup>1</sup>

## *Delineating an Analytical, Conceptual Framework*

Our aim is not to pose a counterfactual question and then try to answer it, but rather to analyze the pertinent variables in the Falklands/

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<sup>1</sup> For a similar conceptual definition by the author, see Yoav Tenenbaum, 'Counterfactual History and the Outbreak of World War I', in *Perspectives on History*, Vol. 53, No. 5 (May 2015), p. 44. For further examination of counterfactual history see Niall Ferguson (ed.), *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals* (Basic Books, 1999), and Andrew Roberts (ed.), *What Might Have Been: Imaginary History from Twelve Leading Historians* (Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2004).

Malvinas Crisis of 1982 so as to ascertain whether such a question can be asked in the light of our own aforementioned definition of what actually constitutes counterfactual history. In other words, the 'What if?' question would follow an assessment of the relevant variables in the story to gauge which of the different variables concerned, if at all, meets our own definition as to what counterfactual history is.

Our objective, then, is to establish the possibility of a 'might have been' on the basis of the 'has been', and to do so by posing questions.

In a sense, we would ask a counterfactual question to ascertain whether we can ask a counterfactual question. Thus, we would pose the counterfactual question and then proceed to analyze if the historical facts that are known to us warrant that counterfactual question. We link the counterfactual with the factual. The counterfactual has no *raison d'être* unless it is logically connected to the factual.

We will be careful not to engage in questions that go beyond the facts and events as these are known to us. Our aim is not to amuse, but to clarify; we wish to enlighten, and not to enliven. Therefore, a question such as 'Would Britain have adopted different policies during the Crisis had someone else served as Prime Minister rather than Margaret Thatcher?' would be irrelevant for our purposes. The question itself is no doubt very interesting, but it falls beyond the parameters we have established, for we deal with the past as it happened and only wish to ask if an element within it might have occurred differently. We deal with the protagonists and the events of the story. We do not try to find a replacement to either one. What we do is to ask whether something that actually took place might not have taken place or might have led to a different outcome; and we do so exclusively on the basis of the historical facts of which we are aware.

It is the contention of this article, that this structured form of analysis is a valuable means to understand better what actually happened and to be able to ascertain logically whether something might have happened differently. Indeed, considering the distinctive

characteristics of international crises, this form of analysis could help in elucidating what took place, how events evolved, and whether anything might have happened differently, and if so how; for by asking whether a counterfactual question is warranted by events we are compelled to investigate those events and their effects.

Furthermore, even if we reach the conclusion that a certain event, either by chance or accident, might have occurred differently, we would need to assess its effect in the wider context of the other events that took place in order to ascertain whether this might have led to a different outcome or not. In this regard, we should distinguish between the immediate effect and the wider, longer-term repercussion. The first might have led to a modification of an event as we know it, but without necessarily changing the outcome of the crisis being studied. We don't deal with the narrow effects of a possible change, but with its wider implications. The latter presupposes an understanding of all the pertinent events and decisions. Thus, an unexploded bomb that might have exploded might have led to more people being killed or injured, or to a ship being destroyed. However, the question to be asked is whether this by itself might have changed other variables in the story and led to a different outcome from the one we know.

#### *The Falklands/ Malvinas Crisis of 1982*

On the 2 April 1982, Argentinean forces invaded and captured the Falklands/ Malvinas Islands. The crisis that erupted as a result was part of a protracted conflict between Argentina and Britain, which started in 1833 with the seizure of the Islands by British forces.

Since 1833 Argentina had claimed sovereignty over the Islands, arguing that they were an integral part of the Argentinean national territory and should therefore be returned to their rightful owners.

The United Nations got involved in the conflict from the 1960s onwards, urging both Britain and Argentina to settle it peacefully by negotiations. To be sure, the UN saw the conflict as a colonial one, and Argentina had

insisted, particularly after 1945, that Britain's presence in the Islands was a relic of a colonial period. The British should relinquish the Islands in the same manner that they did other colonial territories overseas, Argentina contended. In the collective consciousness of the Argentinean people, the Malvinas Islands, as they are called in Argentina, were always an indivisible patrimony of Argentina's sovereign territory. Indeed, in all the official maps of Argentina, the Malvinas had always appeared as an integral part of the country.

Britain had always contended that it would be willing to negotiate a mutually-agreed settlement, but only one which was based on the wishes of the inhabitants of the Islands.

Contrary to other colonial conflicts, the local population in the Falklands/ Malvinas Islands wanted the 'colonial' power to continue to rule. Argentina, on the other hand, argued that the people living in the Islands had been brought there by the British. The inhabitants, according to this line of reasoning, were part and parcel of the same colonial system. Their interests had to be taken into account, not their wishes. In other words, what should determine the final status of the Islands, according to the Argentinean position, was not the desire of the local inhabitants, but the principle of territorial integrity and sovereign rights.<sup>2</sup>

The process of dialogue and negotiations, however difficult and haphazard at times, came to an end on 2 April 1982 when Argentinean forces invaded the Falklands/ Malvinas Islands. The decision by the military junta then ruling Argentina to launch a military invasion of the Islands constituted a strategic surprise to the British government.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For a dedicated collection of relevant primary sources see 'United Nations Documents on the Falklands-Malvinas Conflict,' South Atlantic Council, 2012, online at <http://www.staff.city.ac.uk/p.willets/SAC/UN/UN-LIST.HTM> (last accessed 1 June 2017).

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, PREM 19/615 f31: 'Falklands: No.10 record of conversation (MT-Haig) [pre-dinner meeting: Anglo-US responses to the invasion of the Falklands] [declassified 2012]', p. 1, online at <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/121974> (last accessed 1 June 2017), in which the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher refers to the Argentinean invasion as a surprise both to Britain and to the United

A strategic surprise occurs when those in charge of shaping foreign policy are surprised by the event taking place. They do not expect it, nor, for that matter, are they ready for it. In contrast, a tactical surprise denotes a situation whereby those in charge of shaping foreign policy are not surprised by the event itself, but rather by its timing or location.

Another characteristic of a foreign policy crisis is that decision-makers perceive that the risk of escalation is considerably greater than it was prior to the start of the crisis. Thus, if the crisis started in a non-violent manner, the fear is that it might easily escalate into a war; and if it started as a war that it might escalate into a wider or more intense violent confrontation.

Further, in a foreign policy crisis policy-makers believe they have to decide and act within a limited period of time and under significant pressure.<sup>4</sup> That was certainly the way that British decision-makers felt following the Argentinean invasion of the Falklands/ Malvinas Islands, leading them to act swiftly,

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States. The U.S. Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, retorts that it was even more of a surprise to the United States. PREM 19/616 f206 : 'Falklands: No.10 record of conversation (MT-Haig) [pre-dinner conversation: Anglo-US responses to the invasion of the Falklands] [declassified 2012]', online at <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/134921> (last accessed 1 June 2017. See also, U.S. State Department, 'Background Press Conference on Falkland Islands Situation, Department of State, 30 April, 1982,' p. 2, in which a 'Senior State Department Official' or 'Senior Administration Official' (Alexander Haig) refers to the Argentinean invasion as 'somewhat of a surprise not only to the United States, but perhaps more importantly to Great Britain'. For an overview in the popular press, see for example, Anon., 'PM Thatcher "never, never expected" Argentina to invade the Falklands; "it was such a stupid thing to do"', in *MercoPress* (28 December 2012), online at <http://en.mercopress.com/2012/12/28/pm-thatcher-never-never-expected-argentina-to-invade-the-falklands-it-was-such-a-stupid-thing-to-do> (last accessed 1 June 2017).

<sup>4</sup> For more information on foreign policy crises, see the introductory chapter in Michael Brecher and Jonathan Wilkenfeld, *A Study of Crisis* (University of Michigan Press, 2000); James Richardson, *Crisis Diplomacy: The Great Powers since the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 12-27, 351-352; Patrick J. Haney, *Organizing for Foreign Policy Crises: Presidents, Advisers and the Management of Decision-Making* (University of Michigan Press, 2002), pp. 2-10.

both diplomatically and militarily.

To that effect, at the initiative of Britain's Ambassador to the United Nations, Sir Anthony Parsons, a resolution was adopted by the United Nations Security Council on 3 April 1982, a mere twenty four hours after the invasion. Resolution 502 called for an immediate withdrawal of Argentinean armed forces from the Falkland/Malvinas Islands and for negotiations between Argentina and Britain aimed at resolving the conflict over the sovereignty of the Islands.<sup>5</sup>

The aforementioned resolution was seen as a diplomatic victory for Britain, which was thus able to operate within a convenient legal framework to try to secure a favourable outcome to the crisis. In this context, it is interesting to note that the official commission of enquiry set up in Argentina in the wake of the Falklands Crisis in order to investigate the decision-making process leading to and during the war. Formally called 'Informe Final de la Comision de Analisis y Evaluacion de las Responsabilidades Politcos y Estrategico Militares en el Conflicto del Atlantico Sur,' (and also known as 'El Informe Rattenbach' ['The Rattenbach Report'], from the last name of the person who presided in it, Benjamin Rattenbach, it concluded that UN Security Council Resolution 502 was a triumph for British diplomacy. Although it was surprised and thus had less time at its disposal than Argentina had to prepare for this eventuality, Britain managed to pass a resolution which laid the diplomatic and legal foundations for its subsequent actions during the Crisis.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> S/RES/502 (1982). Falkland Islands, online at <http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/resolutions/1982.shtml> (last accessed 1 June 2017).

For a brief, enlightening, behind-the-scenes description of the diplomacy leading to the adoption of Resolution 502, see British Diplomatic Oral History Project, 'Jane Barder interviewing Sir Anthony (Derrick) Parsons on 22 March 1996 at home in Devon', pp. 22-25, online at <https://www.chu.cam.ac.uk/archives/collections/bdohp/#P-Q> (last accessed 1 June 2017).

<sup>6</sup> 'El Informe Rattenbach - ¿Por qué se perdió la Guerra de Malvinas?', § 749-752, in *El Historiador*, online at [http://www.elhistoriador.com.ar/documentos/dictadura/el\\_informe\\_rattenbach\\_por\\_que\\_se\\_perdio\\_la\\_guerra\\_de\\_malvinas.php](http://www.elhistoriador.com.ar/documentos/dictadura/el_informe_rattenbach_por_que_se_perdio_la_guerra_de_malvinas.php) (last accessed 1 June 2017). The Report itself can be located on the official website of the

Moreover, immediately after the news of the Argentinean invasion had reached London, the British government proceeded to organize a large task force to be sent to the South Atlantic, which was dispatched on 5 April 1982. The objective behind it was to exert pressure on the Argentineans while diplomatic efforts were underway, and to respond militarily to the Argentinean invasion should those efforts ultimately fail.

In the meantime, the United States offered to mediate in order to avert an all-out war between the two countries. For that purpose, the U.S. Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, was sent by President Ronald Reagan on a shuttle diplomatic mission, entailing a series of meetings in London and Buenos Aires, which failed to produce an agreement. Similar efforts by the Peruvian government and the United Nations General Secretary, Javier Perez de Cuellar, were equally unsuccessful.

The military operation that ensued following the failure of diplomacy ended on 14 June 1982, with the surrender of the Argentinean forces in the Falkland/Malvinas Islands and restoration of British rule. The casualties resulting from the war were 649 Argentinean, 255 British and three Falkland Islands residents dead.

### *Counterfactual Questions and the Falklands/Malvinas Crisis of 1982*

We shall dwell upon and assess the plausibility and coherence of each counterfactual question we raise. We shall do so sequentially, from the beginning of the crisis onwards.

#### First

What if Margaret Thatcher had decided not to send a task force to the South Atlantic, thus foreclosing completely the military option following the Argentinean invasion of the Falkland/Malvinas Islands?

Such a question is divorced from the facts as we know them, for the option aforementioned was

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Argentinean Presidency, at <http://www.casarosada.gov.ar/informacion/archivo/25773-informe-rattenbach> (last accessed 1 June 2017).

not even considered by the British Prime Minister. She strongly believed that a task force ought to be sent in order to aid the diplomatic efforts due to be undertaken to try to settle the crisis peacefully. Should those efforts fail, she argued, the task force would be available in time to retake the Islands by force.<sup>7</sup>

Accepting the Argentinean invasion as a *fait accompli* was inconceivable for the Prime Minister and her War Cabinet. Further, agreeing to a mediating endeavour by the United States without sending a task force was equally unacceptable as Britain would be deprived of an important leverage in the ensuing negotiations.

Thus, considering that the option of not sending the task force was not being countenanced at all by Margaret Thatcher or, indeed, so far as we know, anyone else in the British War Cabinet, a counterfactual question like the one mentioned above would be irrelevant.

### Second

What if, in order to facilitate a compromise solution aimed at averting war, Margaret Thatcher and the British War Cabinet had consented to the demand of the Argentinean government that its forces remain in the Falkland/Malvinas Islands while negotiations to reach a final settlement took place?

That option was totally unacceptable to the British decision-makers. No compromise solution was even considered that did not entail a full withdrawal of Argentinean forces from the Islands.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> PREM 19/615 f31.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*; See also: 'Document#3: April 8, 1982 – Jim Rentschler's Telegram to Judge Clark: "Secretary's working dinner with Prime Minister Thatcher"; and 'Document#4: April 9, 1982 – Haig's Telegram to the President: "Discussions in London"', both in Andrea Chiampan & Jason Saltoun-Ebin, 'The Falklands Crisis', in *The Reagan Files* (5 August 2011), online at <http://www.thereaganfiles.com/document-collections/the-falklands-crisis.html> (last accessed 1 June 2017). Haig's telegram states: 'The Prime Minister has the bit in her teeth, owing to the politics of a unified nation and an angry Parliament, as well as her own convictions about the principles at stake. She is clearly prepared to use force, though she admits a preference for a

Thus, such a counterfactual question would be irrelevant as that option was not even considered in any way or form by the British government.

### Third

What if the Argentinean Junta had agreed to the formula proposed by the U.S. mediator, Alexander Haig, entailing a withdrawal of all military forces from the Islands, a mixed presence of Argentinean, British and U.S. representatives in the Islands for an interim period and negotiations aimed at settling the sovereignty issue?

The Argentinean military junta had invested much honour and prestige domestically to agree to any formula that did not secure Argentinean sovereignty over the Islands. Further, a withdrawal of its forces from the Islands was not even considered as a serious option. It might have been considered had Argentina received iron-clad assurances that its sovereignty over the Islands would not be questioned and that it would be fully recognized at the end of the negotiating process. In other words, the Argentinian military junta could not agree to withdraw its forces from the Islands unless Argentina's sovereignty was fully recognized.<sup>9</sup>

Beyond national reputation and patriotic feeling, the personal prestige and political

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diplomatic solution. She is rigid in her insistence on a return to the status quo ante, and indeed seemingly determined that any solution involve some retribution. (...) 'The Prime Minister is convinced she will fall if she concedes on any of three basic points, to which she is committed to Parliament:

- Immediate withdrawal of Argentine forces;
- Restoration of British administration on the islands;
- Preservation of their position that the islanders must be able to exercise self-determination.'

<sup>9</sup> Haig emphasized that the Argentinean Government 'is unable to accept any proposal that does not either clearly state that sovereignty has been transferred or that contains practical arrangements which insure that transfer has taken place.' U.S. State Department, 'Briefing by the Honorable M. Haig, Jr., Secretary of State before Key House Leadership and House Foreign Affairs Committee' 29 April, 1982, p. B3, online at <http://www.margareththatcher.org/document/114272> (last accessed 1 June 2017).

future of the members of the military junta was at stake. No scenario whereby Argentinean forces remained in the Islands or Argentina's sovereignty was recognized in advance of negotiations had any chance of being accepted by the British Prime Minister or her government.

Furthermore, as Haig himself has revealed, even when he thought he had secured an agreement by Galtieri and his foreign minister, Nicanor Costa Mendez, they would subsequently renege on it. If that was not enough, Haig added that the decision-making process in Argentina was cumbersome and incoherent.<sup>10</sup>

There was a long chain of military officials who had to consent to any agreement reached, thus *de facto* affording a veto power to individuals who had not been involved in the negotiations.

Thus, it would be irrelevant to depict a counterfactual scenario whereby the Argentina military junta would have been 'willing and able' to agree to an Argentinean withdrawal from the Falkland/Malvinas Islands and to negotiations the outcome of which would not have been known in advance. These options were not seriously considered.

It ought to be stressed that the military junta in Argentina did not launch a military invasion of the Islands as a bargaining chip in future negotiations. It was not intended to be a tactical move designed to improve its position in talks to be held on the sovereignty of the Falkland/Malvinas Islands. The invasion was undertaken as a strategic move. The intention was to 'reunite' the Islands with the Argentinean mainland. The premise behind the invasion was that Britain would not react militarily, and if it did that the United States would not support it.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>11</sup> The Rattenbach Report, among the many highly critical conclusions, contended: 'En esos momentos, resultó evidente lo erróneo de dos supuestos que condicionaron la concepción política y estratégica de la Junta Militar: QUE GRAN BRETAÑA NO REACCIONARÍA MILITARMENTE Y QUE LOS EE.UU. NO PERMITIRÍAN UNA ESCALADA MILITAR.' 'El Informe Rattenbach - ¿Por qué se perdió la Guerra de Malvinas?', § 755.

The decision by the military junta was motivated by domestic reasons. The invasion was undertaken with a view that it would create a *fait accompli* which would ultimately be accepted by the international community, which, in any event, was not necessarily opposed to Argentina's claim to the Islands.

As far as Argentina was concerned, once the Islands had been captured by Argentina, they would not be relinquished. It was not only a *credo* shared by most Argentineans. Once the invasion was launched, as far as Argentina was concerned, there was no way back.<sup>12</sup>

With the benefit of hindsight one may think that the Argentinean position was unwise. However, our task in this context is not to *judge* whether the Argentinean military junta *should* have behaved differently, but rather to *assess* whether there was a possibility that it *could* have behaved differently.

In this context, it is important to emphasize also the difference between employing hindsight as a necessary tool in counterfactual history and doing so in a normative manner.

Hindsight is a prerequisite to a structured and coherent counterfactual historical analysis. If our aim is to ascertain whether a counterfactual question can be posed, it is imperative that we assess all the facts that are currently known to us of the particular historical event under review. Unless we do so, counterfactual history is turned into another form of fiction, rather than a structured and coherent means of analysis.

In this respect, we should be careful to avoid

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See also Haig's comment in his conversation with Thatcher on 8 April, 1982, to the effect that 'the Argentines had at first been convinced that the use of force would go unchallenged. Now they had been shocked by the British reaction.' PREM 19/615 f31.

<sup>12</sup> The Rattenbach Report dwells on this point in a critical vein, arguing that the public pronouncements of Argentinean leaders and the general arrogance that prevailed both in the highest echelons of the armed forces and the foreign ministry, as well as the nationalistic frenzy encouraged by the printed and electronic media in the country, both reflected and instigated a policy which was rigid and disconnected from changing circumstances. See 'El Informe Rattenbach - ¿Por qué se perdió la Guerra de Malvinas?', §§ 291, 303, 304, 308.

using hindsight to pass judgements on the actions undertaken by the protagonists in question. Hindsight as an analytical tool in counterfactual history cannot be prescriptive in nature for it helps us deal in probabilistic assessments, and not in moralistic musings. The main question to be asked is not what an individual *ought* to have done, but rather what he or she *could* have done.

#### Fourth

What if Argentina had won the war? The premise behind this counterfactual question must be analysed to ascertain whether there was a viable chance for this outcome to emerge.

To begin with, we know that the British armed forces were considerably better than their Argentinean counterparts. They were professional and experienced whereas the Argentineans were conscripts and inexperienced. Further, we now know that the Argentinean soldiers may have been patriotically motivated to defend the Islands, but they were ill-fed, had no appropriate clothing for the harsh winter of the South Atlantic, and were, on the whole, maltreated by their superiors. One to one, the British soldier was in a significantly better condition to fight the war.<sup>13</sup>

To be sure, the British task force was in a disadvantage as it was much further away from its home base than the Argentinean forces in the Islands. Further, the Argentinean air force was relatively good, thus enhancing the geographical advantage, so to speak, in

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<sup>13</sup> See, for example, George Winston, 'Argentinean Soldiers' Ordeal during the Falklands War', in *War History Online* (1 January 2016), online at <https://www.warhistoryonline.com/war-articles/argentinian-soldiers-ordeal-falklandswar.html> (last accessed 1 June 2017); Cecilia P. Incardona, 'La guerra de las Malvinas y el trato de los soldados combatientes: ¿Delitos de lesa humanidad?', in *Terragnijurista*, undated, online at <http://www.terragnijurista.com.ar/doctrina/malvinas.htm> (last accessed 1 June 2017); and Ignacio de los Reyes, 'Torturas a los soldados argentinos en Malvinas/Falklands', in *BBC Mundo* (15 September 2015), online at [http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2015/09/150914\\_malvinas\\_falklands\\_torturas\\_testimonios\\_ao](http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2015/09/150914_malvinas_falklands_torturas_testimonios_ao) (last accessed 1 June 2017).

Argentina's favour.

In this context, an important element emerges, which was mentioned above. Britain was helped by the United States and Chile, respectively, in the provision of military equipment and intelligence information, by the first, and an intelligence base and the provision of intelligence information by the latter.

Certainly, chance or accident could have altered the way the war developed. Lawrence Freedman, for instance, relates how the British attempt to retake the dependency of South Georgia almost ended in disaster. 'If this first operation had ended as a fiasco,' Freedman concludes, 'it could have finished the whole campaign.'<sup>14</sup>

The question that we should ask in this context is whether a failed attempt to retake the dependency of South Georgia would have sealed the fate of the entire British military operation or just delayed it?

To be sure, the longer it would have taken Britain to conduct its military operations, the less hospitable the weather in the South Atlantic would have turned out to be with the onset of winter, rendering it more difficult for the British task force to accomplish its mission. That is why the British government feared that the Argentinean military junta might be playing for time, knowing full well that the longer the diplomatic process took, the more adverse the conditions in the area of the Islands would have been for a military assault by Britain.

In a document entitled, 'Military Lessons from the Falklands', written for the U.S. President on 19 July 1982, Caspar Weinberger says that 'in the final analysis, the battle for the Falklands appears to have been a closer call than many of us would believe. The British won primarily because their forces, inferior in numbers at first, were superior in training, leadership and equipment. (...) But luck also played a significant part'. For example, Weinberger indicates that some Argentinean bombs had

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<sup>14</sup> Lawrence Freedman, *The South Atlantic Crisis of 1982: Implications for Nuclear Crisis Management* (RAND/ UCLA Center for the Study of Soviet International Behavior, May 1989), p. 3, fn. 1.

failed to explode.<sup>15</sup>

The question that we ought to ask, and for which no clear answer might be advanced, is what would have happened had all the bombs that did not explode had exploded on the intended British targets?

We should be careful to distinguish between accidents and mishaps that are an integral part of any war, and accidents and mishaps that are exceptionally rare and which might have altered the way the war turned out to be had they not taken place.

Once again, had perhaps some of those bombs exploded, rather than leading to a British defeat, they might have caused a delay in Britain's victory. Nevertheless, we cannot downplay the implication entailed in Weinberger's conclusion that 'luck also played a significant part' in the outcome of the war. Indeed, of all the variables assessed in the article, the one that might be more valid for a counterfactual question would be this one, i.e., chance or accident. The British journalist and commentator, Simon Jenkins, contends that:

The glow of victory was to conceal how desperately close was the Falklands war. Had Argentinian planes bombed supply and troop ships rather than warships, a land operation could have become logistically impossible. The task force's heavy lift helicopters were all lost when the Atlantic Conveyor was sunk. Despite the performance of the Harrier jump jets, the landing was made without air superiority. Nor could it rely on the foolishness of the enemy in garrisoning the islands with poorly trained conscripts and without attack helicopters. The conclusion of most defence analysts is that the Argentinians should have won this war, and had they awaited the south Atlantic storms of June they probably would have done.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Quoted in The Margaret Thatcher Foundation, 'The U.S. and the Falklands War (2): the CIA', online at <http://www.margarethatthatcher.org/archive/us-CIAfalklands.asp> (last accessed 1 June 2017).

<sup>16</sup> Simon Jenkins, 'How Margaret Thatcher's gamble paid off', in *The Guardian* (9 April 2013), online at <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/apr/09/margaret-thatcher-falklands-gamble> (last accessed 1 June 2017).

The problem with Simon Jenkins' counterfactual scenario is that it entails a change of more than one variable in the story. It ignores what the official commission set up in Argentina in the wake of the war has stated, on the basis of a thorough investigation of local documents, that the decision to invade the Islands was taken under the assumption that Britain would not react militarily and that, in any event, the United States would not support any military response by Britain.

Thus, Argentina was not prepared for a British military response. There was no contingency plan for that. Argentina was not even prepared for a diplomatic campaign against it in any international forum. Therefore, a scenario whereby Argentina could have fought differently or better presupposes a fundamental change of perceptions on the part of the Argentinean decision-makers. It entails an advance assessment that an invasion of the Islands might lead to war with Britain and thus would require military and diplomatic planning for such an eventuality. The problem, of course, is that, had the Argentinean military junta thought that there was a serious possibility of war ensuing as a result of an invasion of the Islands, the decision to invade might not have been taken.

Further, to claim that Argentina would have won the war had it waited for the winter storms is peculiar for it implies that the Argentineans had anticipated the possibility of a war with Britain, which they had not; and, even after the task force was sent to the South Atlantic, the British were aware that Argentina might wish to play for time so as to render it more difficult for them to respond militarily in the midst of winter. Paradoxically, Britain was more prepared for a scenario whereby Argentina might play for time than Argentina was for a scenario in which it would play for time.

It should be stressed, once again, that, notwithstanding the patriotic feelings that motivated them, Argentinean soldiers were no match for their British counterparts.

Moreover, the consistent assistance provided by the United States and Chile, upon which we



dwelt later on in this article, rendered it easier for the British to conduct the war in a favourable manner, and would have helped them even had the war developed in a more adverse way, as the secret plans by the U.S. Navy make it clear (and on which we write further on).

Also, and this is important as it relates to all the aforementioned points, the decision-making process in Argentina during the crisis was cumbersome, slow and disorganized, whereas in Britain it was coherent, organized and transparent by comparison.

Thus, to conclude, Jenkins' argument presupposes a reality that did not exist, to begin with. He depicts a counterfactual scenario that is based on assumptions that are divorced from the facts as we know them, particularly on the Argentinean side. Chance and accident could have an important role in altering how events evolved, but in order for them to be a useful analytical tool in counterfactual history they ought to be based on historical facts.

It seems, though, that, taking into account all the factors at play in the war itself, chance or accident, or luck, as Weinberger would have put it, did not change how the war would have ended, but rather how long it would have taken for Britain to win it. This might have entailed a bigger number of casualties on both sides. It might have led to more ships and aircraft being hit on both sides. Further, the harsh winter of the South Atlantic might have complicated the execution of military plans. In this context, we should stress that, even though the approaching winter was a particular worry to British decision-makers, the Argentinean forces in the Islands were totally unprepared for it. Any difficulty encountered by British soldiers on account of the weather might have been less severe than the existential challenge facing their Argentinean counterparts, who were ill-clothed and ill-fed. Thus, for every hurdle that might have had to be overcome by the British in a longer war, perhaps a worse one might have had to be overcome by the Argentineans.

Nevertheless, it would be pertinent to ask a further counterfactual question.

## Fifth

What if the United States had not helped Britain with military equipment and intelligence information?

The United States had decided to declare its impartiality to begin with, so as to be able to assume the role of mediator between Argentina and Britain in order to try to avert an all-out war. To be sure, the Reagan Administration had endorsed UN Security Council Resolution 502, which called for the withdrawal of Argentinean forces from the Islands. Indeed, the U.S. stance was that the Argentinean military invasion of the Islands was totally unacceptable, but that it would remain neutral as to the question of sovereignty.<sup>17</sup>

Once the U.S. announced publicly on 29 April 1982 that its mediating efforts had failed, the Reagan Administration declared that it was no longer impartial, blaming Argentina for the failure of the talks. Haig says, among other things, that 'one would have to say that the United Kingdom has been reasonable and forthcoming throughout the discussions, and that Argentina has been less so.' He went on to stress what he defined as 'the basic American position,' according to which 'we cannot be or be perceived to be participating in an arrangement that would reward aggression'.<sup>18</sup>

For our purposes, it would be possible to contend that the United States could have

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<sup>17</sup> S/RES/502 (1982).

<sup>18</sup> See Bernard Gwertzman, 'US Sides with Britain in Falkland Crisis, Ordering Sanctions against Argentines', in *The New York Times* (1 May 1982), online at <http://www.nytimes.com/1982/05/01/us/us-sides-with-britain-falkland-crisis-ordering-sanctions-against-argentines.html?pagewanted=all> (last accessed 1 June 2017); ABC News Report, 'April 30, 1982: U.S. Supports Britain in Falklands War' (30 April 1982), podcast published and available online at <http://abcnews.go.com/Archives/video/falklands-war-1982-britain-9808582> (last accessed 1 June 2017).

For background, as well behind-the-scenes statements reflecting U.S. views in this regard, see State Department, 'Background Press Conference on Falklands Islands Situation, Department of State (...) 30 April, 1982', online at <http://fc95d419f4478b3b6e5f-3f71d0fe2b653c4f00f32175760e96e7.r87.cf1.rackcdn.com/7FE226970F2E45E2A7A86DB1A63EBFD9.pdf> (last accessed 1 June 2017).

remained impartial even after the mediation process had reached a dead end. The United States was sensitive to Latin American opinion, which was, on the whole, favourable to Argentina. U.S. obligations under the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) did not necessarily extend to this conflict, which was not directly related to the Cold War, thus formally justifying an impartial stance.

It would not be the first time since 1945 that the United States would not support Britain in a conflict taking place beyond Europe. In fact, back in 1956, the Administration of President Dwight Eisenhower came out very strongly against Britain (and France) following the latter's military operation in the Suez Canal area, which came in the wake of the failure of diplomacy to settle the crisis brought about by Egypt's nationalization and military seizure of the Suez Canal.

A stance of impartiality in the Falklands/ Malvinas Crisis of 1982 would have paled into insignificance as compared to the hostility displayed by the United States during the Suez Crisis of 1956. It must be emphasized: Since 1945 the United States had tried to distance itself from Britain whenever a conflict arose involving what was deemed to be a colonial issue. The Falklands/ Malvinas Crisis could have been seen in the same light, allowing the U.S. Administration to remain impartial.

There are a few gaps in the aforementioned argument. To begin with, the U.S. Defense Secretary, Caspar Weinberger, was so much in favour of the British from the very beginning of the Crisis that he even opposed U.S. mediation to try to settle it. He thought it was a serious mistake to declare impartiality, even for diplomatic purposes, and urged President Reagan to provide all military aid that Britain needed.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> See, for instance, Obituaries, 'Caspar Weinberger', in *The Telegraph*, 29 March 2006, online at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/7499144/Caspar-Weinberger.html> (last accessed 1 June 2017); also, more importantly, the record of the National Security Council Meeting of Friday, 30 April 1982, on the subject of the South Atlantic Crisis. 'Falklands: National Security Council minutes ("South Atlantic Crisis") [US 'tilt' towards Britain] [declassified 2011]', p. 5, online at

As a matter of fact, the United States helped Britain right from the start of the Crisis, even while the U.S. was being ostensibly impartial. It should be stressed that Margaret Thatcher was fully aware and grateful for the assistance in the area of intelligence that was provided by the United States from the very beginning of the Falklands/ Malvinas Crisis. In a memo written by the British Cabinet Secretary to the Prime Minister prior to her forthcoming meeting with Haig in London, Sir Robert Armstrong advised that 'you should be aware that the United States intelligence agencies are helping and supporting our own intelligence efforts with unreserved openness and generosity.'<sup>20</sup>

Further, apart from the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Jeane Kirkpatrick, no member of the U.S. Cabinet involved in shaping foreign policy had expressed any sympathy for the Argentinean position. Alexander Haig did his best to try to persuade his Argentinean interlocutors that his mediating efforts might secure for them a desired outcome at the end.<sup>21</sup> However, he and his aides were frustrated with their double-talk and lack of flexibility. So far as we know, once the mediation efforts had failed, there was no one, perhaps with the sole exception of Kirkpatrick, who urged the U.S. to remain impartial.<sup>22</sup>

Also, President Reagan had a close relationship with Prime Minister Thatcher. Although he cared precious little about the future of the Falkland/Malvinas Islands, he valued very much his personal relationship with her, which he thought was important in a wider international context. Following the failure of

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<http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/114329> (last accessed 1 June 2017).

<sup>20</sup> Prime Minister, Memo by Sir Robert Armstrong for the Prime Minister, 8 April, Ref. A08091, online at <http://fc95d419f4478b3b6e5f-3f71d0fe2b653c4f00f32175760e96e7.r87.cf1.rackcdn.com/719B3323576141C4883162CFE2FAA10D.pdf> (last accessed 1 June 2017).

<sup>21</sup> National Security Council Meeting, 30 April, 1982, Subject: South Atlantic Crisis, Top Secret, p. 5. Alexander Haig stresses that 'Our proposals, in fact, are a camouflaged transfer of sovereignty, and the Argentine foreign minister knows this, but the junta will not accept it.' 'Falklands: National Security Council minutes ("South Atlantic Crisis") [US 'tilt' towards Britain] [declassified 2011]', p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-6.

U.S. mediation, Reagan expressed himself in a clearly pro-British vein, though he wanted, as far as possible, to contain the developing crisis.<sup>23</sup>

With regard to the U.S. position during the Suez Crisis of 1956 and the shadow it cast on the Falklands Crisis of 1982, Haig made it clear that there should not be another Suez, implying that there should not be another international crisis leading to a rupture in the special bilateral relations between the United States and Britain.<sup>24</sup>

The former U.S. Navy Secretary, John Lehman, revealed during a speech he delivered on 26 June 2012, that the Reagan Administration had developed plans to loan a ship to Britain if it lost one of its aircraft carriers in the war. According to Lehman, President Reagan approved without hesitation the plan devised by the Navy. His instructions to Weinberger, his Secretary of Defence, had been simple: 'Give Maggie everything she needs to get on with it.'<sup>25</sup> Thus, the U.S. was ready to help the British even in case of a major setback, by providing them with its own ships. Reagan's words, as quoted by Lehman, make it crystal clear that the United States was fully behind Britain once diplomacy had failed to secure an agreement.

So far as we know, U.S. assistance turned out to be important for the prosecution of Britain's military campaign in the South Atlantic. However, even if we tried to stretch reality as it actually was in order to depict it as it *might* have been, a scenario whereby the U.S. withheld military and intelligence aid from Britain completely would not conform to the facts as we know them. After all, the Pentagon was

helping the British even while the United States was mediating in order to solve the crisis and its official position was one of impartiality. Reagan had a close personal relationship with Thatcher. Britain was the United States closest ally. Britain was a parliamentary democracy while Argentina was being ruled by a military junta.

Opinion polls in the U.S. indicated clearly that the overwhelming majority of people sided with Britain rather than with Argentina.<sup>26</sup>

The Senate passed a resolution, opposed only by one senator, Jesse Helms, expressing full support for Britain.<sup>27</sup>

Even in case of a major setback, such as losing an aircraft carrier in war, Britain would have been helped by the U.S. with an aircraft carrier of its own. Reagan's words, as quoted by the former Secretary of the Navy, make it abundantly clear that the British had a reliable, consistent and active ally in the United States once hostilities started in the South Atlantic.

Thus, even if we assumed for the sake of argument that it might have been convenient for the United States to adhere to its impartial position in public so as not to alienate its Latin American friends, the question would still remain as to why would the U.S. have refused to help Britain in secret bearing in mind all the aforementioned?

For a counterfactual question to be valid, it must be based on an assumption about something that might have happened differently based on all the facts as we know them. Our contention would be that, on the basis of the information available to us, there is hardly any evidence that could allow us to believe that things might have occurred differently in this regard.

One, and in a sense, related question, remains.

### Sixth

What if Chile had not cooperated with Britain

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<sup>23</sup> Nicholas Wapshott, *Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher: A Political Marriage* (Sentinel, 2007), pp. 160-185.

<sup>24</sup> See 'Falklands: National Security Council minutes ("South Atlantic Crisis") [US 'tilt' towards Britain] [declassified 2011]', p. 3; also, PREM 19/615 F92: 'Falklands: UKE Washington to FCO ("Falklands") [Henderson summarises US views; Haig: "there cannot be another Suez"] [declassified 2012]', online at <http://www.margarethatcher.org/document/122042> (last accessed 1 June 2017).

<sup>25</sup> Sam LaGrone, 'Reagan Readied U.S. Warship for '82 Falklands War', in *USNI News* (27 June 2012), online at <http://news.usni.org/2012/06/27/reagan-readied-us-warship-82-falklands-war-0> (last accessed 1 June 2017).

<sup>26</sup> See, for instance, Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands* (Pan Books, 1997), p. 136.

<sup>27</sup> Howard Levie, 'The Falklands Crisis and the Laws of War', in *International Law Studies*, Vol. 70 (1985), p. 212.

by furnishing it with intelligence information and by affording it a near-by base for its intelligence activities in the area?

Margaret Thatcher herself acknowledged years later that Chile's assistance during the war was very important to Britain. Chilean individuals who were involved in executing this policy have spoken openly about it;<sup>28</sup> so have British individuals.<sup>29</sup>

Chile saw Argentina as a potential enemy, having a territorial dispute with it over three islands in the Beagle Channel, which almost led to war between the two countries in 1978. Indeed, it is said that one of the reasons behind Argentina's decision to launch an invasion of the Falkland/Malvinas Islands was to send a message to Chile. To be sure, Argentina's military government had its eyes set on the forcible capture of the disputed islands in the Beagle Channel, following the successful invasion of the Falkland/Malvinas Islands. The head of Argentina's Air Force during the Falklands/ Malvinas Crisis of 1982, Basilio Lami Dozo was one of the three members of the military junta then ruling the country. He revealed many years later that Galtieri intended to attack Chile following the invasion of the Islands. Galtieri made his plans known when he announced that the Chileans should learn the lesson of what Argentina was doing now, because later it will be their turn.<sup>30</sup>

From the outset of the crisis, the British

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<sup>28</sup> See Fernando Matthei, 'Memorandum for Lady Thatcher on Chile's Support during Falklands' Conflict', in *Mercopress* (5 April 2012), online at <http://en.mercopress.com/2012/04/05/memorandum-for-lady-thatcher-on-chile-s-support-during-falklands-conflict> (last accessed 1 June 2017).

<sup>29</sup> On the testimony of Sidney Edwards, an RAF official who was in charge of the secret talks with Chile during the Crisis see, Harriet Alexander, 'Without Chile's help, We Would Have Lost the Falklands', in *The Telegraph* (7 July 2014), online at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/southamerica/falklandislands/10947350/Without-Chiles-help-we-would-have-lost-the-Falklands.html> (last accessed 1 June 2017).

<sup>30</sup> H.D., 'Después de Malvinas, iban a atacar a Chile', in *Perfil* (22 November 2009), online at <http://classic-web.archive.org/web/20120226054905/http://www.diario.perfil.com.ar/edimp/0420/articulo.php?art=18309&ed=0420> (last accessed 1 June 2017).

government realized that Chile could become a potential ally. The Joint Intelligence Committee in Britain had already indicated on 2 April 1982, that it would look at the possibility of assistance from potential allies, particularly Chile. The Chief of Staff discussed the possibility of using airfields in Chile so that the RAF could have a base within operational range of the Falkland Islands.<sup>31</sup> The British Government would receive information to the effect that 'Chile has taken a generally anti-Argentine line,' thus enhancing the belief in London that Chile could indeed become an active ally of Britain.<sup>32</sup>

The Chileans were fearful that Argentina might attack Chile should the military junta in Argentina be successful in capturing the Falklands/ Malvinas Islands.<sup>33</sup> Chile was apparently in a difficult position. On the one hand, it did not wish to be ostracized in Latin America by supporting Britain. On the other hand, the Falklands/ Malvinas Crisis of 1982 presented the Chileans with a unique

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<sup>31</sup> FCO, 7/4472: 'Falklands: Minutes of MOD Chiefs of Staff Committee - COS 2nd Meeting/82 (Falklands Situation, Operation Corporate, Decisions Required, Chile, Other Business) [declassified 2012]', pp. 1, 4, online at <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/122146> (last accessed 1 June 2017).

<sup>32</sup> CAB 148/218 f73: 'Cabinet, Defence and Overseas Policy (Official) Committee, Sub-Committee on the South Atlantic and the Falkland Islands, International Reaction to the Argentine Invasion of the Falkland Islands, ODA (SA) (82) 12, 8 April, 1982', Clause 3. Located online at <http://fc95d419f4478b3b6e5f-3f71d0fe2b653c4f00f32175760e96e7.r87.cf1.rackcdn.com/AB9A4D194AAF42B393993A6DB70062A0.pdf> (last accessed 1 June 2017).

<sup>33</sup> According to Haig, the Chileans were 'very fearful that if Argentina gets away with the seizure of the Falklands, next they're going to seize the Beagles'. 'Briefing by the Honorable Mr. Haig, Jr., Secretary of State before Key House Leadership and House Foreign Affairs Committee, Washington, D.C.', 29 April, 1982, p. 17 (B12), located online at <http://fc95d419f4478b3b6e5f-3f71d0fe2b653c4f00f32175760e96e7.r87.cf1.rackcdn.com/F9FBE507B68E4639A8301926B9C1BCD9.pdf> (last accessed 1 June 2017). See also Patricia Arancibia Clavel, 'Inglaterra no pudo tener un mejor aliado que Chile', in *Los Andes* (25 March 2002), online at <http://www.losandes.com.ar/noticia/opinion-36227> (last accessed 1 June 2017). Herein, Fernando Matthei dwelled on Chile's fears about Argentina's territorial ambitions, referring to General Galtieri's speech following Argentina's invasion of the Islands, from which it was easy to infer that Chile might be attacked next.

opportunity to help weaken its potential enemy, Argentina. Chile decided to keep some distance from Argentina's position while not being overly critical of the latter's actions. At the same time, in secret, it resolved to help Britain during the crisis. Its policy turned out to be successful as Argentina was ultimately defeated and, indeed, humiliated.

It could be argued perhaps that the Chilean military then ruling the country, under the leadership of Augusto Pinochet, could have decided, after all, not to cooperate with Britain. Chile could have hoped for a British victory, but without helping actively to bring it about. That was certainly an option.

On the other hand, Chile had a singular opportunity to help a much stronger state (Britain) weaken its potential enemy (Argentina) without necessarily incurring the wrath of its neighbours, as it would do so in secret and without making a fuss of it. Furthermore, Chile could thus secure in return military aid and diplomatic backing from that state (Britain), something that the Chilean military junta sorely needed then. Why would Chile miss such an opportunity?

Britain had much to gain and little to lose from that cooperation. Chile, for its part, had similarly much to gain and relatively little to lose, except the temporary anger of its Latin American friends should it become public knowledge.

Thus, in either case in which Britain got outside military and intelligence assistance (from the United States and Chile, respectively), a counterfactual question, though not wholly inconceivable, would seem to be founded on an unreasonable assumption, which is not backed up by the historical facts as these are known to us.

Without the help of both the United States and Chile, Britain's military campaign to re-conquer the Islands might have been significantly more difficult. Indeed, even Sidney Edwards, the RAF official in charge of Britain's links with Chile during the Falklands/ Malvinas Crisis, has stated that 'Without Chile's help, we would have

lost the Falklands.'<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, though, Sir Lawrence Freedman, who wrote the official history of the Falklands/ Malvinas War, has argued that, in his opinion, without Chile's help, the outcome would have been the same, though it would have been more difficult to achieve it.<sup>35</sup> In a sense, both Edwards and Freedman engage in counterfactual history. Both answer the counterfactual question, 'What would have happened had Chile not assisted Britain during the Falklands/ Malvinas Crisis?'

However, in order for that scenario to have occurred (in which Chile refused to have helped Britain), we need to assume a reality not warranted by the facts as are known to us. Let us remember: for a counterfactual question to be pertinent, a variable in the story must be changed, but only if it can be proved that such a change would have been plausible in the circumstances prevailing then. It is not enough to claim that it would not have been inconceivable for such a change to have taken place. It must pass the test of logical plausibility and historical coherence. We would argue that is so in this particular case. The prevailing conditions in the wake of Argentina's invasion of the Islands were such as to create a singularly propitious setting for an active, mutually convenient alliance between Chile and Britain. The benefits to be accrued to both countries was as clear then as it is today with the benefit of hindsight. Chile feared Argentina's ambitions more than any possible adverse reaction in Latin America. The first was perceived as much more of a tangible menace than the latter. Anyway, from the outset it was obvious to the representatives of the two countries that were involved in the forging and implementation of this alliance that secrecy was paramount, thus diminishing any immediate adverse reaction that might emerge in Latin America. The convergence of interests between Chile and Britain was so obvious as to allow us to conclude that a counterfactual question in this regard would be implausible.

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<sup>34</sup> Alexander, 'Without Chile's help, We Would Have Lost the Falklands'.

<sup>35</sup> Anon., 'Sin la ayuda chilena, para los británicos habría sido más difícil', in *Clarín* (3 July 2005), online at <http://edant.clarin.com/suplementos/zona/2005/07/03/z-03702.htm>.

### *Conclusion*

Our analysis has led us to the conclusion that no counterfactual question could reasonably be posed in the context of the Falklands/ Malvinas Crisis of 1982. This is not to say that we believe in historical inevitability. As we stated at the beginning of the article, counterfactual history is postulated on the basis that history is not preordained and that the individual is, on the whole, a free agent and that his or her actions are the corollary of choice, albeit within prevailing circumstances and objective conditions. It is precisely this line of reasoning that has guided our analysis and which has led us to examine each possible counterfactual question to ascertain its pertinence and coherence. In a sense, it could be argued that counterfactual history, like history itself, is not inevitable. Not every historical event merits a 'What if' question. However, in order to know that, one needs to assess carefully the different variables in the story to see whether a change in any one of those variables would have been plausible and coherent based on the facts as are known to us. This is what we have done with regard to the Falklands/ Malvinas Crisis of 1982.

This is what can be done with regard to other international crises in history. Rather than pose a counterfactual question and then try to answer it, we follow a structured format in which we ask whether a counterfactual question is warranted for each variable under review. Our approach, we would argue, helps us understand better both the way in which the crisis evolved and the way in which it might have evolved. Our purpose is not to engage in mere historical speculation. We are not interested in what could have happened, but rather in what might have happened. However, even then, our aim is to enquire first whether a counterfactual question would be pertinent in the light of what happened. In other words, does it make sense to pose a counterfactual question considering the facts as are known to us? Before we dwell on changing a variable in the story, we have to ascertain whether the facts allow us to do that. For a counterfactual question to be valid and helpful as an analytical tool, it needs to be based on a coherent

possibility that an event might have developed differently than it actually did.

To be sure, chance or accident might have led to a different scenario in a particular instance of the crisis. Our aim, though, would be to ascertain whether such a change might have had an impact, beyond the particular event in which it took place, on the outcome of the crisis. That might depend on the other pertinent events that occurred and the decisions that were taken. However important in history, particularly in international crises, the effect of chance or accident depends on the effects of parallel events.

Using counterfactual history as an analytical tool to study international crises helps us understand better the events involved, the effects of the decisions reached and the actual role of chance or accident. We believe that our structured, counterfactual approach narrows the possibilities of changes that might have occurred and thus leads us to a clearer picture of what actually occurred.

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