

# **The U.S. Decision-making Process during the Falklands Crisis**

**Cannon Yi-feng Kuo\***

## **Abstract**

**“The secret of crisis management is not good vs. bad, it’s preventing the bad from getting worse.” ---Andy Gilman**

*The Falklands Crisis reflects a somewhat similar situation between China and Taiwan. China, like Argentina, would invade islands off its coast and then fend off a relief force — most likely from the U.S., which, like the British, would need to travel thousands of miles. Another similarity is that most Taiwanese people consider themselves Taiwanese rather than Chinese<sup>1</sup> like residents of the Falklands; nearly all want to remain British.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the author attempts to examine what the USG would put into perspective when facing a crisis related to the sovereignty issues of one of its allies during the decision-making process.*

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<sup>1</sup> “Majority of Taiwanese don’t identify as ‘Chinese’: poll,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, May 13, 2020, <https://www.smh.com.au/world/asia/majority-of-taiwanese-don-t-identify-as-chinese-poll-20200513-p54sh5.html>.

<sup>2</sup> “Falkland Islands vote 99.8% to stay British,” *France 24*, March 12, 2013, <https://www.france24.com/en/20130312-falklands-vote-overwhelmingly-remain-british>.

*This paper adopts Allison's Rational Actor Model (RAM), Organizational Behavior Model (OBM), and Governmental Politics (GPM) to examine how the "tilt" policy towards Britain was done during the Falklands Crisis and subsequent war between a powerful U.S. regional partner, Argentina, and the United States' closest ally, the U.K. over the sovereignty issue of the Falklands.*

*The crisis prompted a clash within the U.S. foreign policymaking establishment as administration officials balanced the costs of the conflict for U.S. interests in the Western Hemisphere against the risks of undermining the Western Alliance. To maximize the U.S. interests, the U.S. took a neutral stand at the beginning of the crisis and launched mediation to defuse the conflict between the two allies. However, the mediation was overtaken by events and had to be changed to pursue U.S. interests to a lesser extent. The final "tilt" emerged as a result of the rational deliberation to preserve U.S. strategic objectives, the component organizations: State Department, CIA, the Congress, and the Defense Department carrying out their missions based on their routines, SOPs and culture as well as the pulling and hauling between central players.*

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**Keywords:** the Falklands Crisis, RAM, OBM, GPM, Western Hemisphere, Western Alliance, tilt

## Introduction

The Falkland Islands consist of two large islands, East and West Falkland, and several smaller ones, which lie in the South Atlantic some 300 miles east of the island of Tierra del Fuego at the southern tip of the South American continent.<sup>3</sup>

Many figured it stands to reason that the U.S. would support and side with Britain because of the so-called US-UK “Special Relationship” during the Falklands crisis between two U.S. allies, Argentina and Britain. After studying the declassified documents and participants’ interviews, this author found the U.S. almost “betrayed” its most important ally, who would regularly give higher priority to relations with the European Community and the Commonwealth than to ties with the U.S., according to Kirkpatrick during her tenure as USUN Representative.<sup>4</sup>

President Reagan had outlined a fairly clear U.S. position from the start of the crisis: neutrality over which country had sovereignty over the Falklands but strong opposition to settling the question by military aggression. Reagan then implemented what this author calls a “dual-track” approach to defuse the crisis by allowing his cabinet secretaries large leeway in interpreting it. Indeed, Weinberger and Haig left this National Security Council

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Calvert, “Sovereignty and the Falklands crisis,” *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 59, no. 3 (Summer 1983): 405.

<sup>4</sup> Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, “My Falklands War and Theirs,” *The National Interest* 18 (1989): 16.

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(NSC) meeting on April 7, 1982, five days after the Argentine invasion, with Reagan's approval of further installments of military aid led by Defense Secretary Weinberger and of shuttle diplomacy led by State Secretary Haig. The two opposing forces have been bending over backward for three weeks to achieve their goals. These two opposing forces, in this author's opinion, also sowed the seeds of failure for diplomatic mediation.

Finally, the modest and essentially public U.S. "tilt" toward Britain at the NSC meeting on April 30 became more pronounced in practice as diplomacy faded and the soldiers decided the outcome on the ground. Military aid became Washington's most significant contribution to the war.<sup>5</sup>

### *Literature review*

There is a wealth of research on the Falklands War, but there are few works that use Allison's three decision theories to analyze what made the U.S. foreign policy decision-making openly support Britain in the Falklands crisis.

Among the works that describe the war between Britain and Argentina in the Falkland Islands or the post-war review are the following: Fowler (1982) details the land forces that contested the

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<sup>5</sup> Alexander R. Wieland and Adam M. Howard, eds. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988: Conflict in the South Atlantic, 1981-1984*. (Washington D.C.: United States Government Publishing Office, 2015), Document 195.

Falklands War,<sup>6</sup> and English and Watts (1982) examine the naval forces of both sides who fought in the battle for the Falklands<sup>7</sup> and Freedman (1982) argues, through the British perspective, that if there are lessons to be learned, they lie in recognizing that factors neglected in formal presentations of a military balance are often decisive. Britain's victory was only partly based on equipment.<sup>8</sup> Monaghan (1998) portrays the battle between Britain and Argentina for supremacy in the Falklands Islands as little more than a skirmish. He employs literary critical methods in developing a comprehensive analysis of the political speeches and journalism through which the Thatcherite myth of British greatness reborn in the Falklands along neo-conservative lines was communicated<sup>9</sup> Badsey (2004) gives a fascinating new insight into the Falklands Conflict, covering every aspect of its origins and the political and diplomatic response to the Argentinean action as well as illuminating accounts of the military effort to retake the islands, at every level of command.<sup>10</sup>

Chant (2013) shows how the key to British success was the

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<sup>6</sup> William Fowler, *Battle for the Falklands (1) Land Forces*, Vol. 1 (London: Osprey Publishing, 1982).

<sup>7</sup> Adrian English and Anthony Watts, *Battle for the Falklands (2): Naval Forces*, Vol. 2 (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 1982).

<sup>8</sup> Lawrence Freedman, "The war of the Falkland Islands, 1982," *Foreign Affairs* 61, no. 1 (1982): 196-210.

<sup>9</sup> David Monaghan, *The Falklands War: Myth and Countermyth* (California: Springer, MacMillan Press: 1998).

<sup>10</sup> Stephen Badsey, Mark Grove, and Rob Havers, *The Falklands conflict twenty years on: lessons for the future* (London: Routledge, 2004).

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speed with which the British gained and then maintained air superiority over the islands and the waters around them with their small force of Sea Harrier *Short Take-Off and Vertical Landing* (STOVL) warplanes, which operated from two aircraft carriers.<sup>11</sup> Anderson (2014) portrays the Argentine invasion of the Falklands in 1982 sparked national outrage and Britain felt she had to avenge the humiliation and protect her own. His book explores both the military and political dimensions of this important conflict, including detailed accounts of the air/sea battle, the Battle for San Carlos Water, Goose Green, Mt Harriet, Tumbledown, and many others. It explains how success in the Falklands set the stage for the years of Thatcher's dominance and restored British prestige. Including first-hand accounts from both soldiers and civilians, this is an interesting and thoroughly up-to-date appraisal.<sup>12</sup>

Francis Mackay and Jon Cooksey (2017) tell the story of Britain's Special Air Service (SAS) raid on Pebble Island during the Falklands War.<sup>13</sup> Bijl (1992) examines the history, organization, and equipment of the Argentine forces that battled for control of this remote British outpost during the Falklands War

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<sup>11</sup> Chris Chant, *Air war in the Falklands 1982* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013).

<sup>12</sup> Duncan Anderson, *The Falklands War 1982* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014).

<sup>13</sup> Francis Mackay and Jon Cooksey, *Pebble Island: The Falklands War 1982* (Pennsylvania: Casemate Publishers, 2017).

(1982).<sup>14</sup>

The above works are all accounts of the war between the two countries in the Falkland Islands and rarely talk about why the United States finally decided to support Britain.

Gordon (1982) gives his point of view on the relationship between the U.S. and Latin American countries. He points out how the bond changes among members of the Organization of American States (OAS) and how the Falklands Crisis impacts the US-Latin American relations and the member countries themselves.<sup>15</sup> His work helps people understand issues between Latin American countries themselves and the United States.

Works that describe the economic sanctions imposed on Argentina during the Falkland Islands crisis are the following: Daoudi and Dajani (1983) analyzed the Falkland Islands War from the perspective of the economic system, they summarized the economic system between Britain and Argentina from the beginning of the crisis and the impact of economic sanctions on Argentina from political, economic and psychological aspects. They conclude that economic sanctions are effective and useful even if their complex potentials are not fully explored.<sup>16</sup> Martin

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<sup>14</sup> Nick van der Bijl, *Argentine Forces in the Falklands War* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 1992).

<sup>15</sup> Gordon Connell-Smith, "The OAS and the Falklands conflict," *The World Today* 38, no. 9 (September 1982): 340-347.

<sup>16</sup> M. S. Daoudi, and M. S. Dajani, "Sanctions: the Falklands episode," *The World Today* 39, no. 4 (April 1983): 150-60.



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(1992) examines Britain's success in gaining the cooperation of other states, particularly the members of the European Economic Community (EEC). She argues that British manipulation of the EEC's institutional incentives overcame members' resistance and details the involvement of the EEC and the decisions that led to the Community's imposition of sanctions.<sup>17</sup>

Works on crisis warnings and misjudgments before the crisis in Argentina are Hopple (1984), who illuminates issues of conflict and crisis warning and emphasizes the crucial importance of the strategic logic of decision makers.<sup>18</sup> Feldman (1985) pointed out the timing of the Falklands invasion and the subsequent miscalculation that the United States would tacitly assist Argentina were partly shaped by U.S. policy, and the abruptness of Argentine actions was conditioned by Reagan administration overtures towards a grand "anti-Communist" alliance.<sup>19</sup> This author believes that the United States should also be responsible for Argentina's decision to send troops to the Falkland Islands. This is because the U.S. government relied on the assistance of the Argentine anti-communist junta in order to fight against the

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<sup>17</sup> Lisa L. Martin, "Institutions and cooperation: Sanctions during the Falkland Islands conflict," *International Security* 16, no. 4 (1992): 143-178.

<sup>18</sup> Gerald W. Hopple, "Intelligence and warning: implications and lessons of the Falkland Islands War," *World Politics* 36, no. 3 (1984): 339-361.

<sup>19</sup> David Lewis Feldman, "The United States Role in the Malvinas Crisis, 1982: Misguidance and Misperception in Argentina's Decision to Go to War," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 27, no. 2 (1985): 1-22.

expansion of communism in the American countries at the beginning of the Reagan administration.

Publications belonging to U.S. government organizations and how U.S. officials do their jobs at the United Nations (U.N.) include: Pfiffner (1986) observed Presidents must set early ground rules for the role that cabinet members will play in the administration and the appropriate relationship between the White House staff and the Cabinet. Kirkpatrick (1989/90) points out her observations during her tenure as USUN Representative at the U.N. that the “international community” did not approve of the British war policy. She also observed how the U.K. had not supported U.S. interests at the U.N. and the attitudes of Haig and Weinberger. Dunn (1994) examined the policy dilemma posed by the crisis, the motivations of the key players involved in the process, and the policy that finally emerged.<sup>20</sup> Thornton (1998) exposes the role of the Regan Administration in the war that ended Argentina’s nuclear program and helped keep Margaret Thatcher in power.<sup>21</sup> John Lehman (2012), who was U.S. Secretary of the Navy during the Falklands War. In this personal recollection of the war’s conduct, he emphasizes a strong and mutually supportive Anglo-American relationship at odds with the emerging historical interpretation of the alliance between the U.K.

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<sup>20</sup> David B. Dunn, “Bureaucratic Politics and the Falklands Campaign,” Research Paper, National War College, Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, DC: 1994.

<sup>21</sup> Richard C. Thornton, *The Falklands Sting: Reagan, Thatcher, and Argentina’s Bomb* (Nebraska: Potomac Books Incorporated, 1988).

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and the U.S. as one fraught with difficulties and mistrust.<sup>22</sup> Wieland (2013) explores the life of Caspar Weinberger and explains why President Reagan chose him for Secretary of Defense.<sup>23</sup>

However, many declassified documents show that Britain was very dissatisfied with the attitude and the way the United States handled the crisis during the period of American mediation.

Works that are part of the U.K. government's operations include Sanders, Ward, Marsh, and Fletcher (1987), who argue that the Falklands war produced a boost in Conservative popularity of at most three percentage points for a period of only three months. Government popularity was already accelerating as a result of macroeconomic factors before the outbreak of the Falklands crisis, in particular, "personal economic expectations" proved to be of critical theoretical and empirical significance and can be modeled satisfactorily on the basis purely of objective macroeconomic indices. Thus, macroeconomic factors were at the roof revival of Mrs. Thatcher's political fortunes, and most of the boost to government popularity that occurred in the spring of 1982 derived from intelligent (or, perhaps, cynical or even

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<sup>22</sup> John Lehman, "The Falklands War: Reflections on the 'Special Relationship,'" *The RUSI Journal* 157, no. 6 (2012): 80-85.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Howard Wieland, "Direct responsibility: Caspar Weinberger and the Reagan defense buildup," Ph.D. diss, The University of Southern Mississippi, 2013, ii.

fortuitous) macroeconomic management.<sup>24</sup> Freedman (2005) provides a detailed and authoritative account of one of the most extraordinary periods in recent British political history and vividly portrays a government at war. After the shocking Argentine invasion of the Falklands in April 1982, Margaret Thatcher faced the crisis that defined her premiership as she determined to recover the islands.<sup>25</sup>

On the US-UK “Special Relationship,” Freedman (2006) compares the US-UK special relationship during the Falklands War in 1982 and the Iraq War in 2003. In addition, he argues that although Britain and the United States were on the same side in both wars, the basis of cooperation was different. In the Falklands War, despite British rhetoric downplaying American influence, American material support was crucial to Britain; however, in the Iraq War, Britain acted as a mediator between the United States and other European allies. Britain had little influence on the direction of U.S. policy. Therefore, in most people’s view, Prime Minister Blair became Bush’s sidekick.<sup>26</sup>

Boyce (2017) traces the interaction of war and diplomacy and analyzes why the Falklands conflict of 1982 engaged the

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<sup>24</sup> David Sanders, Hugh Ward, David Marsh, and Tony Fletcher, “Government Popularity and the Falklands War: A Reassessment,” *British Journal of Political Science* 17, no. 3 (1987): 281-313.

<sup>25</sup> Lawrence Freedman, *The official history of the Falklands Campaign, Volume 2: War and diplomacy* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>26</sup> Lawrence D. Freedman, “The special relationship, then and now,” *Foreign Affairs* 85 (2006): 61.

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British and Argentine people in a deeply personal way. He also examines the interpretation of the war in Britain, revealing how the war--a successful one--was seen by its critics as an example of “Thatcher’s Britain.” This “small war” exemplified what one historian calls “the myriad faces of war” and had--and has--resonances larger than its size.<sup>27</sup>

The only work that uses Allison’s three models to explain why the U.S. decided to support the U.K. in the Falklands crisis is written by Li. However, the author only devotes a few pages in the last chapter to explain the decision-making of the tilt toward the U.K. through Allison’s three models in this crisis.

Li (2017) states that the U.S. policy during the Falklands Crisis did not purely aim to stand by Britain, but a dynamic policy, which has undergone a process from neutral mediation to supporting Britain to the ultimate return to neutrality. She discusses the disagreement within the U.S. government about whether or not to support the U.K. between the Defense and State departments. She compared the Anglo-US and Argentina-US relationships before and after the crisis and the dilemma the U.S. was facing. In her last chapter, she understated Allison’s three models for explaining U.S. foreign policy in this crisis.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> George Boyce, *The Falklands War* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017).

<sup>28</sup> Siyu Li, “Difficult Choice: A Study on the Decision-Making of the Reagan Administration During the Falklands War (1982-1983),” Master’s Thesis, Central China Normal University, 2017 [In Chinese].

*Main purpose*

The purpose of this paper is to examine what made the Reagan administration decide to side with the U.K. on the sovereignty dispute of the Falkland Islands from a neutral position to tilt towards the U.K. My research questions are: what drives the decision-making from RAM, OBM, and GPM perspectives, respectively?

Few works have ever explored what made the U.S. decide to side with Britain through the lenses of Allison's three models. Perhaps many consider the siding a trifle due to the "Special Relationship" between the U.S. and the U.K., or intrinsically the crisis itself is less interesting or important than any other modern war. However, did the siding-with-Britain decision happen really smoothly as it looked? At the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Falkland war, this author attempts to examine and understand better how the process of the U.S. decision-making of the tilt was done based on the declassified documents from both the U.K. and the U.S., previous relevant works, and memoirs of major players through the lenses of the three models devised by Allison and Zelikow, namely rational actor model, organizational behavior model, and governmental politics model during the Falklands crisis.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> James P. Pfiffner, "White House Staff Versus the Cabinet: Centripetal and Centrifugal Roles," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (1986): 666.

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### *The Falklands Crisis Background*

Argentina bases her claim to the Falklands on the Islands' possession and occupation by Spain in the late 1790s. Though the actual discoverer of the Islands remains in dispute, the first documented settlement was established by the French in 1764. The French named the Islands "Iles Malouines," after the French port St. Malo. (The name was later translated by the Spanish to Malvinas.) Two years later, the French sold the islands to the Spanish Crown for 25,000 British pounds.

In the meantime, the British, in 1765, laid claim to the islands, initiating a sovereignty dispute first with France, then with Spain, which was only abandoned when Britain's attention was turned to the Revolutionary War (1775-1783) launched by the American colonies to the north. The Spanish remained in actual possession of the Islands for the next 40 years until Argentina, newly independent from Spain, claimed them for itself. A small Argentine delegation established a new capital at the protected harbor of Stanley, only to be dislodged by three boatloads of British seamen in 1833. The British, through the royally chartered Falkland Islands Company, populated the Islands with colonists and sheep and have administered it ever since.<sup>30</sup>

The Falkland Islands constitute one of Argentina's oldest

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<sup>30</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Document 1.

foreign policy problems. The question of sovereignty over the Islands, claimed by Argentina but administered by Great Britain since English marines threw out Argentine settlers in 1833, has become an Argentine staple at the U.N. and among the Non-Aligned, absorbing for many years a disproportionate amount of Argentine international political capital and energy in world fora.<sup>31</sup>

On May 3, 1979, Conservative Party leader Margaret Thatcher got elected Britain's first female prime minister. The Tories ousted the incumbent Labor government in parliamentary elections and inherited the confidential bilateral negotiations with Argentina over the Falkland Islands that had started in 1966.<sup>32</sup> The initial approach of the Thatcher government was to continue negotiating with the Argentinians on a permanent settlement to the issue. On March 10, 1981, Ron Deare, Head of the Foreign Office's West Indian and Atlantic Department, reviewed the status of discussions with Argentina on the future of the Falkland Islands. The ministerial-level talks in New York at the end of February of the same year produced a stalemate. Argentina insisted on its sovereignty, and the Islanders were determined to remain British. Minister of State Nicholas Ridley had carried a mandate from London to support the

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<sup>31</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Document 1.

<sup>32</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Document 1.



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Islanders. To get things off dead center, Ridley had proposed several options to the Islanders, including a lease-back arrangement that would have conceded Argentina sovereignty over the Islands on the understanding that they would immediately be leased back to the British for a specified period. The Islanders wanted to make no concessions.<sup>33</sup>

On Argentina's side, after Galtieri took power as Argentine President on December 22, 1981, Argentina became annoyed at the British foot-dragging on the question. Therefore, by January 1982, the Argentine Junta's plans to invade the islands had become explicit. According to an article in Buenos Aires daily *La Prensa*, the new Galtieri administration may be considering sending an "ultimatum" to Her Majesty's Government (HMG) demanding recognition of Argentine sovereignty over the Falklands and significant movement toward resolution of the drawn-out dispute.<sup>34</sup>

Additionally, the British government decided to remove the HMS *Endurance* from the Falkland Islands. This decision, taken by the Ministry of Defense and confirmed by Parliament on June 30, 1981, was deplored by cabinet members, members of

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<sup>33</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Document 4.

<sup>34</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Document 9.

parliament, and the Islanders.<sup>35</sup> This move was widely perceived by the Argentines as a reduction in British commitment to the islands.<sup>36</sup>

On March 19, 1982, Argentine workers hoisted an Argentine flag on the island of South Georgia,<sup>37</sup> followed by a battalion of Argentine Marines landed by amphibious means near Port Stanley on April 2.<sup>38</sup> The Falklands Crisis thus started. The next day the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 502, demanding an immediate cessation of hostilities between Argentina and the United Kingdom and a complete withdrawal by Argentine forces. The council also called on the governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom to seek a diplomatic solution to the situation and refrain from further military action.<sup>39</sup>

The resolution showed different perspectives of the international community regarding the sovereignty issue of the

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<sup>35</sup> Matthew Fehrs, "Too Many Cooks in the Foreign Policy Kitchen: Confused British Signaling and the Falklands War," *Democracy and Security* 10, no. 3 (2014): 236.

<sup>36</sup> Owen Bowcott, "Thatcher Warned of Defense Cuts Dangers before Falklands War," *The Guardian*, December 30, 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/dec/30/thatcher-warned-defence-cuts-falklands>.

<sup>37</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Document 15.

<sup>38</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Document 44.

<sup>39</sup> "United Nations Security Council Resolution 502," Wikipedia, accessed December 10, 2021. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_Nations\\_Security\\_Council\\_Resolution\\_502](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council_Resolution_502).

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Falklands. It was adopted by ten votes in favor (France, United Kingdom, United States, Zaire, Guyana, Ireland, Japan, Jordan, Togo, and Uganda) to 1 against (Panama) with four abstentions (China, Poland, Spain, and the Soviet Union).<sup>40</sup> Resolution 502, which was in the United Kingdom's favor, gave the U.K. the option to invoke Article 51 of the United Nations Charter and claim the right of self-defense. It was supported by members of the Commonwealth and by the European Economic Community, which later imposed sanctions on Argentina.<sup>41</sup>

### **Rational Actor Model Perspective and the first cut**

#### *Rational Actor Model (RAM)*

In analytical perspectives on foreign policy decision-making, the first is the Rational Actor Model (RAM). This approach assumes that a unitary state as the actor in foreign policy is rational and can be relied on to make informed, calculated decisions that maximize value and perceived benefits to the state. RAM depends heavily on individual state-level interaction between nations and governments as units of analysis, assuming the availability of effective information management of policymakers for optimized decision-making and that actions taken all the way are consistent and coherent. Steps in rational actor decision-making are identifying the problem, defining

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<sup>40</sup> "United Nations Security Council Resolution 502."

<sup>41</sup> "United Nations Security Council Resolution 502."

desired results, assessing the consequences of potential policy alternatives, and finally, making the most rational decision to maximize strategic goals and objectives.

The rational actor theoretical approach can be valid for understanding the goals and intentions behind a foreign policy action. To use the RAM in explaining why the U.S. finally decided to openly announce support for the U.K. One needs to understand the temporal and spatial context of the Falkland Islands Crisis in 1982.

Between the late 1960s and the late 1970s, there was a thawing or *détente* of the ongoing Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union.<sup>42</sup> By the end of the 1970s, American nuclear superiority had vanished, and the Soviet momentum, made up of ceaseless efforts to improve weapons accuracy, carried them to the “margin of superiority.” In the 1980s, the U.S. began, hesitantly, to strengthen its NATO conventional forces and urged U.S. allies to do likewise.<sup>43</sup> As a result of a decade of declining defense budgets, some induced by the vain hope that the era of “*détente*” would lead the Soviets to reduce their massive military buildup; and the Vietnam War, which cost the U.S. untold

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<sup>42</sup> “Milestone: *Détente* and Arms Control, 1969-1979,” Office of the Historian, accessed February 10, 2022, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/detente>.

<sup>43</sup> William Z. Slany, et al. (ed.), *American Foreign Policy Current Documents 1982. Department of State Publication 9415* (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1985), 4.

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billions but weakened the U.S. in every way instead of giving it any added military strength. The strategic nuclear balance was beginning to tip to the Soviet's advantage, eroding the deterrent value of the U.S. strategic nuclear forces. The Soviet SS-20 deployment of a new generation of intermediate-range missiles aimed at Europe eroded the deterrent value of U.S. theater nuclear forces.<sup>44</sup> To enhance the U.S. theater deterrent, the U.S. will deploy ground-launched cruise missiles and Pershing II missiles in some European countries, and Britain was one of them and was important to American interests.<sup>45</sup>

Meanwhile, the new U.S. administration of Ronald Reagan had made the reversal of perceived Soviet gains in Latin America a top foreign-policy priority. Despite the Argentine junta's ugliness, it was seen in Washington as a reliable and influential friend in the hemispheric confrontation with communism that was building. Thus, the geo-strategic stage was set in Buenos Aires for a war that took London and Washington by complete surprise.<sup>46</sup>

The hypothesis for the theory of RAM is due to the Cold War period, the Falklands Crisis put the U.S. in a dilemma as a result of the alliance with the two sides of the conflict; therefore, no war between the two allies would be in the U.S.'s own interest.

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<sup>44</sup> Slany, *American Foreign Policy Current Documents 1982*, 4.

<sup>45</sup> Slany, *American Foreign Policy Current Documents 1982*, 6.

<sup>46</sup> David C. Gompert, Hans Binnendijk, and Bonny Lin, *Blinders, blunders, and wars: What America and China can learn*, (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2014), 153.

### **Aims and calculations of concerned agents**

The Rational Actor Model is used to recount the aims and calculations of Argentina, the U.K., and the United States, respectively, and to show what goals they were pursuing.

First, why did the Argentines decide to invade the Falklands? Many scholars suggest that the Argentine government used the invasion to divert the then public attention from political repression and the country's worsening economic problems. However, after the war, Argentine General Galtieri claimed that Argentine socioeconomic problems were not a motive.<sup>47</sup> Costa Mendez, the Foreign Minister, on Argentine television on April 15, 1982, said if the invasion had been successful, Argentina would have increased the size of its patrimonial or historical sea and, therefore, its control over area fisheries and seabed mineral resources. In addition, Argentina would have stabilized its southern sea frontier strategically. The islands would have granted more comprehensive diplomatic and military options. The seas around the Falklands and South Georgia contain significant fisheries, abounding with shrimp-like krill, which has considerable economic potential. The Soviets, Japanese, and East Europeans, among other fishing nations, have been increasingly active in krill harvesting around the Falklands.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Marshall Van Sant Hall, "Argentine policy motivations in the Falklands War and the aftermath," *Naval War College Review* 36, no. 6 (1983): 21.

<sup>48</sup> Van Sant Hall, "Argentine policy motivations in the Falklands War," 21.

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Secondly, why did the British decide to retake the Falkland Islands? In the October of 1981, the Tory party conference had been alive with dissent. Members of the Conservative Party who opposed Thatcher were openly conspiring against her. Bets were being taken against her surviving into the new year. Well behind in the polls and with the new Social Democratic party challenging both Labor and Conservatives, few believed Thatcher would ever lead her party to another election win. Thatcher appeared a weak, broken leader with little support even within her party.<sup>49</sup> This author perceives the Argentine invasion as Thatcher's turning point in saving her career; she was pledged to the House of Commons to restore British administration and to the effective restoration of sovereignty.<sup>50</sup> The Argentine invasion has made British national pride and the survival of the Thatcher government at stake, so the British must retake the Falklands.

Thirdly, why did the United States decide to support the U.K. instead of Argentina? As the rational actor paradigm indicates: The United States, conceived as a rational, unitary decision maker, is the agent; action is chosen in response to the strategic situation the actor faces. Threats and opportunities arising in the

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<sup>49</sup> Simon Jenkins, "How Margaret Thatcher's Falklands Gamble Paid Off," *The Guardian*, April 9, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/apr/09/margaret-thatcher-falklands-gamble>.

<sup>50</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Document 80.

international strategic “marketplace” move the nation to act.<sup>51</sup> The United States needs to work on its goals and objectives, national security, and interests with consistency in the context of the crisis and the Cold War. At the outset of the crisis, the U.S. has a payoff function that ranks all possible sets of consequences in terms of its values and objectives. The agent (the US)’s appreciation of value is bounded by—actually interpenetrated by—its perception of reality since “facts are relevant only in relation to some judgment of value, and judgments of value are operative only in relation to some configuration of fact.”<sup>52</sup>

*Objective: To find a peaceful way for all concerned out of this mess*

The Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands poses a genuine crisis for the U.S. in that the conflict involves two powers friendly to the U.S.—one of them a key NATO partner who remembers an American betrayal under very vaguely similar circumstances—Suez, 1956. The problem for the U.S. is to maintain its commitment to the U.K. special relationship, not alienate the Argentines, and find a peaceful way for all concerned out of this mess.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, after the April 7 National Security Planning Group meeting, President Reagan authorized Secretary

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<sup>51</sup> Graham T. Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision, Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2nd Edition (London: Longman, 1999), 24.

<sup>52</sup> Allison and Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*, 56, footnote 11.

<sup>53</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Document 47.



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of State Haig to mediate and work out a peaceful solution agreed upon by both sides as the only driving force or effective alternative to maximize U.S. strategic goals and objectives that could not be pulled off by the U.N. or OAS. Haig's "Shuttle Diplomacy" started on April 8.

Yet, from the outset of the crisis, the handling of the Falkland crisis by the United States Government provoked deep resentment in Britain. The Argentines have also been critical of the United States, charging that it was favoring Britain. But a broad cross-section of Britons has been offended by what they feel is the lack of more overt support by senior American officials, including President Reagan and Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig Jr.<sup>54</sup> Thus, the United States fell between two stools by trying to keep on good terms with Argentina and the UK at the same time.

First, US Embassy telegrams from London show no great understanding of the depth of the crisis the invasion had provoked in Britain. Symbolically enough, the U.S. Ambassador to Britain, J.J. Louis, was on a golfing holiday in Florida at the time of the invasion and saw no reason to return early.<sup>55</sup> Then, perhaps the

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<sup>54</sup> Steven Rattner, "U.S. Handling of Falkland Crisis Stirs Deep Resentment in Britain," *The New York Times*. April 17, 1982, <https://www.nytimes.com/1982/04/17/world/us-handling-of-falkland-crisis-stirs-deep-resentment-in-britain.html>.

<sup>55</sup> "The US & the Falklands War (1): The Us 'Tilt' Towards Britain (30 Apr 1982)." Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed January 3, 2022, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/archive/us-falklands>.

most significant outrage has been directed at Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, the delegate to the United Nations, for attending a dinner at the Argentine Embassy on April 2, the day of the Argentine seizure of the Falkland Islands.<sup>56</sup>

At the special session of Parliament held to discuss the Argentine landing on April 3, the State Department reported as part of the Falkland Islands Situation Report Number 5: “Mrs. Thatcher declined to say whether the British fleet would be ordered to engage the Argentines. She said the aircraft carrier *Invincible* would sail April 5 to lead the task force.”<sup>57</sup> Now, with the British fleet steaming toward the islands, the stakes were high not only for both countries involved but also for the United States. No one wanted war, but at the moment, it appeared they might get one.

#### *The U.S. Interests and Dilemmas*

On the day the British task force set sail, April 5, President Reagan outlined the U.S. and his own--discomfort in a news conference:

*... We're friends with both sides in this. And we're going to try, strive for---and I think they*

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<sup>56</sup> Rattner, “U.S. Handling of Falkland Crisis Stirs Deep Resentment in Britain.”

<sup>57</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Document 58.

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*will be willing to meet in the idea of a peaceful resolution. ... I just don't think that it's an issue that should come to that point [i.e., war].*<sup>58</sup>

What Reagan remarked at the news conference reflected the central dilemma facing the administration---namely, how to choose between two friends, which can be viewed from two dimensions. Purely on substance, the U.S. might have been inclined to side with the British since the UN Charter (Article 2(4)) expressly forbids the use of force to solve international disputes---except in cases of self-defense. With respect to the sovereignty issue, the United States had traditionally adopted a neutral stance, championing the sovereignty claims of neither the British nor the Argentinians, and had avoided direct involvement in the negotiations on the islands' status. Still, while the United States was a "friend" of both nations, the central problem was that relations between the United States and Argentina on the one hand and the U.S. and Britain on the other were not, in fact, equal.

While both Argentina and Britain have been American allies in the context of the Cold War, the Anglo-American tie is special and longstanding. Rooted in shared language, cultural, and legal traditions, it was reinforced during the two major world wars. Britain remained a critical NATO ally. As then CIA's Deputy

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<sup>58</sup> Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, *President Reagan Press Briefing. Oval Office on April 5, 1982*, Youtube, April 26, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rbxU7j9Ldw8>.

Director, Admiral Bobby Ray Inman, said at the National Security Planning Group (NSPG) on April 7 after hearing Jeane Kirkpatrick's remarks that Argentina is an all-important partner in hemisphere solidarity and the U.S. simply cannot let the U.K. call the shots:

“I want to reiterate, as emphatically as I can, my opposition to Jeane Kirkpatrick's point of view, it's the most wrongheaded thing I have ever heard! I'm here to say we have no alternative but to back our British allies to the hilt. I'm not evoking just the historical ties of bloodlines, language, law, alliance, culture, and tradition, central as these are. I want you to remember the overwhelming importance of our shared interest in the strategic stakes, the depth, and breadth of our intelligence cooperation, and the whole gamut of global Cold War concerns we have riding on close interaction with the U.K. And I want you to remember the problems we have with Argentina on the nuclear non-proliferation front. If we let the Argentines get away with aggression now using purely conventional stuff, who is to say that in ten or fifteen years down the road they won't be tempted to try it again with nukes?”<sup>59</sup>

Both Argentina and Britain have been American allies in the context of the Cold War, but the Anglo-American tie is special, longstanding, and was reinforced during last century's two major

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<sup>59</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Document 76.

## **The U.S. Decision-making Process during the Falklands Crisis** 29

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wars. Britain remained the cornerstone of NATO.

The U.S. interests and objectives at the time involved: preserving its relationship with the U.K. and its role in defense of the West; maintaining the Thatcher Government in power; nurturing the U.S. new relationship with Argentina; insulating U.S. hemispheric policy, particularly in the Caribbean, from this crisis; and minimizing opportunities for increased Soviet influence in the region.<sup>60</sup>

Nothing fruitful has transpired since Secretary of State Haig's laborious shuttle diplomacy started on April 8. In the middle of April, State officials considered each of these interests obviously important. To maximize the utility function of the USG, the temptation, of course, will be to continue to attempt to protect all of them simultaneously and, in particular, to balance any support for the U.K. with efforts to maintain good relations with Argentina. Since no breakthrough in the negotiations is sufficient to stem the gathering momentum toward confrontation, now this temptation must be resisted. The Department of State's perceived interest in deterring confrontation is not as important as having the British emerge victorious should confrontation occur. At some point, the U.S. has to judge when its objective to prevent conflict (which requires a good deal of even-handedness) has been overridden by its requirement to manage a conflict (which

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<sup>60</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Document 143.

requires major support from the U.K.).<sup>61</sup>

An unsuccessful U.K. would gravely weaken the integrity of the Atlantic Alliance after a U.K. failure. The sale of Trident II missiles to the U.K.<sup>62</sup> would be abandoned; the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) would lose much of its credibility; Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force (INF) deployment could be fatally undermined; the Thatcher Government would fall. In short, the State Department perceives the U.S. could well lose the special relationship and Britain's unique ability to bridge and, at times, heal differences across the Atlantic. The U.S. must be prepared to do what is necessary to see the U.K. prevail and must be seen to be doing so at the appropriate time.<sup>63</sup>

Consequences of supporting Britain to get a quick victory involved the following: The Soviets would try to exploit the situation to increase their influence, the U.S. attempts to build an anti-Cuban consensus would be weakened, and U.S. long-term relationship with Argentina would be jeopardized.<sup>64</sup> Before the war breakout between the two sides, continued U.S. diplomatic efforts will make it easier for the U.S. to argue that neither the

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<sup>61</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Document 143.

<sup>62</sup> Slany, *American Foreign Policy Current Documents 1982*, Document 197, 527.

<sup>63</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Document 143.

<sup>64</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Document 143.

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U.N. nor the OAS should serve as an important negotiating venue. Such efforts on the U.S. part could also provide camouflage to conceal its private backing of the U.K. while avoiding presenting the Soviets with easy opportunities to build contacts with the Argentines or make political capital out of a perceived U.S. tilt towards London.<sup>65</sup>

After another two-week of efforts, Haig still could not make the two sides come to terms, Haig's mission was finally terminated on April 29. At the National Security Council Meeting on April 30, Haig stated that the Argentines have always suspected us of being on the side of the British. Our imperative has always been to get a settlement. The Argentine strategy was to string out the process and hope the weather would prevent the British from taking action. Meanwhile, their position remains rigid. Their final offer, if accepted by the British, would cause Mrs. Thatcher's fall. The U.S. proposals are a camouflaged transfer of sovereignty, and the Argentine foreign minister knows this, but the junta will not accept it.<sup>66</sup>

The main theme of RAM can be summarized as follows: Due to the intransigence of the Argentine junta, the U.S. was compelled to terminate the mediation and side with Britain to minimize the damage caused by the crisis.

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<sup>65</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Document 143.

<sup>66</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Document 195

## **Organizational Behavior Model Perspective and the Second Cut**

### *Organizational Behavior Model (OBM)*

For some purposes, governmental behavior can usefully be summarized as actions chosen by a unitary, rational decision-maker: centrally controlled, completely informed, and value-maximizing. However, a government is not an individual. It is a vast conglomerate of loosely allied organizations, each with a substantial life of its own. Therefore, governments perceive problems through organizational sensors, define alternatives, and estimate consequences as their component organizations process information; governments act as these organizations enact routines. Governmental behavior can therefore be understood as outputs of large organizations functioning according to standard patterns of behavior.<sup>67</sup>

Therefore, government leaders don't tackle the broader scope of a crisis but instead delegate smaller facets of the issue to committees, departments, and other organizational entities supporting the government. In the case of the Falklands Crisis, the three leading agencies dealing with the Falklands Crisis in the Executive Departments are the Department of State, the Department of Defense, and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). However, some kinds of fundamental shifts in the behavior

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<sup>67</sup> Allison and Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*, 143.



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of governments can take place with little change in a particular organization's parochialism and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).<sup>68</sup> The advantage of applying this model is the potential to streamline decision-making with the establishment of a standard protocol for certain circumstances with predictable, measurable outcomes. In other words, the organizational process model anticipates the measured pace of organizational practices and seeks to create a protocol that can be readily applied in the event of a crisis.

For OBM, the hypothesis would be that the component organizations in the U.S. government with more robust capabilities will gain the upper hand over their opponent organizations that are not capable and effective.

The second conceptual model, namely the Organizational Behavior Model, is to perceive governmental behavior less as deliberate choices and more as outputs of large organizations functioning according to standard patterns of behavior.<sup>69</sup> Organizations, as actors, process information and initiate action based on pre-existing procedures and culture. In this section, the author explains how foreign policy is the output of component organizations, from which people who make up them are abstracted during the crisis. Organizations are defined by their mission, structure, and culture determined at their founding by

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<sup>68</sup> Allison and Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*, 174.

<sup>69</sup> Allison and Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*, 143.

Congress or the president or some combination of whoever created the organization.<sup>70</sup> However, Morton Halperin created the term organizational essence to describe “the view held by the dominant group within the organization of what its mission and capabilities should be.” In other words, an organization’s essence is the way the organization sees itself—the organization’s fundamental purpose as agreed upon by the majority of the organization’s members.<sup>71</sup>

The three leading agencies dealing with the Falklands crisis are the Executive Departments. First, the oldest cabinet-level federal agency, the Department of State, the mission of which is to lead America’s foreign policy through diplomacy, advocacy, and assistance by advancing the interests of the American people, their safety, and economic prosperity. Second, the Federal Government’s largest agency, the Department of Defense, whose mission is to provide the military forces needed to deter war and ensure the U.S. nation’s security and its allies. Third, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), whose mission is to collect, evaluate, and disseminate vital information on economic, military, political, scientific, and other developments abroad to safeguard national security.

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<sup>70</sup> Nikolas K. Gvosdev, Jessica D. Blankshain, and David A. Cooper, *Decision-making in American foreign policy: Translating theory into practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 133.

<sup>71</sup> Gvosdev, Blankshain, and Cooper, *Decision-making in American foreign policy*, 134.

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The day after the invasion, in a master stroke of diplomacy, the British ambassador to the U.N., Sir Anthony Parsons, was able to secure approval, in the Security Council, of a resolution (UNSC Resolution 502) that:

*(a) required Argentina to withdraw its forces from the Falklands immediately; and*  
*(b) instructed both sides to work out their differences diplomatically, abiding by the principles of the UN Charter.<sup>72</sup> In addition, the State Department instructed USUN to make a supporting statement containing the following points: “The U.S. deplores Argentina’s use of force; We call on Argentina to cease hostilities and withdraw its military force immediately; We also urge the parties to resume negotiations in order to settle this dispute peacefully.”<sup>73</sup>*

This author considers the move at the U.N. very important because it provided the British with UN-backing for actions taken in self-defense as well as let Britain argue that Argentina would have to withdraw before London would make any concessions.

To the Department of State, all of the Falklands Crisis

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<sup>72</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Document 46.

<sup>73</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Document 46.

management practices were being done against the backdrop of what was perhaps the principal strategic challenge of the day, which was getting a response in Europe to the SS-20 deployments, and the whole goal was obviously to get the Western response to the Soviet-Euro missile challenge.<sup>74</sup> What was interesting about the governmental response to the Falklands Crisis was how divided it was. There were three camps in the administration at the time. Also, there were some interesting cross-bureaucratic lines. There were coalitions between and among the various bureaucracies, so some people from the White House, State Department, and Defense Department were in one camp, others in another camp, and still others in another camp.<sup>75</sup> The three camps were the pro-British camp, the pro-Argentine camp, and the Al Haig camp, respectively. For the pro-British camp, they're going to do whatever it takes because once Mrs. Thatcher rolls the dice on this retaking mission of the Falkland Islands. The U.S. started to worry if the British lost in the Falklands, the Thatcher government would fall, and the U.S. would never get the Brits to commit to deploying missiles. At the time, the U.S. policy was that the USG needed the British and a continental country, i.e., two countries, one of which had to be Britain, to agree to the missile deployments, or the consequence would be a cosmic

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<sup>74</sup> "Richard Haass Oral History," University of Virginia Miller Center, May 27, 2004, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/richard-haass-oral-history>.

<sup>75</sup> "Richard Haass Oral History."

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defeat for NATO.<sup>76</sup>

The second camp was the pro-Argentina camp, which was essentially the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs (ARA), at that point, the Latin American bureau at the State Department. Proponents of this camp saw the crisis through the lens of the ARA Bureau, a little bit of clientitis, but mainly through the anti-communist struggles in Central America. At the time, Argentina was being extremely helpful in what the U.S. was doing in Central America. For them, it was because of what was going on in Central America; they needed to show some loyalty to the Argentines.<sup>77</sup>

Then thirdly, the Al Haig camp. The Falklands Crisis was toward the latter end of his tenure; Haig was on the way out. The crisis was a potential banana peel for him. If he could pull off a settlement in the crisis, it would be tough to dismiss this very embattled, controversial Secretary of State. So, he became a third camp, literally airborne; for weeks, he was airborne. His goal, or his purpose, was to mediate a deal and end the hostilities between the two sides.<sup>78</sup>

### *The Haig's Shuttle Diplomacy*

The man driving the U.S. position on the Falklands Crisis

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<sup>76</sup> “Richard Haass Oral History.”

<sup>77</sup> “Richard Haass Oral History.”

<sup>78</sup> “Richard Haass Oral History.”

was Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig, Jr. The following is his schedule mediating back and forth between London, Buenos Aires, and Washington and summaries of each trip.

**(1) London - April 8** -- Secretary Haig met at 5 p.m. on April 8 at the Commonwealth and Foreign Office with Foreign Secretary Francis Pym to discuss the Falkland Island Crisis. Haig said that in the President's mind starting this trip in London was a way to demonstrate the strong friendship between the U.K. and the U.S. Haig met with Prime Minister Thatcher at 6 p.m. that day.

Prime Minister Thatcher 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 diplomatic solution. She is rigid in her insistence on a return to the status quo ante and, indeed, seemingly determined that any solution involves some retribution.<sup>79</sup>

The Prime Minister is convinced she will fall if she concedes on any of three basic points to which she is committed to Parliament:

- A. Immediate withdrawal of Argentine forces;
- B. Restoration of British administration on the Islands;

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<sup>79</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Document 82.

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C. Preservation of their position that the Islanders must be able to exercise self-determination.

Haig focused on three elements of a solution, which he argued would meet her needs:

A. Withdrawal of Argentine forces;

B. An interim arrangement involving an international presence (e.g., the US, Canada, and two Latin American countries) to provide an umbrella for the restoration of British administration;

C. Swift resumption of negotiations.<sup>80</sup>

**(2) Buenos Aires - 9th/10th April** —The Argentines began by demanding that they, in effect, administer the island in the interim period and that the British agree on a priori that the outcome of the ensuing negotiations would provide for a transfer of sovereignty. In the end, Haig and his team came up with a formula that would involve interim U.S.-UK-Argentine tripartite supervision of local administration, and they blurred the question of whether the negotiations would result in Argentine sovereignty. Haig has specified December 31, 1982, as the date for the completion of negotiations. The thought of negotiating under this deadline may cause Mrs. Thatcher as much of a problem as will

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<sup>80</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Document 82.

the formula for an interim administration. Nevertheless, Haig considers what he has is definitely worth taking to London.<sup>81</sup>

**(3) London - 12th/13th** —Thatcher has conceded change from the status quo ante. She has agreed to (1) place local British administration under a tripartite commission; (2) an Argentine flag; (3) provisions for expanded Argentine interaction with the Islanders; (4) December 31, 1982, deadline. Argentine demand for either de facto control or guarantees of sovereignty.<sup>82</sup>

**(4) Washington DC - April 14** — Haig had a telephone discussion with Argentine Foreign Minister Costa Mendez on a concept of decolonization and the creation of a status of international minority provision for compensation of island inhabitants' property rights, etc. and establishment of arrangements for joint ventures for the exportation of island resources. Argentina must have a firm statement that the U.S. is not helping the U.K. in any way. It would be essential to have some guarantee on a limit for the movement of the British fleet.<sup>83</sup> Haig told Costa Mendez about the draft agreed upon in London

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<sup>81</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Document 92.

<sup>82</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Document 112.

<sup>83</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Document 116.



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on April 12, and Mendez also wanted Haig to read the Argentine draft.<sup>84</sup>

**(5) Buenos Aires - 15th-19<sup>th</sup>**—The Argentines still insisted on (1) shared control in the interim period, with provisions that would permit Argentina to saturate the Islands and push out the Falklanders; (2) conditions for negotiations on a final settlement that amounts to a prior agreement that the result will be the affirmation of Argentine sovereignty.<sup>85</sup> Al Haig had found the Argentinians even more impossible than on his first visit. The White House had instructed him to tell the Junta that if they persisted in their intransigence, this would lead to a breakdown of talks, and the U.S. Administration would make clear who was to blame.<sup>85</sup>

**(6) Washington DC - 22<sup>nd</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup>** — British Foreign Secretary Francis Pym visited Washington D.C. April 22–23, his first as Foreign Secretary. His visit followed Secretary Haig's two trips to London (April 8–9 and April 12–13) and two trips to Buenos Aires (April 9–11 and April 15–19) in his search for a diplomatic solution to the South Atlantic dispute between Argentina and the U.K. At the April 23 meeting, Secretary Haig and Foreign Secretary Pym considered the draft of

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<sup>84</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Document 117.

<sup>85</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Document 139.

the Falkland Islands Framework, which had been developed out of Secretary Haig's conversations in Buenos Aires and London. After careful discussion, Pym argued, the text he would be taking back to London rewarded Argentine aggression. Secretary Haig transmitted a revised text of the Framework to the Argentine and British governments on the night of April 26–27.<sup>86</sup>

No matter how the settlements prepared by the State Department vary, the contents of those terms are deliberately made obscure. The core question of the sovereignty over the islands was intentionally kept camouflaged with a view to implicitly transferring the sovereignty to the Argentines, which the Argentine Foreign Minister Costa Mendez realized, but the junta would not accept it.<sup>87</sup> Haig's mission finally came to an end on April 29. Government organizations such as the State and Defense, etc., carry out missions based on their standard patterns of behavior in quasi-independence to act on problems threatening U.S. interests.

From the Argentine seizure of the Falkland Islands on April 2 to the end of the war, the Department of Defense secretly repositioned a spy satellite, using up scarce fuel and thus shortening the satellite's life in space from its Soviet-watching orbit in the Northern Hemisphere to a place over the South

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<sup>86</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Document 164.

<sup>87</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Document 195.

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Atlantic where it could provide intelligence to the British fleet.<sup>88</sup> The Pentagon officials said American intelligence information, provided by means other than just satellites, probably made the key difference between winning and losing because the Argentine attacks on the Royal Navy would have been even more effective if the British had not had the information. Besides the provision of intelligence, Pentagon officials supplied 12.5 million gallons of aviation fuel diverted from U.S. stockpiles, along with hundreds of Sidewinder missiles, airfield matting, thousands of rounds of mortar shells, and other equipment.<sup>89</sup>

However, the Joint Chiefs of Staff would do everything they could to prevent any of what the Defense Department provided to the U.K. from leaving because they wanted to keep them all for their stock. They didn't want to draw down their stuff and give it.<sup>90</sup>

The main theme of OBM can thus be summarized as follows: Owing to Britain's predominance in NATO and its determination over the sovereignty of the Falklands, as well as division and intransigence within the Argentine junta, the Defense Department

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<sup>88</sup> Michael Getler, "U.S. Aid to Britain in Falklands War Is Detailed," *The Washington Post*, March 7, 1984, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1984/03/07/us-aid-to-britain-in-falklands-war-is-detailed/6e50e92e-3f4b-4768-97fb-57b5593994e6/>.

<sup>89</sup> Getler, "U.S. Aid to Britain in Falklands War Is Detailed."

<sup>90</sup> "Richard Haass Oral History."

gained the upper hand over the Department of State.<sup>91</sup>

## **Governmental Politics Model Perspective and the Third Cut**

### *Governmental Politics Model*

Beyond the OBM analysis lies a further, more refined level of investigation. The leaders who sit atop organizations are no monolith. Instead, each individual in this group is, in his or her own right, a player in a central, competitive game. The name of the game is politics: bargaining along regular circuits among players positioned hierarchically within the government. Governmental behavior can thus be understood as the result of bargaining games, focusing on those who are engaged in this interaction. The nature of foreign policy problems permits fundamental disagreement among reasonable people about how to solve them.<sup>92</sup> The GPM hypothesis would be the players close to President Reagan would gain the upper hand and have their policy adopted or approved by the president.

In contrast with Model I (RAM), the Governmental Politics Model sees no unitary actor but rather many actors as players: players who focus not on a single strategic issue but many diverse intranational problems as well; players who act in terms of no consistent set of strategic objectives but instead according to various conceptions of national, organizational, and personal

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<sup>91</sup> "Richard Haass Oral History."

<sup>92</sup> "Richard Haass Oral History," 255-256.

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goals; players who make government decisions not by a single, rational choice but by the pulling and hauling that is politics<sup>93</sup>.

The development of United States policy towards the Falklands Crisis, a dispute between two of its allies, provides an abundant source of materials for the student of bureaucratic politics. The struggle over what constituted the proper policy response was played out at the highest levels of the Reagan administration. The process was confined almost entirely to the executive branch, dominated at the time by a conservative view of America's place in the world.<sup>94</sup> In this crisis, one can perceive President Reagan's leadership style, the interplay of diverse personalities, conflicting interpretations of the national interest, and divergent bureaucratic imperatives all combined to create a situation characterized by diffuse power, multiple action channels, and missed and mixed signals.<sup>95</sup>

Mainly in the Executive branch, the players during the crisis who participated in the formulation of U.S. foreign policy were President Reagan, Secretary of State Haig, Secretary of Defense Weinberger, US Permanent Representative to the UN Kirkpatrick, Deputy Director of Central Intelligence Bobby Inman, the White House Staff, and Congress.

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<sup>93</sup> Allison and Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*, 255.

<sup>94</sup> Dunn, "Bureaucratic Politics and the Falklands Campaign," 1.

<sup>95</sup> Dunn, "Bureaucratic Politics and the Falklands Campaign," 1.

**President Reagan**—At the start of the Reagan years, the administration adopted a decentralized policymaking process,<sup>96</sup> which gives the impression that Reagan did not show too much concern for the crisis. At the outset of the crisis, Reagan’s attitude toward the crisis appeared impatient and passive during the National Security Planning Group meeting in the White House Situation Room when JCS Chairman Gen. David Jones and Defense Secretary Weinberger launched into a long droning rundown on airfields in the South Atlantic, technical “My Eyes Glaze Over” (MEGO) stuff about runway lengths, cargo-load capacity, refueling radii, etc. while Reagan eyes the door with a how-soon-can-I-get outta here look.<sup>97</sup> As British historian and biographer Richard Aldous wrote in an opinion piece in the New York Times on February 27, 2012, the Falklands conflict is often hailed as a high point of the “special” bond between President Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. And yet America’s response at the time, and the subsequent attempts to revise it, exemplifies how complex and even fractious that historic relationship really was.

Mrs. Thatcher, facing pressure to resign, had expected resolute support from Reagan in retaking the islands by force. Instead, what she got was studied neutrality. “We are friends with both

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<sup>96</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Preface, 12.

<sup>97</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Document 76.

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countries,” President Reagan breezily remarked. Was it really worth going to war over what he called that “little ice-cold bunch of land down there.”<sup>98</sup> “Mrs. Thatcher let Mr. Haig on his first stop of the shuttle trip know that she was “dismayed” by Reagan’s attitude and the “constant pressure to weaken British stance.” When Reagan telephoned on May 31 urging Thatcher “to show we’re all still willing to seek a settlement,” the prime minister finally lost patience. “This is democracy and our island,” she thundered, “and the very worst thing for democracy would be if we failed now.” What would the United States do if Alaska were invaded, she demanded to know.<sup>99</sup> One can see that President Reagan did not show much concern about the dispute at the beginning but later became eager to defuse the crisis by pressuring Thatcher to show magnanimity rather than force the invading Argentine troops to surrender and to reach a cease-fire deal providing for a shared Argentine-British role in the islands’ future and a joint American-Brazilian peacekeeping force, but Thatcher rejected Reagan’s appeal for talks three times, becoming more emphatic each time.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Richard Aldous, “With Friends Like These,” *The New York Times*, February 27, 2012,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/27/opinion/with-friends-like-these.html>.

<sup>99</sup> Aldous, “With Friends Like These.”

<sup>100</sup> John F. Burns, “Paper Show Rare Friction for Thatcher and Reagan,” *The New York Times*, December 28, 2012,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/29/world/europe/falklands-war-caused-rare-friction-for-thatcher-and-reagan.html>.

**Secretary of State Haig**—Being the Secretary of State, Haig would, of course, hope the crisis should be settled in a diplomatic way. This organizational perspective is reflective of the theory of the Governmental Politics Model by Allison: *Where You Stand Depends on Where You Sit*.<sup>101</sup> At the National Security Planning Group (NSPG) meeting five days after the Argentines occupied the Falklands, Haig proposed the “Shuttle Diplomacy,” intending to defuse the crisis after briefly analyzing how the two sides shaped up their next move. The Secretary, at the early stages of the crisis, perceived that if the prospects for a peaceful solution were not great, they still must be seized, and he assumed both sides wanted to find a way out and a mechanism to make the escape possible. He also pointed out that American mediation was a mechanism acceptable to both sides, not the U.N. or the OAS.<sup>102</sup>

Haig had been anxious to work out a peaceful and brokered solution, which in part was perceived as the survival of his position as the Secretary of State. He wrote in his memoirs:

*It was clear to me also that if I undertook this mission and did not find a way to stop the hostilities, I might have to resign.*<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Allison and Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*, 307.

<sup>102</sup> Alexander M. Haig, Jr., *Caveat: Realism, Reagan, and Foreign Policy* (New York: Macmillan, 1984), 270.

<sup>103</sup> Haig Jr., *Caveat: Realism, Reagan, and Foreign Policy*, 271.



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Having been the 7<sup>th</sup> Supreme Allied Commander Europe, Haig was pro-British and observed that a negotiated settlement would be in the interest of Britain and the United States though he secretly helped Argentina to retrieve the sovereignty of the Falklands, as he observed at the National Security Council meeting on the morning of April 30, 1982.

*Our proposals, in fact, are a camouflaged transfer of sovereignty, and the Argentine foreign minister knows this, but the junta will not accept it.*<sup>104</sup>

**U.S. Permanent Rep. to the UN Kirkpatrick**-First, Kirkpatrick points out that in the years after World War II, Great Britain had dismantled an empire. Only once, at Suez, did Britain's imperial impulse revive, and then primarily because of U.S. intervention with embarrassing consequences. And as she showed throughout the difficult negotiations over disengagement in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe Rhodesia), Mrs. Thatcher was herself a decolonizer in a long line of decolonizers.<sup>105</sup> So, she observes if not in Rhodesia, why in the Falklands? Secondly, Kirkpatrick does not share the idea that the war was a heroic response to a wholly unwarranted act of aggression and had the approval of the "international community." She dismisses the "international community"

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<sup>104</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Document 195.

<sup>105</sup> Kirkpatrick, "My Falklands War and Theirs," 11.

approval as poppycock because she considers the then British Permanent Rep. to the U.N. had maneuvered the Security Council into approving a British resolution demanding that Argentina abandon threats and use of force, which did not get the approval from the “international community.” On the contrary, in the years preceding the war, the General Assembly passed resolutions in 1965, 1973, and 1976 calling for negotiations between Britain and Argentina in the framework of U.N. guidelines on decolonization.<sup>106</sup> According to Kirkpatrick’s account at the U.N., once the war started, Britain was forced to veto Security Council resolutions calling for an immediate cease-fire. Britain left in the veto’s wake a disapproving majority convinced that the U.K. was less interested in peace than in imposing its own solution on the Argentines. And in the years since the war, Britain has largely ignored the international community’s appeals for negotiation of the Falklands issue.<sup>107</sup> The USUN Rep. cites the U.N. majority’s view on the question of whether Argentina was guilty of an illegal act of aggression as stated by Venezuela’s then-president, Christian Democrat Herrera Campins, in a personal letter to President Ronald Reagan. There Campins rejected the U.S. argument that the “rule of law” and “rule of force” were the issues. The British, he charged, continued to lay claim to a “colonial-title which mutilates the territorial integrity of an American state.” Therefore, “it is fundamental to international peace and security

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<sup>106</sup> Kirkpatrick, “My Falklands War and Theirs,” 12.

<sup>107</sup> Kirkpatrick, “My Falklands War and Theirs,” 13.

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that the exercise of Argentina's sovereignty over its island territories in the South Atlantic is fully guaranteed."<sup>108</sup>

Kirkpatrick perceives a policy of neutrality in that war made sense from the point of view of U.S. interests and would have done Britain no harm and emphasizes the U.S. in the Western hemisphere, part of the Americas, has a permanent interest in good hemispheric relations by pointing out three factors which required attention in a serious consideration of U.S. policy: 1. the nature of the Anglo-American alliance; 2. the U.S. permanent interest in maintaining good relations within the Western hemisphere; and 3. Latin sensibilities. The female hard liner supports that if the U.S. mediation failed, then U.S. interest, she thought, dictated that the U.S. should remain neutral: because the U.S. had a continuing interest in good relations with Latin America as well as with the U.K.<sup>109</sup>

Kirkpatrick came to Ronald Reagan's attention in 1979 when he read an article she had written for the neoconservative magazine *Commentary*, "Dictatorships and Double Standards." In the article, she accused the Carter administration of abiding totalitarian enemies on the left while holding authoritarian allies in Latin America and elsewhere to a higher standard. It was difficult, she wrote, to "democratize governments, anytime, anywhere, under

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<sup>108</sup> Kirkpatrick, "My Falklands War and Theirs," 13.

<sup>109</sup> Kirkpatrick, "My Falklands War and Theirs," 17.

any circumstances,” “right-wing autocracies do sometimes evolve into democracies,” but communist societies never do.<sup>110</sup>

“This is incredible. Who is this person?” Reagan is said to have exclaimed.

The columnist George Will introduced the two at a dinner party at his Georgetown home in 1980, and Kirkpatrick eventually decided to endorse Reagan for president and to campaign for him. When he named her U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, she became the first Democrat to fill a Cabinet-level post in the administration. She was unanimously confirmed by the Senate.<sup>111</sup>

**Secretary of Defense Weinberger--**During Weinberger’s defense tenure, his wife Jane volunteered her services to the Folger Library, the home of the largest collection of William Shakespeare’s writings anywhere in the world. The Secretary was steeped in all things English, and it had a profound effect on his Pentagon administration.

As the lover of all things British, Secretary Weinberger loved its culture, having the bearing of an acculturated Harvard White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP); he also based much of his

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<sup>110</sup> Jeane Kirkpatrick, “Dictatorships and double standards,” *Commentary* 68, no. 5 (1979): 65.

<sup>111</sup> Joe Holley, “U.N. Ambassador Upheld Reagan Doctrine,” *The Washington Post*, December 9, 2006, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2006/12/09/un-ambassador-upheld-reagan-doctrine/c19ca33f-cfa9-460f-b2e8-7bdbd232a8bc/>.

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defense policy on British principles. He was the first American official to run to the aid of the British on their almost impossible 7,500 miles logistical tail from Great Britain to the Falklands.<sup>112</sup> When asked about his attitude toward the Falklands crisis during a Presidential Oral Histories interview, he said:

*To my mind it was a very, very clear and simple case. Here was our oldest and strongest ally and a member of NATO, and our NATO obligations were to come to the defense of any one of the NATO members who was attacked. Britain had been attacked. ...*

*You had a corrupt military dictatorship from Argentina on one side. You had our oldest and strongest ally and a member of NATO on the other side. I didn't see what the problem was, so to speak, except that we should support Britain as completely as possible.*

*There were a lot of attempts at settling it diplomatically. Settling it diplomatically would have meant something to the effect that Britain could keep the Falklands for two years, and then they would revert to Argentinean control, and we wouldn't have a war, and everybody would be happy. That was totally foreign to*

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<sup>112</sup> Wieland, "Direct responsibility," 156.

*what I thought should happen and what Mrs. Thatcher thought should happen.*<sup>113</sup>

From the perspective of bureaucratic politics, Weinberger had three significant advantages. First, he had the closest personal relationship with President Reagan of all the first-layer policymakers. He had served in Reagan's cabinet as the Director of Finance while Reagan was Governor of California. Secondly, he commanded a bureaucracy that had an extensive, ongoing supply relationship with the forces he wanted to assist. Thirdly, he had the full support of the Joint Chiefs, who were gravely concerned with the performance in the battle of a key NATO ally.<sup>114</sup>

**Deputy Director of Central Intelligence Bobby Inman**—Inman, by his own account, was the point man for the Falklands crisis within the intelligence community, rather than CIA Director William Casey<sup>115</sup>. From the very beginning of the crisis, Inman made a stand to support Britain out of concern for continued access to British overseas facilities by U.S. intelligence

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<sup>113</sup> "Caspar Weinberger Oral History," University of Virginia Miller Center, November 19, 2022. <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/caspar-weinberger-oral-history>.

<sup>114</sup> Dunn, "Bureaucratic Politics and the Falklands Campaign," 8.

<sup>115</sup> Dunn, "Bureaucratic Politics and the Falklands Campaign," 10.

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operatives.<sup>116</sup> At the NSC meeting on April 7, Kirkpatrick commented that Argentina is an all-important partner in hemisphere solidarity. The U.S. must settle this and simply cannot let the U.K. call the shots. Inman rebutted:

I couldn't disagree more strongly with Jeane. For hemisphere solidarity, we don't depend on Argentina—we don't owe Argentina a thing!<sup>117</sup>

The low profile adopted by the CIA in the Falklands debate may have reflected divisions or mixed feelings at the top of the agency, given Casey's strong interest in covert operations in Central American and the growing Argentine involvement in those activities.<sup>118</sup>

**The White House Staff**—During the early days of the Reagan administration Alexander Haig began to suspect signs of White House domination of the Cabinet. When the Cabinet designates met on January 7, Edwin Meese dominated the meeting, giving a primer on the president's ideas, procedures, and priorities, while

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<sup>116</sup> Dunn, "Bureaucratic Politics and the Falklands Campaign," 10.

<sup>117</sup> Alexander R. Wieland, and Adam M. Howard, eds. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988: Conflict in the South Atlantic, 1981-1984*. United States Government Publishing Office, 2015. Document 76.

<sup>118</sup> Dunn, "Bureaucratic Politics and the Falklands Campaign," 10.

Reagan sat passively.<sup>119</sup> Haig recalls that he had “the distinct feeling that Ed Meese and his colleagues perceived their rank in the Administration as being superior to that of any member of the Cabinet.”<sup>120</sup> The senior White House staff (primarily Edwin Meese, James Baker, and Michael Deaver), though not heavily involved in the decision-making process, no doubt kept a watchful eye on the political consequences of the Administration’s evolving Falklands policy in light of the American public’s pro-British sentiments. Additionally, there was a widely-shared feeling of contempt among White House staff toward Secretary of State Haig, who was seen as trying to usurp the President’s authority to manage foreign affairs.<sup>121</sup>

**Congress**—On April 29(Thursday), 1982, in the House of Representatives, the Senate approved a pro-British resolution (S Res 382) calling on Argentina to remove its troops from the Falkland Islands. The vote was 79-1.

Earlier that day, the House Foreign Affairs Committee approved by voice vote another resolution (H Res 441)

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<sup>119</sup> Haig Jr., *Caveat: Realism, Reagan, and Foreign Policy*, 76.

<sup>120</sup> Haig Jr., *Caveat: Realism, Reagan, and Foreign Policy*, 76.

<sup>121</sup> Dunn, “Bureaucratic Politics and the Falklands Campaign,” 10.



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expressing ‘full U.S. diplomatic support’ for Britain should it go to war with Argentina over the Falklands.

The Senate resolution said, ‘the United States cannot stand neutral with regard to implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 502,’ which accused Argentina of aggression and called for its withdrawal.

Recognizing Britain’s right to self-defense under the U.N. Charter, it called on the administration ‘through consultations with Congress, to further all efforts, pursuant to Security Council Resolution 502, to achieve the full withdrawal of Argentine forces from the Falkland Islands.’

Sen. Joseph Biden, D-Del. (U.S. President now), a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and author of the earlier resolution said the one approved by the Senate ‘clearly recognizes the United States is on the side it should be on, the side of Great Britain.’<sup>122</sup>

**National Security Council**—As compared with the Departments of State and Defense, the role of the National Security Council in

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<sup>122</sup> John F. Barton, “Averting a Threatened Filibuster by Sen. Jesse Helm, R-N.C.,” United Press International, April 29, 1982, <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1982/04/29/Averting-a-threatened-filibuster-by-Sen-Jesse-Helms-R-NC/6407388900800/>.

the decision-making process during the Falklands crisis was less pronounced. In contrast with previous administrations, the NSC occupied a less central place in foreign policymaking at the start of the Reagan years, reflective, in part, of the administration's early enthusiasm for a decentralized policymaking process.<sup>123</sup>

Government officials who are on top of major organizations to form a circle of central players who, in his or her own right, make government decisions not by a single rational choice but by the pulling and hauling that are politics. The main theme of GPM can thus be summarized as follows: Due to the Argentine junta's refusal to accommodating Haig's settlement, Weinberger, joined by Congress, the White House Staff, and the Deputy Director of CIA, had his way in the process of decision-making of the Falklands Crisis.

### **Conclusion**

After the research, this author found Allison's three models are verified by and large.

To preserve its strategic interest, the U.S. could not but side with Britain due to the Argentine junta's refusal of Haig's settlement; the Department of Defense thus won over Reagan to tilt toward the U.K.; Weinberger also emerged winner of the

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<sup>123</sup> Wieland and Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988*, Preface, 12.

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decision-making process due to the same reason. However, the Rational Actor Model seems cannot fully explain the decision-making process in this case in that Reagan was not very involved in the crisis and his authorization in the whole process.

Had the Argentinians been prepared to accept Haig's proposals in some form, Britain would have been under huge pressure from the U.S., the pulling and hauling between the players would have been more fierce, and the resultant different. Without Weinberger's military assistance, the Falklands campaign could not have been mounted, let alone won.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Getler, "U.S. Aid to Britain in Falklands War Is Detailed."

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