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The Falklands Conflict – History and Predictions for The Future

Konflikt o Falklandy – historia i predykcja przyszłości

• Abstrakt •

Przesłaniem i myślą przewodnią artykułu jest konflikt o Falklandy – zakątek świata, o który od wieków toczyły się spory ze względu na jego unikalne położenie geograficzne i zasoby naturalne. O ile ten pierwszy czynnik był źródłem antagonizmów pomiędzy Argentyną a Wielką Brytanią już od XIX wieku, tak drugi jest stosunkowo nowy, bo pojawił się dopiero pod koniec XX wieku. Doświadczenia krótkiego, ale jakże kosztownego konfliktu z 1982 roku pokazują, że problem falklandzki nie został całkowicie zażegnany, że istnieje realne zagrożenie wybuchu nowego konfliktu w przyszłości.

Słowa kluczowe: Falklandy, Malwiny, wojna, konflikt, zasoby naturalne

• Abstract •

The key focus of the article is the conflict over the Falkland Islands – a corner of the world that has been disputed for centuries due to its unique geographical location and rich natural resources. While the location factor had been the source of antagonism between Argentina and the United Kingdom since the 19th century already, the second element is relatively new; the most relevant discoveries were made only in the late 20th century. Experiences gained from the short, but very costly conflict of 1982 show that the Falklands crisis has not been completely resolved, and the threat of outbreak of a new conflict over the Islands in the future is real.

Keywords: Falklands, Islas Malvinas, cold war, conflict, natural resources

Introduction

In this dynamically changing era, in with an increasing multitude of surprising phenomena affecting the socio-political order, focusing on history of “forgotten” parts of the world, such as the Falklands, might only at first glance appear unju-

stified. After a deeper consideration, it is far from being so. After all, there are plenty of locations around the globe where disputes related to zones of influence, resources and territories are still ongoing. Only some of them are considered significant enough from the point of view of international security to be worthy of being written about. The state of existing knowledge should also be periodically reviewed, and the public should remain aware of pending threats, not only of those which almost every day are communicated through the media, but also of those far-away and forgotten (by some).

Undoubtedly, the Falklands are a clear example of such a corner of the world. The dispute over the Islands between Argentina and the United Kingdom has its sources rooted deep in distant history and is of colonial origin. Although formally the conflict over these isles ended in 1982, tensions between Argentina and Great Britain make the threat of outbreak of another conflict, perhaps more drastic than the previous one, a real one, worth reflecting upon. In the face of mounting tensions between the two countries, the question arises not *whether* it could lead to an open conflict between them, but rather *when and under what circumstances* this might occur. And if it comes to that, what will be the real reason for the battle being waged? Before focusing in more detail on these questions, the two geopolitical determinants, which play an important role in the dispute over the Falkland Islands will be presented here. One of the determinants is geographical in nature, i.e. the location of the Islands on the world map, and the second is an economic one, linked to huge energy resources that lie beneath the Falklands. In order to discuss the present situation of the Islands, the colonial past of the archipelago cannot be ignored. This past history still weights heavily on the relations between the United Kingdom and Argentina, and just as it had contributed to the conflict of 1982 it also remains a factor in the current tensions between the two countries.

Colonial Past of The Falklands

The first references to the Falklands archipelago are inextricably linked to the geographical discoveries made by Amerigo Vespucci in 1502 (Lorton, 2016); he reported their existence in the ship's logbook after reaching the southernmost point of his journey across the Atlantic. Other traces of their existence are found in the writings of the Portuguese captain Esteban Gomez, participating in Ferdinand Magellan's expedition, who in his 20 November 1520 entry called them the Magellan Desert (Lorton, 2016). Five years later, a note about the Islands can be found in Pedro Veza's writings; with another mention by the bishop of Plasencia in

1540. In later years, the credit for discovery of the Falklands became the subject of dispute between Portugal, Great Britain, the Netherlands and France.

After the period of Portuguese exploration, the age of expansion of Great Britain dawned, and this period is usually presented as a starting point in the history of the Falkland. The British claim to the discovery finds confirmation in, *inter alia*, the name of the archipelago, derived from the name of the Treasurer of the Admiralty – the Lord Falkland, who organized the first expedition to the South Atlantic with the intention to explore the Islands (Lorton, 2012). The expedition awoke great interest in this corner of the world and resulted in expeditions led by John Davis and Richard Hawkins in the years 1592–1594. Interestingly enough, Hawkins, believing that no one had discovered them before, gave them the name of Hawkins's Maidenland, supposedly in honor of the Virgin Queen, Elizabeth I. (Lorton, 2012). However, in addition to the British, also the French – who called the islands Malvinas – claimed the right to this discovery. One of the first French explorers was Beauchese Gordin (Lorton, 2016), who in 1701 started the relatively short history of French colonization of the Islands. Thanks to Antoine Louis de Bougainville, the first French colony – called Port Louis – was founded in 1764. Two years later, in January 1766, the captain of the British ship HMS Jason, John MacBride founded a settlement at Saunders Island near West Falkland (Freedman, 2005). At that time, the French colonized only the eastern parts of the Islands, with the western part belonging to England (MON, 1983).

Three years later, in 1767, the Falkland Islands came under the rule of the Spaniards, thus the name of the main town, Port St. Louis, was changed to Puerto Soledad. In 1771 the Falklands changed hands again, this time coming under the ownership of the British, who exercised authority over them until 1820. In 1820, Argentina (at the time: United Provinces of South America) for the first time raised its formal claim to the Islands. After it has obtained the rights to them, already in 1821 a military garrison and a penal colony were created in Port Louis. Such a decision of the authorities of Argentina and the lack of interest of Port Louis authorities' in this particular step yielded negative effects, since they led to a prisoners' revolt and seizure of power by them. The rebellion was finally crushed, but by 1831 the town was almost completely destroyed. This event foreshadowed a new era in the history of the Falkland Islands, as already in 1833 thanks to Royal British Navy operations the Islands came again under the rule of Great Britain. In 1892 they formally became a British colony (Czwartosz, 1983; Freedman, Gamba-Stonehouse, 1991).

From that moment the dispute over the Falkland Islands narrowed down to only two parties: the United Kingdom and Argentina; the latter tried – unsuccessfully –

to recover the Islands lost in the 19th century until a last strong push in 1982 (however, the attempts have not entirely stopped even after that date). Argentina never came to terms with its loss and from 1964 lobbied at the UN for the Falkland Islands to be returned to it, using for this purpose the UN Charter decolonization provisions (Freedman, Gamba-Stonehouse, 1991). As a consequence of escalating tensions between the two countries, in 1965 the UN General Assembly enacted a resolution calling upon the United Kingdom and Argentina to reach a peaceful solution to the conflict (Dolzer, 1992). Unfortunately, it did not bring the expected results, since the Falklands were of great political, military and commercial significance both for Argentina and Great Britain. The grounds for this was both their geographical location on the route leading from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean routes and Antarctica, as well as – from the military point of view – its positioning in a highly strategic region of the world. Until now the Islands have served as an important fuel supply base for the British Naval Forces and merchant vessels following the route around Cape Horn. The conflict of interests between Argentina and Great Britain gave rise initially to tensions, expressed in a diplomatic dispute between the countries, to finally result in the outbreak of an open armed conflict, which by many experts was described as inevitable – and well overdue.

The Falklands War of 1982

Genesis of the Conflict and the Course of Events in The Falkland Islands

A historical analysis of the conflict leads to the conclusion that, firstly, it was indeed inevitable and, secondly, the British resistance was a sine qua non condition for strengthening its influence in that region of the world. Had it not been for its immediate and decisive reaction to the aggression of Argentina, Great Britain would have irrecoverably lost access not only to the Falkland Islands, but also to their resources. Energy resources, about which little was said at the time of the War due to the imprecise forecasts as to their exact location and volume, were alleged to be the main cause of the conflict already in the 1970s. No matter what the balance of factors, it can be assumed that adding the matter of natural resources to the strategic importance of the Islands meant that the Falklands would never cease to be a subject of dispute.

The harbingers of imminent explosion of violence in the Falkland Islands and other islands located in the Antarctic region appeared in late 1981 (Kubiak, 1993); in most sources already 1981 is presented as the start date of the conflict. The for-

mal date of its commencement is December 15, 1981, when the icebreaker of the Argentine Navy, “Almirante Irizar”, entered the port of Leith in South Georgia. Its task was to perform an inventory check of inactive whaling station purchased from the British, and intended for scrapping. During the initial works, the Argentines provoked the British by building a mast upon which the Argentine flag was hoisted. Great Britain immediately responded to the incident and issued a note of protest, which Argentina found to be without grounds. The escalation of tensions between the countries led to a meeting of the UN Security Council, convened on April 1, 1982, which called upon both parties to resolve the conflict through negotiations. The expected results were not achieved – instead of adhering to the provisions of the UN Resolution, Argentina broke talks with Britain on the possible solution that were ongoing since 1965, and announced mobilization of the armed forces (*Her Majesty's Stationery Office*, 1982). At about 11pm on the night of April 1, 1982, the first Argentine troops – 92 marines from the Amphibious Commando Company – landed on East Falkland near Lake Point (Middlebrook, 2009). The Company captured 79 British soldiers from Naval Party 8901 who, together with the governor of the Islands, were later transported to Montevideo in Uruguay. Before these events came to pass, the Argentine commandos (without firing a shot) overpowered the British patrol of 8 marines at Cape Pembroke, thereby eliminating an observation post controlling the waterways leading to Port Stanley. At the same time, the tank landing ship ARA Cabo San Antonio (Q42) disembarked 300 soldiers, who took over the airport, the post office, the radio station and the seat of the Islands' Governor in Port Stanley (Kubiak, 1993). In the face of the enemy's superior forces and the surprise effect, all the British forces along with the civic guard organized by Governor Rex Hunt surrendered (Anderson, 2002). The symbol of the Argentine forces' victory was drawing up of the Argentine flag on the Government House mast.

The invasion of South Georgia had a less speedy resolution, since the 23-man British sub-unit unexpectedly offered strong resistance until 3 April 1982. This attack did not come without losses to the invaders as the British shot down 2 Argentine helicopters. Unfortunately for the British, this incident was the only small “victory” on their part in this phase of the conflict. As a consequence, due to the surprise effect and superior strength of their forces, the Argentines were able to gain control over almost the entire area of the Islands, as well as relocate and deploy motorized brigade units (which consisted of a total of 8,400 soldiers) in the main region of Port Stanley (Elser, 1984).

At the same time, two infantry battalions with artillery support (coming up to a total of 1,400 troops) were deployed in the area of Darwin and Goose Green,

and one infantry battalion reinforced with the 9th engineer company (consisting of 900 soldiers each) landed on West Falkland, where they occupied the area of Port Howard and Fox Bay. In total the Argentine forces consisted of approximately 12,000 soldiers and 1,100 tanks and other types of vehicles (Witkowski, 1998).

The invasion that led to seizing of the Islands by the Argentines was spectacularly quick, and the information on the act of aggression reached London with one-day delay. The reaction of Great Britain was immediate. On April 3, an extraordinary Parliament session was convened and in its entirety devoted to events in the South Atlantic. Overnight (April 3 to 4), it was decided that British Armed Forces will be deployed in order to restore the old order in the Falklands (Elser, 1984). The first step was to be primarily the mobilization of the civilian fleet and organization of logistical support for the upcoming operation.

Geographical Conditions of the Operation

The specifics of preparation and conduct of the British Forces' operation in the Falklands were heavily influenced by spatial and climatic challenges presented by the location of the arena of conflict. The logistics support of the armed forces, the deployment of troops into the theater of war and the military operation itself all had to take into account the climate and other geographical characteristics. One of the main problems with which the Supreme Command of the British Armed Forces was confronted when preparing the operation was the distance of 14,300 km separating the Falkland Islands from the British naval base in Portsmouth, UK. It allowed for the armed response forces to reach the Islands only after 26 days. This parameter imposed the necessity of making precise calculations concerning the entirety of British Forces logistical support both during the deployment and the later actual engagement as without such waging war in such a distant theater of operations would be impossible. Logistical challenges associated with the distance were, however, greatly simplified by the possibility of using Ascension Island, located halfway to the Falkland Islands, as the supply base for ammunition, liquid fuels, food and other gear necessary for the conduct of armed hostilities (Freedman, Gamba-Stonehouse, 1991).

Besides the distance to the theater of operations where the British Forces would operate, also the terrain layout in the Falkland Islands, its flora, climate and maneuverability in a given area as determined by available road network were of great significance for the military planners. The Falkland Islands are characterized by limited differences in land elevation, giving it the appearance of a relative-

ly flat land with small hills (highest elevation – Mount Kent, 458m above sea level), additionally with a distinct lack of forests but dense coverage of other plants creating favourable conditions for masking. Furthermore, presence of bogs and so-called “stone runs” up to 400m in width as well as the underdeveloped road network were a cause of further difficulties. Over the entire territory of the islands, there were only 14 kilometers of asphalt tracks, mainly in the area of Port Stanley (Elser, 1984). Apart from geographical conditions, the climate was similarly crucial for the operations. While the average temperature of 0°C in winter it itself would not be much of a problem, coupled with high humidity and gusty, very changeable winds it could be a variable that would negatively impact the combat capability of sub-units. Apart from adverse impact on the troops, such mix of conditions has a potential of limiting maneuverability and hampering the choice of fire positions (Elser, 1984).

British Expeditionary Forces

Despite the unexpected attack of the Argentine Forces and delayed transfer of information about this fact, the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, decided to immediately prepare the UK forces for operations in the Falklands. They were divided into two echelons, the first of which reached combat readiness on April 4th. Almost immediately after, on April 5, 36 warships and auxiliary units left the naval base at Portsmouth (Kubiak, 1993). This quick mobilization was achievable as the base in Portsmouth had sufficient capacity to handle such a large number of vessels, and it possessed both the cargo handling machinery and had in stock other equipment needed for the wartime.

The British Land Forces included the 3rd Commando Brigade (Royal Marines) commanded by Brig. J. Thompson (Kubiak, 1993)¹. Most of the units left the base in Portsmouth on April 5, 1982, apart from the vessel “Canberra” which was in the Mediterranean Sea when the orders were given and set off for the Falkland Islands only on April 9. It is worth noting that 4 submarines (including two nuclear ones: “Superb” and “Conqueror” and two classic ones: “Onyx” and “Olympus”) as well as the amphibious carrier “Sir Geraint”, which served as a floating

¹ The 3rd Commando Brigade was the core of the Land Forces and was a well-trained tactical formation belonging to the British reinforcement forces in the northeastern theater of the NATO military operations (in Northern Norway). The Brigade’s experiences from actions in extreme climatic conditions in Norway could be useful during operations in the Falklands.

supply base for vessels in the South Atlantic were already maneuvering in the Falklands area where they had been sent before the outbreak of the war. In April and June the civilian aircraft involved in the process of supplying the troops, transported over 350 tons of various supplies to Ascension Island.

The 5th Infantry Brigade commanded by Brig. A. Wilson formed the second echelon of the British Forces. From 1981 it was an intervention unit intended to operate overseas – however, its combat composition was not suited to the specific climatic conditions of the Falkland Islands (Elser, 1984). Since the Royal Navy did not have a sufficient number of auxiliary units to support action at such a considerable distance from home, during the war the Royal Navy requisitioned about 70 merchant ships (Smith, 2008).

Course of the Conflict

After landing in the Falkland Islands, in the first phase of activities the British failed to re-seize South Georgia, a first move that (if successful) intended to give them the opportunity to create a supply chain for troops fighting in the Falklands. The attack failed due to bad weather, particularly strong wind and rain, which laid bare all the defects in soldiers' uniforms and equipment. At the same time, the first battle at sea took place between the Argentine destroyer "Santa Fe" and the British destroyer "Antrim" supported by ship-based Wessex-type helicopters and the frigate "Plymouth". Although the Argentines lost the battle, it cannot be entirely classified as a British success, as Great Britain has thus revealed its presence in the Falklands area and lost the element of surprise. In this situation, they were forced to accelerate their landing on the Islands, and, as a result, on April 23, thirty commandos reconnoitred the area and took position on the coast, thus allowing a Marines company to land. During the operations at sea, the British fleet lost one of their container ships "Atlantic Conveyor", which was severely damaged by Argentine strike fighter of Super Etandard class. Six Wessex helicopters and three Chinooks sank along with the container ship while it was under tow to a more secure location; the rest of the cargo was recovered (Elser, 1984).

Between May 21–25, the British strengthened their position in the region of San Carlos. Moreover, they managed to finally unload the heavy equipment of the 3rd Brigade and reserve battalions remaining so far on board of the transport ships. This took place practically without any contact with the enemy air forces, as the main effort of the Argentine Air Forces was directed elsewhere. On May 25, part of the forces of the 3rd Brigade started their march towards Goose Green and Da-

rvin, while some detachments made their way inland with the task to seize Mount Kent. At dawn on May 28, the British Forces reached the area of Darwin and almost immediately, counting on the element of surprise, moved to attack – without a thorough reconnaissance of the enemy position. The defenders were prepared and the British attack faltered for a while in the murderous machine-gun fire it met. Finally, despite the difficulties, the British seized the designated enemy defence lines – however, they used up almost all of their ammunition do achieve that (Elser, 1984).

Capture of thirty-four thousand gallons of napalm, stored in containers designed to be attached under Pucara COIN aircraft, that passed into British hands the airstrip in Goose Green was seized should be included among British successes in that phase. It will remain a mystery why Argentine did not use that very effective combat measure. At that point, despite the constant movement of the British forces in the direction of Port Stanley, the total balance of land operations was not too optimistic. On-off engagements with the Argentine forces prolonged extended the timeline of operations, each additional day of the war threatened severe losses both at sea and in the air. In the face of enormous risk of a longer war, the British command decided to send into battle the second echelon of its Land Forces – the 5th Infantry Brigade under the command of Brig. A. Wilson, which reached the theater of operations on June 1 (Kubiak, 1993). The disembarking of the 5th Brigade did not take place until June 8, because the weather conditions as well as offensive actions of the Argentine Air Forces hampered the operation. As a result of bombing by the Argentine Forces, three watercrafts were hit, including the Fearless-class amphibious landing platform dock, which sunk a few hours later, and landing ships “Sir Tristram” and “Sir Galahad” which badly damaged (Kubiak, 1993).

However, the Argentines’ violent attacks did not bring the expected effects, as the British were steadily approaching Port Stanley. Its eventual seizure finally brought an end to the warfare, which had consumed huge financial outlays and brought heavy losses in equipment.

The military solution to the conflict did not solve the antagonisms between the two countries. Argentina continued to take all possible steps through diplomatic channels in order to have the Falkland Islands recognized as part of its territory. On the other hand, Great Britain had to reckon with enormous problems while restoring law and order in the Islands, in both political and social terms. Undoubtedly, the war in the Falkland Islands should be classified as a lesson for the future. It is also a good example for learning how to wage a war in distant theaters of operation, far away from home bases, especially as concerns usefulness and reliability

of weapons and equipment in difficult climate and terrain as well as the planning of logistical support (MON, 1993).

Currently, the Falklands Conflict is considered as a logistical success, which would not have been possible had it not been for the pragmatism of the UK government, the effort put in coordination of the means of transport and supply measures, as well as all forces being maintained in relative readiness in case of a potential conflict. Relocation of such large forces and resources over a relatively short time and quick organization of a fleet group of 100 naval units indicate that at that time the British Naval Forces were at high combat readiness – in line with the British program of establishing rapid reaction forces that had been consistently pursued for several years before.

Furthermore, the involvement of civilian (merchant) vessels requisitioned to supply the British forces in the conflict is also noteworthy. This efficient and fast conversion of a large number of civilian ships for military purposes points to the existence of well-prepared plans and a legislative developed beforehand, authorizing the requisitions for the benefit of the intervention forces. All in all, about 50 vessels belonging to private owners were converted and equipped for military purposes in the course of the Falklands War. Casualties of the War on British side included 255 killed and 777 wounded soldiers². Five British ships, including two destroyers, two frigates and one container ship, were sunk during the wartime. In addition, 5 other ships were badly damaged; and 34 planes and 24 helicopters of various types were lost. For comparison, the Argentines suffered about 650 dead and lost in action, and 1300 injured. Moreover, 5 Argentine vessels and 73 planes and helicopters were destroyed in the military operations (MON, 1993). The balance of losses on both sides does not show the British to have had a significant advantage; the high-quality logistic arrangements on their side brought them closer to victory. The British also had the upper hand in terms of potential of their economy, which could support long-term warfare – it was one of the decisive factors in the capitulation of the Argentine forces.

The experience of the British in the Falklands laid the foundation for a system of planning of future wartime operations based on mobilization and conversion of available civilian resources for the needs of the conflict, not only in the UK. Thanks to research focused on this very conflict, especially its logistical preparations, attention of analysts in many countries (in particular the USA) was drawn

² The Argentine losses are likely to be greater by up to even 45 planes and helicopters, but these figures are only conjectures made by the British side – the final numbers have never been officially disclosed by Argentina.

to quality of logistical arrangements as a factor in winning a war. This lesson was learned, and put in practice nine years later during organization of logistical support system during the first Gulf War as well as in later operations. The remaining question is whether today both parties of the conflict would be ready to once more engage in armed combat, perhaps to an even more extensive degree, bringing more severe implications. The Falklands War of 1982, however short, was remarkable in terms of effects it produced, as it brought a significant loss of power and resources to both countries involved.

It is also worth noting that the Falklands conflict was the last one so far with the involvement of just two nation-states, as there was no participation of allied forces in the hostilities. This war, despite a clean-cut end, did not resolve the problems between Argentina and Great Britain. The old dispute over the Islands still makes its presence felt nowadays and, just like in the early 1980s, at any time may degenerate into open conflict. Will Great Britain allow itself to be surprised once more, as it was in April 1982? Probably such a spectacularly quick invasion and seizure of the Islands will never happen again, especially taking into account the much greater British military potential in that region now and the modern detection and communication technologies. So if it was to come to an open war again, what would its course be like? We leave the answer to the imagination of the readers...

Situation of The Falkland Islands After 1982

The several-weeks long war ended with victory for Great Britain, which came at a high financial cost. However, the real challenge was to restore order in the Falklands and the further investment needed for the development of the region. The most important task was to restore the Islands economy based on livestock breeding and fishing. For this purpose, a number of investments aimed at improving and developing the livestock production sector were made, and a protection zone around the Islands introduced in order to regulate fishing. Profits gained from the sale of fish and farm animals allowed the Falkland Islands economy to recover and create new prospects for their few inhabitants. It is worth noting that in 1982 only 1,950 people – whose origin dated back to the colonial period and the influx of so-called Scottish Kelpers – inhabited the Falkland Islands. By 2003, the population of the Falklanders increased to 2,900, with Britons making up 70% of the residents and 30% originating in the Scandinavian countries, Chile and the island of Saint Helena (Ivanov, 2003).

Development of new road infrastructure – which had been under-developed and in poor condition even before the War – was another key investment made in the Islands. As a result of agricultural reform, large farming areas were transformed into smaller family farms, and immigrants from Chile and Saint Helena were accepted as settlers. In addition to the economic development, it was equally crucial to strengthen the state security system, especially in light of the events of 1982. One key development direction was to improve the land, sea and air transport infrastructure – and among the first steps in this direction was the set-up of an airbase in Mount Pleasant, suitable also for civil aviation purposes. In the next stage, a new road infrastructure in the Islands was developed virtually from scratch, and ferry crossing were established to connect the islands. These investments improved not only transportation conditions, but also contributed to development of trade and tourism. Shortly after 1982 their share in the economy started to grow, and in the mid-2000s these sectors caught up in importance with agriculture (just after fishing in terms of GDP share). The discovery of oil and natural gas deposits in the vicinity of the Islands in 1998 was a turning point for the economy and added another boost to the importance of the Falklands. Even earlier, in the 1970s, there were indications that this region of the world was rich in energy resources, but proper research did not begin until the end of the 20th century. The initial prospecting efforts did not manage to assess the precise volume of the resources. Nevertheless, even the general information provided made the Falkland Islands grow in attractiveness – and the aspirations of Argentina to incorporate the Islands into its territories were thus revived again after some years (Royle, 2012).

The experiences of 1982 led to formation, in 1983, of the South Atlantic Council as a platform to improve the relations between Argentina, Britain and the Falkland Islanders, as well as to assist them in resolving the dispute on terms satisfactory to all parties (South Atlantic Council, 2015). A year earlier, the 3rd UN Conference on the Law of the Sea approved the Convention on the Law of the Sea, which established, *inter alia*, the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf tasked with issuing recommendations to coastal States on determining the limits of their continental shelf (Article 76; The United Nations Convention, 2015). Some of the key Convention provisions specified the limits of a state continental shelf at a distance of 200 nautical miles from territorial sea baselines (The United Nations Convention, 2015). Argentina was not able to reconcile with these decisions and in 2009 unilaterally extended its claim on continental shelf to 350 nautical miles from that line, requesting the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf to open an international debate on the issue. The de-

cision in this matter, extending the limits as per the request of Argentina, was announced in March 2016 (*Argentyna nie odpuszcza...*, 2012).

The threat of Argentina making another attempt to annex the Islands has a human dimension of course – due to the fact that the Falklands are inhabited by fewer than 3,000 people, their fear of a repeated attack by Argentina seems reasonable. In order to protect the Islands, the United Kingdom has kept the Royal Navy forces on a permanent standby in the South Atlantic since 1982, as part of Atlantic Patrol Tasking (South). They have the responsibility to offer ongoing protection and reassurance to British interests in the South Atlantic (Royal Navy, 2015). In addition, the Falklands have their own voluntary defence structures – the Falkland Islands Defence Force (FIDF) protects the security of the citizens and the Islands territory. Even though the service is performed on a voluntary basis, members meet once or twice a week for joint military exercises under the supervision of a small number of professional military personnel (Falkland Islands Government, *Welcome to the Falkland...*, 2015). Although the origins of FIDF go back as early as 1847, only in 1983 the local government reorganized these structures in line with the British military doctrine, ensuring joint training of FIDF soldiers with the British troops and operation of military grade equipment (Falkland Islands Government, *The Falkland Islands Defence Force...*, 2013). The existence of such a defensive formation proves that the inhabitants of the Islands not only expect military support from the British in order to maintain their status quo, but also feel the obligation to actively defend the territory where they live.

Even though the war officially ended over 35 years ago, it still lives in the minds of the Falklanders as well as war veterans and their families visiting the Islands, especially during the celebration of the Liberation Day on June 14 each year. In addition, for those interested in history organized tours explaining the course of the War are available. Places where Argentine casualties of the war were buried on the Islands are among other stops on the sightseeing route. Due to the fact that part of the population still remembers the traumatic events of 1982, the cemetery in Goose Green where 247 Argentine soldiers were buried was devastated multiple times. Younger generations have been trying to show respect to all the victims of the War, although this does not preclude their overall negative attitude towards Argentina, inherited from the older portion of the local population. Importantly, though formally the Falklands remain under the sovereignty of the United Kingdom, the residents themselves see them as a state rather than an overseas territory. As for the views of the Argentines, they also claim the Falkland Islands – known there as the Malvinas – as theirs, as evidenced by roadside signs

that one may encounter while travelling across Argentina (Royle, 2012)³. Revival of efforts aimed at return of the Falkland Islands under the administration of Argentina was observed during the presidential term of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, holding this office from December 10, 2007. It is worth taking a closer look at what prompted this new attempt, though some key topics have been at least partially signalled in this work already (Royle, 2012).

Revival of the Dispute About The Falkland Islands

Nowadays, the decision taken in 1982 by Margaret Thatcher is viewed as guided by intent to demonstrate the power of the British Empire. Although more than 30 years have passed since the end of the Falklands War, and a little less since the restoration of diplomatic relations between the warring parties, relations between Argentina and Great Britain still remain tense. The dispute over the territory of the Falkland Islands once again picked up momentum in 2011 after Cristina Fernández de Kirchner was re-elected as president. This coincided with the declaration of the Rockhopper Exploration Company, one of the few undertakings with right to explore the oil-rich area of the Falkland Islands, relating to plans of commencing extraction of this raw material in 2016. Already in 2010, Argentina revealed that it was considering introduction of special permits for ships travelling from Argentine ports to the Falkland Islands, which would complicate organization of mining of natural resources – coincidentally, serious oil and gas exploration efforts in the area began also in 2010. Such requirement of prior permission was indeed introduced. Furthermore, the revival of the dispute was a response to David Cameron's refusal to return to negotiations on the exercise of authority over the Falklands territory. Following this action, the Argentinian President called the British Prime Minister "arrogant" (*Rockhopper optimism on Falklands...*, 2011). Cameron then endorsed the necessity of following the will of the Falkland Islanders, which led to a referendum in the first half of 2013. In effect, 1,517 of 1,672 inhabitants eligible to vote opted for remaining under the sovereignty of Great Britain (*Falklands referendum*...²⁰¹³). Importantly, only three respondents were in favor of the Islands being under authority of Argentina. These results were not recognized by the authorities of Argentina, seeking to expand their own sphere of economic influence over the areas rich in oil and natural gas, i.e. offshore deposits

³ "The Malvinas are Argentine", and "Argentinas por siempre" meaning "Argentine forever" accompanied by a the map of the Falkland Islands.

in the vicinity of the Falkland Islands. Even before the announcement of these results, the then Ambassador of Argentina to the UK pointed to the “illegal” nature of the referendum and confirmed that Argentina would maintain its claims to disputed territory no matter the outcome. It is worth mentioning that the Islanders’ choice in favor of remaining under British authority was a repeat the results of the 1986 referendum, in which 96% of voters supported the same solution (Gilbert, 2013).

As David Cameron indicated in early 2013, the UK would remain firm about exercising control over the Falklands, especially in the face of the increasingly demanding rhetoric on the part of Argentina. In a BBC interview, he emphasized: “I get regular reports on this entire issue because I want to know that our defenses are strong, our resolve is extremely strong” (Meikle, 2013). The Prime Minister also said that, as long as the people of the Falklands would recognized the sovereignty of the British Queen over them, they could count on his 100% support. Such declarations came in response to a letter sent to the UK Prime Minister by Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, whose presidential term lasted until December 2015, on the 180th anniversary of the British taking over control over the Islands. In Kirchner’s view, this event should be seen as Argentina being forcibly stripped of the Falkland Islands, a fate suffered by other states that fell victim to British colonialism of the 19th century. The character of the published statement clearly indicated the belief of the Argentine society that the United Kingdom deliberately, using military force, expelled the Argentines from the Falkland Islands 180 years prior and subsequently began implantation of the British population there, which undermined the territorial integrity of Argentina. Kirchner referred to the Resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1965 inviting the parties involved in the dispute to negotiate a solution, which according to Argentina should have focused on elimination of all manifestations of colonial legacy in the Malvinas (*Cristina Fernández de Kirchner’s...*, 2013).

A month later, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Argentina, Héctor Timerman, pointed out in one of the interviews that within 20 years, Argentina would regain control over the Falkland Islands. This would be, according to him, achieved through peaceful means, thanks to the growing awareness of people of the world, who in the future would clearly recognize that British citizens settling in overseas territories were part of the colonization process and consequently accept Argentina’s rights to sovereignty over the Islands (today, the issue has increased in complexity and it is hard to share Timerman’s belief). In terms of specifics, Timerman promised protection of the inhabitants of the Falkland Islands in the future (“their way of life, their language and right to remain British citizens”), but did

not officially start any talks with their involvement. It was clear that political and economic interests of Argentina were at the forefront of the Minister's mind, with restoration of the former territorial unity of the state being just an afterthought. In the same interview, Timmerman openly accused the British of using the "cover" of UK citizens in this overseas territory to maintain access to oil, natural gas and fishing areas, whose rightful owner is Argentina. Citing the resolution of the United Nations, he said that there were only two sides of the conflict – the United Kingdom and the Argentine Republic – and negotiations should have been tackled only between them. He described the referendum in the Falkland Islands – planned for March 2013 – as "something that doesn't mean anything because (...) it is like asking the British citizens of the Malvinas Islands if they want to remain British" (Wintour, 2013).

Timmerman's position seemed inconsistent, as despite the repeatedly stressed willingness to start negotiations with the British, he refused to hold a meeting where a representative of the Falklanders would be present. While the representative of Argentina expressed a desire to resolve the dispute peacefully by negotiation, Prime Minister David Cameron stated unequivocally that in case of any threat Great Britain would be ready to use military force and engage in another war to protect its overseas territory against any attack. In early 2013 he pointed out: "We have strong defences in place on the Falkland Islands. That is absolutely key – we have fast jets stationed there, we have troops stationed on the Falklands" (Chapman, 2013). These assurances rang weak at the beginning of April 2016, when it was announced that for the past few months, for the first time since 1982, the Falklands area had been left without assistance of the Royal Navy, normally protecting the Islands located approximately 14 000 km away from Great Britain. This followed from a combination of several problems, such as reduction in the number of professional military personnel, the need to deploy vessels to monitor the activities of the Russian fleet in the vicinity of the United Kingdom, and the high engine failure rate of Type 45 destroyers. Consequently, since November 2015, i.e. the return of the last British frigate from the southern part of the Atlantic, the effects of spending cuts to the British Armed Forces budget could also be felt in the Falkland Islands. This situation caused deep indignation among politicians opposing the policies pursued by David Cameron. Although HMS Clyde, a small, lightly armed patrol vessel remained in the Falklands, no bigger ship was posted to the Atlantic Patrol Tasking (South). However, according to the UK Ministry of Defense, this area was well enough protected by other ships ("HMS Clyde, a Royal Fleet Auxiliary support ship and 1,200 UK personnel operating RAF Typhoons, and ground defenses").

Another important event in that period was the decision of the United Nations issued a few days earlier, which shocked the British society and the people of the Falkland Islands. It concerned the extension of the maritime territory of Argentina in the South Atlantic by about 35%, as had been requested by that state as early as in 2009. It should be noted that the decision was taken by the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (UNCLCS), and thus was a recommendation only and not binding. Contributing to the growing tensions was the issue of exploration of oil and natural gas deposits in the Falklands area and their extraction, a strong boost to the Falklands economy – previously based on livestock farming – and as previously the matter of strategic location of the Islands. Even though the presence of natural resources was discovered already in 1998, it took 10 more years to their extraction in 2010, a process that was firmly opposed throughout by Buenos Aires (*Falkland Islands seek clarity...*, 2016). Of course, the aforementioned decision of the UN delighted the authorities of Argentina and was celebrated as a success, as it gave hope for acquisition of significant resources in the future and improvement of the economic situation of the country. Although David Cameron clearly rejected the decision of the UNCLCS, Argentine Foreign Minister, Susana Malcorra, pointed out: “We have taken a great step forward in demarcating the outer limit of our continental shelf” (Krol, 2016). Under the UNCLCS decision, the Argentina’s maritime zone of influence was to be increased by 1.7 million square kilometers and bring the country many profits, primarily from inclusion of new fishing areas and extraction of natural resources (Krol, 2016).

However, after a few months of silence, once again contact between the two countries was established and talks between Argentinean President Mauricio Macri and other senior officials and UK Foreign Office Minister Sir Alan Duncan took place in Buenos Aires. Sir Alan Duncan has also met with his Argentinean counterpart, Foreign Affairs Minister Susana Malcorry. The aim of the negotiations was to remove some of the restrictions in place around the Falkland Island – mainly concerning oil and gas exploration, fishing areas and shipping. The two countries pledged to work more closely together also on the matters of trade and security, as long as this would not violate the sovereignty of the Islands (as both sides to the territorial dispute continue to recognize this area as their own). Another outcome of the talks was the declared support for a project aimed at identifying the bodies of Argentine soldiers fallen in the 1982 War and buried on the Islands. Just as Mauricio Macri, President of Argentina since December 2015 promised at the beginning of his presidency, this started a thaw in the Argentinean-British relations. In his eyes, this start of a real dialogue by parties conflicted for so many

years and agreement on some joint actions should be regarded as a “new kind of relationship” – a turn in the relations between these states which seemed to be impossible only a few months before. As stated by Sir Alan Duncan, these were the first positive talks and bilateral arrangements between the UK and Argentina since 1999 (*Argentina and UK to work toward...*, 2016).

Future Predictions for The Falkland Islands

It is difficult to clearly state what will be the nature of the relationship between Great Britain and Argentina – and what will be the fate of the Falkland Islands. It is not entirely sure the Falklanders are safe from wars in the future. There are currently no indications that the conflict would escalate again shortly. On the contrary, establishment of cooperation between the two countries in conflict for a number of years gives hope for maintenance of peaceful relations in the future. There are a few possible scenarios for the resolution to this territorial dispute. One of them assumes peaceful co-existence of all parties, all benefiting from economic cooperation. But even the most optimistic predictions do not foresee renunciation by Argentine of its claim to the Islands and sovereignty over them, thus leaving alive the possibility of this country once again trying to gain control of the Falklands in the near or distant future. The most pessimistic scenario of the course the dispute may take in the future, is the repeat of the 1982 invasion, an attempt by the Argentines to conquer the Islands. Although in the face of changes in the rhetoric used by the United Kingdom and the Republic of Argentina it would seem unlikely, the risk of volatile changes in views and policies after a change in governments must be remembered. History has shown that most momentous decisions made as regards the Islands usually were a reflection of the current political situation within Argentina. It cannot be ruled out that the next Argentinean governments will be unwilling to cooperate, or assumed that the United Kingdom will not at some point decide that its interests in the area are more important than the spirit of collaboration. Theoretically, there remains the option of full independence and sovereignty of the Falkland Islands as a separate state – the inhabitants of the Islands are strongly attached to their land and consider the Falklands pretty much an independent entity. Obviously, the referenda have shown twice their willingness to remain under the British flag – however, a choice between two countries as potential sovereigns is a matter completely different than choosing between dependence and sovereignty. However, such a drastic development seems to be the least likely – although the Falklands have quite considerably developed economically since

ce 1982, they still need the military support of the UK to deter potential enemies that could invade their territory. As the Islands' population is of only about 3,000, there is no way for the Falklands to ensue their own protection.

It is worth considering whether Héctor Timerman's prediction of 2013 is conceivable, i.e. Argentina taking over control of the Islands by 2033. If it was to happen at all, it will most likely not be due to a peaceful solution. Would, therefore, Argentina be willing to re-invade the Falkland Islands? How would the UK respond to such an event? Are these countries prepared to and able to withstand entanglement in another war? Analysis of the events of 1982 and analogical reasoning on this basis can provide some likely answers to these questions.

First, it is necessary to return to the theoretical foundations of decisions taken by both parties in 1982 – let us use for this purpose the prospect theory developed by Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky. Although, in principle, the theory was created to serve in the field of psychology and economics, it has also been applied in international relations for many years. Research conducted by these authors showed that people have different perception of profit and loss forecasts. They are more inclined to opt for a smaller-sized profit if the probability of actually getting it is higher than to choose a less-likely but bigger reward. On the other hand, in the case of losses, respondents are more willing to suffer a potentially greater loss if only the probability of its occurrence is lower than a smaller, but more certain one. With regard to political behaviors, this means that political leaders can make more risky decisions in order to avoid even minor, but pretty certain losses (Levy, 1992). This was the case when the decision on the occupation of the Falkland Islands in 1982 by the Argentine forces was made, an act born of desperation of the military junta wanting to gain public legitimacy and maintain power at all costs. This move gave them a chance to achieve these goals, which would be impossible if the dictatorship remained passive. The Argentine leaders chose the riskier option, since only this gave them a chance of avoiding total failure. The British government responded equally decisively to the seizure of the Falkland Islands, since not taking any action would have meant a certain 100% loss. Therefore, in the event of the outbreak of another conflict, a strong reaction of the British would be the most likely scenario. It would most likely involve, on the one hand, the necessary commitment of additional financial resources and, on the other, strengthening of the forces stationed in and around the Islands – what would necessitate a transfer to the south Atlantic theatre of additional units (and resources) committed to pursuing other strategic objectives.

The prospect theory also increases our understanding of the contemporary political behavior of Argentina towards the Falkland Islands. Through establishment

of cooperation with Great Britain, the country decided to receive smaller but certain gains, especially in the economic dimension. Perhaps the previous negative experiences mean the lesson has been learned. It is hard to imagine circumstances in which this relatively stable situation could change. Obviously, theoretically Argentina may attempt to obtain the power over the Islands through military means at any point in the future, but these days – especially when looking through the lens of the prospect theory – this option seems unrealistic. There are currently no indications that for Argentina the conquest of the Falklands territory is a *sine qua non* condition for ensuring continuity of its government. On the contrary, by cooperating with the UK and thus securing small but relatively certain gains, the Argentine government can win societal support as citizens themselves can profit from development of fisheries, shipping, tourism and chances for employment in sectors of extraction and processing of natural resources. Such a solution is profitable for both parties involved, since peaceful coexistence of both countries and the new bilateral agreements mean both states are free to pursue their interests in the South Atlantic.

The Falkland Islands government sees the future of their territory through the prism of economic development and aims to be considered as one of the most active overseas British territories. This means that both the inhabitants and the authorities of the Falklands do not provide for the possibility of coming under the rule of Argentina. Recent years have brought modernization of the educational system, improvements in healthcare, better internal communications as well as overall strengthening of the private sector. The next stages of development of the Islands infrastructure will focus on fisheries and onshore fish processing facilities, exploration of hydrocarbon deposits, agricultural diversification, development of export and tourism and increased involvement of the private sector in all of the above activities (Falkland Islands Government, *Our Future*, 2016). These goals seem aligned with the British vision of the Falkland Islands' future. In contrast, Argentina repeatedly stressed its desire to seize power over the Islands – an underlying fact that has not been altered by the mere initiation of a new series of meetings focused on Anglo-Argentinean bilateral cooperation. Héctor Timerman stated his belief in this vision coming true by 2033 – today, however, this seems pretty much a dream, far removed from what is actually achievable within that timeline.

The matter of the decision taken by the International Committee within the United Nations, recommending the extension of the maritime territory of Argentina in the southern part of the Atlantic by 35% still remains unresolved. This recommendation being implemented would effectively mean the Falkland Islands would fall within the limits of the Argentinean continental shelf baseline. Whilst

the United Kingdom rejected this decision, considering it as non-binding, Argentina treats it as legitimizing and constantly reminds the international community of its consequences as concerns the location of the Falklands. In this discourse Argentina relies also on older findings going in line with its interests (e.g. the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2065). As pointed out by David Cameron's spokesperson commenting on the nature and tasks of the Committee: "this is an advisory committee. It makes recommendations; they are not legally binding and the commission doesn't have jurisdiction to consider sovereignty issues" (*UK and Argentina agree...*, 2016). Both sides of the territorial dispute are aware of the decision being non-binding in legal terms, and for this reason the matter is considered unresolved. What is certain is that the United Kingdom will not voluntarily agree to have the Falkland Islands, a territory under British sovereignty, surrounded by territorial waters of another country, especially Argentina. The people of the Falkland Islands together with their elected government would likely be opposed to finding themselves in such circumstances as well.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be assumed that in the next few years the debate focused on the legal status of the Falkland Islands and Argentina's territorial claims will be overshadowed by other issues, mainly attempts to extend and deepen economic cooperation with Great Britain. Even though both sides continue to declare the Falklands as rightfully theirs, and likely will also do their best to retain (UK) or gain (Argentina) authority over the Islands, nowadays they are attempting to develop peaceful relations based on benefit calculations. Undoubtedly, the foreign policy priorities defined by any successive government in Argentina or the United Kingdom will have a major impact on continuation or reversal of this trend. The newly elected (at the end of 2015) President of Argentina has been implementing policies and pursuing goals he had set himself at the beginning of the term, including those of "normalization" of the Argentine-British relations. The two terms of presidency of his predecessor, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, had the tensions running high and balanced on a knife's edge. Under Kirchner, Argentina not only did not acquire new territories, but also for many years it was robbing itself of a chance to participate in potential profits. This problem was recognized by the successive administration – following a reorientation of Argentina's foreign policy towards more immediate rewards, the government is increasingly gaining support among society uninterested in another – smaller or larger – war or economic stagnation.

Perhaps several years were necessary to realize that inflexibility and clinging to unachievable ambitions do not always positively impact a state's power. Undoubtedly, memories of the War of 1982 – which has not changed the political map of the world – are still present in the awareness of the Argentines, the British and all citizens of the Falkland Islands. In the event of another attempt at a military solution to the conflict, the scenario would most likely repeat itself – with this in mind, both sides are reorienting their current foreign policies towards cooperation rather than creating further divisions. One can hope that the trend of cooperation between the two countries re-started in the second half of 2016 by Sir Alan Duncan's visit to Buenos Aires will be maintained by successive rulers of the Republic of Argentina and the United Kingdom. These days, the key intention of President Macri is to “bring Argentina in from the cold”, “chart a calmer course than his fiery predecessor, and establish good business and political relations with Britain” (Alexander, 2016).

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