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### Title

Cognitive-Linguistic-Organizational Aspects of Field Research in International Relations.  
Working Paper No. 5, First Annual Conference on Discourse, Peace, Security and  
International Society

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/24m6w58t>

### Author

Cicourel, Aaron

### Publication Date

1988



University of California  
Institute of Global Conflict  
and Cooperation

## Cognitive-Linguistic-Organizational Aspects of Field Research in International Negotiations

by  
*Aaron V. Cicourel*

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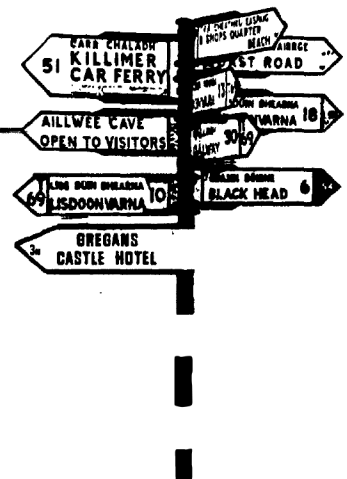
Working Paper No. 5

*Series edited by James M. Skelly*

First Annual Conference on  
Discourse, Peace, Security and  
International Society

Ballyvaughn, Ireland

August 9-16, 1987



The conference held at Ballyvaughn, Ireland, in August 1987 was the beginning of an on-going international intellectual interchange on topics related to the discourse of peace and security and international society. It will include annual meetings, the second to be held in summer 1988, again in Ballyvaughn. Sponsored by the University of California Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, the conferences are intended to foster general inquiry into these scholarly topics and to stimulate research and teaching that incorporates these perspectives at University of California campuses. This year's series of working papers comprises the writings which seventeen authors submitted to their colleague-participants in preparation for the 1987 conference. Some have been updated somewhat before publication here. Some have been published elsewhere and are reissued here by permission. The Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation hopes that these working papers will help to interest even more scholars in pursuing these lines of thought.

James M. Skelly  
Series Editor

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## **Defence, Discourse and Policy Making: Britain and the Falklands**

If we need a new language of national and international politics in order to think differently so as to cope with the dangers of a nuclear world, we also need a new language of policy analysis to examine the structures and processes by which defence policy in general, and nuclear policy in particular, is made. And we can do this by using what George Steiner called the "language turn" to reconceptualise the defence policy process. What is needed,<sup>1</sup> as a start, is a new lexicon of basic terms derived from language and discourse but applied to the policy process. We might then begin to develop this new vocabulary into an effective critique of defence decision making in the modern or indeed, the post-modern state.

This enterprise requires more than a mere technical adaptation of, say discourse analysis, semiotics, pragmatics, or any other school of linguistic analysis to the world of defence. It requires, in addition, a full-scale political and philosophical critique of the state. That critique would draw its inspiration from the "language turn," (particularly, say, Foucault's power/knowledge thesis) and address all those modern projects (industrialisation, institutionalisation, the science/state alliance, and war) which have contributed to the development of the state, as well as those ontological and epistemological philosophies upon which, in defence especially, its discourses of political action are based.

We live, of course, in a new and uniquely threatening nuclear world. But the processes which created that world are old ones. These in turn had their origins in the Enlightenment, in industrialisation and in the growth of the apparatus of rule. The nuclear state, therefore, marks the culmination of processes which became well established in the Nineteenth Century, notably the industrialisation and institutionalisation of defence, and the emerging alliance between the state and science. The threat it poses to us is novel but its existence is the product of those long-established historical dynamics which have shaped the political communities of advanced industrial societies.

Politics, above all, is language in action. A political community, then, is a discursively constituted entity, a "node within a network" that "indicates itself, constitutes itself only on the basis of a complex field of discourse."<sup>2</sup> Such communities produce and reproduce themselves through discursively constituted external (international) relationships as well as discursively constituted internal (domestic) relationships. Defence policy making, in which deterrence is the central core for nuclear states, is thus an identity defining processes as much as it is any of the other things it might claim to be. Perhaps its most distinctive characteristic is that it is JANUS-like; looking inwards and outwards simultaneously. In deconstructing the discourse of nuclear deterrence, therefore, we are also engaged in deconstructing the origins and workings of the

modern state, and of inter-state politics. Hence, though nuclear capabilities and the doctrines of nuclear deterrence are new, the threat of nuclear conflict has to be examined in the politically understood context of national and international politics and the dynamics of conflict which are exhibited there.

This paper begins with a very crude attempt to offer the basic reinterpretation of policy making that we need. It then goes on to provide an account not of nuclear deterrence or nuclear conflict but of the small post-imperial war which the British fought in the South Atlantic in 1982. The choice was in some ways convenient, but the processes exhibited in the Falklands War are common to the logic of conflict and to the symbolic construction of political communities which have direct relevance to the whole nuclear debate and I intend to draw some of these out further in a post-script.

## Policy Making

Policy making is not rational, mechanical, bureaucratic, or cybernetic (the economic, Managerialist, Allisonian, and Steinbruner views respectively; all tainted by the behaviouralist and positivist influences that have dominated management and political science as well as the realist school of international relations). It is a discursive process permeated by power because discourse also constitutes power relationship and because policy discourse, which is about action, is also meant to be acted upon. Much of the conversation of policy making is private and technical. It is the confidential or, more often, the tacit code of the policy community. However, no policy community can operate effectively without a more public language through which a broader discourse can be established with the public. Necessarily that medium bears the characteristic hallmark of communication between different levels of society; namely simplification. Consequently the public language of policy making is essentially symbolic; a vulgate or vernacular of symbolic generalisations found in what we might call a policy culture.

There are, therefore, two basic though related idioms in policy discourse. One is technical. It operates according to what Lyotard calls the performativity principle— which insists on optimising the relationship between the inputs and outputs of a system.<sup>3</sup> The other is cultural. It is concerned with what Lyotard also refers to as the narrative tradition of knowledge, and it operates according to the principle of normativity. Culture, in short, seeks to normalise and legitimise our partial, particular, discontinuous, and discordant understanding of experience and transform it into a shared cosmological conception of coherence and continuity— common-sense. These two idioms constitute, so to speak, the double helix which carries the hereditary and operational codes of policy making. And the interrelationship between each idiom is as complex as their internal dynamics.

For the inputs and outputs of a policy system we should substitute the utterances (performative, denotive, interrogative, etc.) of human actors which reverberate with a multitude of meanings and connotations. For the institutional structure of policy making, its hierarchies and organisational charts, we should substitute the idea of a language community; a complex composition of individuals who, by sharing a common language, share a form of life, exhibit distinct "family resemblances," are connected within the policy community by an extended kinship network and allied through a variety of mechanisms with other policy communities.

Policy makers, therefore, are not rational actors, cogs in a machine, or bureaucratic cyphers. They are agents who act within many discourses and those discourses specify the scope and character of their agency. Indeed discourse creates them as historical subjects. They may be "authors" of the texts of individual policy issues, but their authorship is determined by tradition and culture through the discursive practices and processes which Gadamer, Barthes, Ricoeur, and Foucault have analysed.<sup>4</sup> Hence they are as concerned with revision, interpretation, and exegesis as they are with authorship and action in the enactment of policy texts. Even as it structures, discourse remains in some degree problematic, contingent, and accidental. Discursive structures change and break down. They never acquire the status of a total institution.

Finally, policy itself is neither a goal, a value, a rule of a standard; or indeed any of the other traditional definitions offered in the literature of policy science. Policy is text. Simply and obviously stated, the language games of policy making are conducted principally through texts (communiqués, announcements, agreements, treaties, legislation, reports — Parliamentary and congressional — government documents, memoranda, protocols, declarations, aide memoires, and so on through an almost unending list of textual material). Amongst other things bureaucratisation was the textualisation of government and administration, and each textual move in political discourse provokes a counter-move. Such texts evolve over time, out-living the professional lives of politicians and officials, becoming something which they and their successors have to address and revise. Political leaders, for example, assume authorship for texts they had no hand in formulating. Alternatively, having authorised or helped to formulate a text, they become stuck with it and have to contend with competing renditions of its content. Other times they may simply abandon texts which they have inherited because they lack the political courage to enact them; just as the Thatcher Government abandoned the strategy of sovereignty negotiations with Argentina in 1981 (the Foreign Office's text) in a failure of political will which ultimately led to the Falklands War.<sup>5</sup>

The idea of text is inseparable not only from that of the texture, tone, and performance of the policy community, but also from the related issues of authority and authorship. And here we have to recall one of the principle demands of the structuralist manifesto:

it is about time that criticism and philosophy acknowledged the disappearance or the death of the author.<sup>6</sup>

Following Barthes, at least in some degree, it is quite evident that in political affairs,

the text is not a line of words releasing a single "theological" meaning (the message and an author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centres of culture.<sup>7</sup>

If there are no single authors of policy texts many individual voices are nonetheless engaged in their rhetorical formulation and adaptation; a process which takes place in response to specific historical circumstances — the drama of politics. Equally, we should abandon the idea in politics and policy making that the authors' intentions remain controlling. For, as Ricoeur put it, "the text's career escapes the finite horizon lived by its author."<sup>8</sup> Little wonder then that "policy implementation" remains a puzzle for policy managers and "policy scientists." A univocal conception of authorship usually corresponds with a naive view of the controlling capacity of the text.

Authorship, therefore, is problematic and multi-vocal; a point which (significantly) the French structuralists share with conservative British political philosophers, from Burke to Oakeshot, who are preoccupied with the conception of tradition. But we have to be careful, in eschewing the positivist concept of an original universal author, not to commit ourselves to some transcendental anonymous authority such as that of a linguistic system, a genre or indeed a tradition. For tradition too is a multi-vocal human construct, and therefore by definition both incomplete and problematic, in which a multitude of voices and their echoes find a register. There is logic in a system, style in a genre, and potential in a tradition. But each has to be understood and more or less mastered in order to be employed, and such employment requires interpretation. Here then is where judgement and difference comes in.

Because discourse, or a text, has to be interpreted in order to be enacted, a related creative process parallels that of the formulation of the discourse itself; and is intimately related with it. That process is the exercise of the individual judgement involved in actually employing language. A great deal has been written in sociology and in the sociology of organisations, for example, about role playing. But little has been said there about the creation of a character, or a subject, a genuinely dramaturgical process which goes far beyond mere role playing. As in drama so in life, which means policy making, character is not a static or uni-dimensional thing. Characters are accomplishments. They have identity and are contingent as much upon individual talents and particular contexts as they are upon the roles assigned by the discursive practices of administrative and political institutions.<sup>9</sup> Characters are created in the interstices which lie between the lines; by what has to be brought to the role and read into the script. Of course, the

whole question of the subject is a deep one; because discourse creates subjects. But time and place, the hour and the experience, as well as the script make their own individual demands upon actors everywhere. Thus all actors are mediumistic in the sense not only that they require a medium but also in the sense that they themselves have to mediate between the general, (be it in the form of a text, a plot or a rule), and the particular — the immediate and constant need to turn these into action (performance). Hence, as Ronald Beiner has argued so expertly, if we are talking about collective action or action taken on behalf of a collectivity, *political* judgement must also be of central concern in the discursive analysis of policy making.<sup>10</sup>

In short, so the argument goes, all we have is language. But language is arbitrary and imprecise. Moreover its use is located in time and in space — each of which is relative. There is, therefore, no escape from those discourses through which we produce and reproduce political life, but also no escape from the judgement required in their use.

But, to return to the text, there is no such thing as a finished text, for policy texts are constantly revised through use. And, of course, there is no such thing as an unexpurgated text, because all policy texts are extensively edited and abridged accounts of the complex discourse of policy making. Policy texts are partisan versions of the nature and of the status of a policy issue. And such accounts enclose as much if not more than they disclose, providing partial interpretations and understandings which should always be treated with critical circumspection.

In sum, all policy issues have con-texts because, as Steiner observed, "No statement starts completely anew, no meaning comes from a void."<sup>11</sup> All utterance, therefore, is a practical engagement in which the possibilities of political language, the indeterminacies of policy texts, and the unexpected in politics combine with the variable talents of individuals to provide a mixture (policy making) that requires sophisticated critical appraisal rather than comparison with bogus "scientific" policy axioms. Policy criticism rather than policy science is the discipline to be pursued. And the task of criticism is to appraise "an ever negotiable" and evolving canon of policy texts and performances, recognising also that those texts and productions read us even as we read them; telling us what it is we value, fear and despise.<sup>12</sup> Ultimately policy analysis, if it is to be genuinely critical (rather than subservient to power), has to be a moral and ideological engagement; a practice in which the examination of values is to supersede, though not ignore, that of the instrumentalities with which they are related.

Policy texts, therefore, seek to legislate not merely the agenda but also the language and the tenor of the entire policy debate in an attempt to prescribe the limits, tone, and content of acceptable discourse. Translated into the vulgate of a policy culture they become institutionalised and find expression in symbol, myth, and legend. And deterrence, both as theory and policy, is a perfect example.



Hence every policy text offers its own reading of an issue, always remembering that reading itself is an active rather than a passive exercise. Some issues are routine and unimportant. They affect few people or constituencies and are dealt with in ways appropriate to their status. Others touch on large sectional interests and affect broad sectoral policies of government; such as economic, defence, or social welfare policies. Their complex ramifications provide much of the regular work of the central policy making and administering bureaucracies. A few issues may ultimately threaten parties, leaders, or governments. Fewer still threaten (or appear to threaten) political communities, touching the broadest national sentiments and involving the deepest national passions. The status of the texts which define a policy issue, therefore, is not fixed. Much depends upon circumstances and much depends upon how issues are played by policy makers. Change may be intentional. But issues often change for all sorts of unanticipated reasons. Alternatively, in response to calculation, caprice, or opportunism policy makers may choose to make an issue out of an issue. As often as not the sheer complexity and unpredictability of political affairs means that events are beyond the policy maker's control or quickly outstrip it. When this happens, and if it does so rapidly in a radical way, a crisis ensues; not only because the issue might then become extraordinarily important but also because, in the act of identifying and responding to such a change in status, the language as well as the routines of policy making are transformed and the texts of the issue radically rewritten. In this regard we have what Paul Chilton refers to as a critical discourse moment. All these features were illustrated in what happened in the South Atlantic in 1982.

On 2 April 1982 Argentine forces invaded and captured the Falkland Islands, British sovereign territory in the South Atlantic long disputed by successive Argentine regimes. The attack apparently caught the Thatcher administration totally by surprise and precipitated the resignation of the entire political team at the British Foreign Office, including the Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington who described the seizure of the Islands as a "national humiliation."<sup>13</sup> A major domestic and international crisis then erupted during the course of which diplomatic mediation by the United States, Peru, and the United Nations strove to avert armed conflict between the two protagonists. In the meantime a powerful British Naval Task Force, composed of a Carrier Battle Group and an Amphibious Assault Force, headed into the South Atlantic. As far as the British public was concerned Argentina's attack also came as a complete surprise and it was represented as such by the Government and most sections of the media.<sup>14</sup>

It was evident throughout the crisis that no material interests were at stake for either country. Neither was the conflict part of a wider global or ideological struggle. Initially, at least, the issue was no great test of the resolve of any alliance or of the position of any alliance leader. In fact, neither Britain nor Argentina was caught unawares by their disagreement; although the United Kingdom was badly surprised by the speed with which it went critical. The dispute was a long-standing one

in which the positions of both sides were well known, and no struggle for national survival was entailed by it. There were, in addition, no other parties to the quarrel whose interference might have compounded the difficulties of resolving it. Conflicting historical claims to territorial sovereignty over islands of little if any intrinsic value to Britain or Argentina, and of no interest to any but these two states, remained isolated from super-power rivalries and unconnected with any important regional strategic balance, or with global strategic relationships.

The dispute was an apparently uncomplicated international disagreement between two otherwise friendly states, which historically have shared some mutual regard, transformed by military gamble and political misjudgement into crisis and war. It ought to have been resolvable and yet it proved intractable. One might reasonably have thought also that even if no solution was immediately negotiable or foreseeable, a sense of proportion ought to have been sufficient to contain the disagreement below the threshold of violence. None of these perfectly reasonable and mitigating factors, however, had any relevance to the course of the conflict which followed but every relevance to the issues raised by language in action which is policy making.

Indeed the Falklands conflict is appropriate to a discussion about discourse and defence for many reasons. Despite the hypocrisy and hyperbole which distinguished the process, what was genuinely remarkable about the change brought about by the crisis was the total metamorphosis of the Falklands dispute from a minor post-imperial problem as defined by the texts of Foreign Office negotiations sanctioned by every British Government from 1966 onwards, into a drama of national credibility, as defined by Mrs. Thatcher, her War Cabinet, and most sections of British public opinion after 2 April 1982.

From the British perspective, and for Mrs. Thatcher especially, the war immediately became a test of basic national and international political values. Fought for exclusively symbolic reasons, it was a conflict, therefore, about belief systems during which a certain self image of the United Kingdom was defended and validated; and it exposed in the process much about the character of defence discourse and the operation of the belief systems it sustains. The case is interesting, then, less because it shows how a belief system filters "reality", and much more because it demonstrated the extent to which "reality" itself is symbolically constructed by discourse, and that men are prepared to die for the worlds which they create in this way. "Mankind will will the void rather than be devoid of will," might have been Mrs. Thatcher's motto if nuclear confrontation had been involved.<sup>15</sup>

What appeared to be at issue, therefore, was a belief system itself — a form of political life dependent upon political discourse in general and defence discourse in particular. Thus, as the Prime Minister roundly declaimed in a Parliamentary debate on 8 April 1982: "I took a decision immediately and said that the future of freedom and the reputation of Britain were at stake. We cannot, therefore, look at it on the basis of precisely how much it will cost."<sup>16</sup> A total threat, she

was arguing, required a total response. A sense of proportion was not relevant because what was being challenged were values themselves, the very means by which political identity, whether individual or collective, is expressed and measured. Argentina's attack threatened this sense of identity because its invasion was not simply a breach of geographical boundaries. It penetrated deep into a complex symbol system — that of a political community — whose outer boundaries, like all belief systems, are symbolically constructed, and the full force of those comprising Britain's political culture and identity were brought into play by the attack.<sup>17</sup> Such a reaction, moreover, set in process that logic of conflict which students of international relations have long recognised and researched.<sup>18</sup>

To the extent, therefore, that there were no limits to the structuring power of what Paul Chilton has called Falk talk, these were set not only by individual talents of Mrs. Thatcher and her colleagues, as political actors, or indeed the military as professional actors, desperately improvising a response in very dangerous circumstances. It was also determined by the character of the political setting in which these agents were operating, namely the UK, and by the exigencies of conflict in the South Atlantic. For the moment, however, we have to outline the salient features of the background to the crisis providing a brief resume of the text of the Falklands issue as a post-imperial anomaly — an interpretation of the dispute which guided post-war British policy up to 1980/81.

## **Background**

Post-war negotiations on the status of the Falklands began in November 1966.<sup>19</sup> For the first time in the history of the dispute the British indicated their willingness to concede sovereignty, if certain conditions were met and the Islanders' wishes respected. Throughout the next sixteen years negotiation and confrontation alternated as successive British Governments, committed to conflicting political goals in ascribing paramountcy to the Islanders' wishes but determined to solve the sovereignty dispute and effect a withdrawal from the South Atlantic, demonstrated their lack of political will to resolve the contradiction at the centre of British policy. Through the 1970s, as Britain ran out of the various diplomatic options provided in the main texts of negotiation, the dispute became militarised and Argentina began to experiment with exercises in brinkmanship. Militarily and politically, British Cabinets were well informed about the dynamics of the issue, and none was ignorant of the threat to the Islands, or of the importance of continuing with sovereignty negotiations as a way of avoiding a direct military confrontation. They were fully and regularly briefed by Foreign Office and Intelligence Reports which all repeated the same refrain. Commitment to sovereignty negotiations was the critical variable. Abandoning them would precipitate conflict. If Ministers wished to run that risk there were counter-measures to be taken and a price to be paid.

By 1979 only leaseback remained as a device by which the dispute might be settled; conceding sovereignty to Argentina in principle but leasing the Islands back for a period to allow the Islanders time to accommodate to the change in political status or reconsider their future in the Falklands. Thatcher's first administration was partially persuaded to explore this line, against the Prime Minister's inclinations. But its uncertain political support for the idea evaporated completely in the face of a hostile House of Commons response to a Government statement on leaseback which was delivered by Nicholas Ridley, the Junior Foreign Office Minister concerned, on 2 December 1981. Thereafter, Thatcher's Cabinet abandoned sovereignty negotiations but without any attempt to implement the counter-measures specified in numerous official and intelligence briefings. No military contingencies were made to face the predicted Argentina threat, and diplomatic talks were expressly designed from then on to prevaricate and delay, a process which all official advice regarded as provocative and dangerous. In short, Britain's Falklands policy imploded into a vacuum created by an absence of political leadership quite unprecedented even in the history of this dispute.<sup>20</sup>

By the end of 1981, in a noteworthy display of political immobility, the Prime Minister and her Foreign Secretary thus induced that diplomatic crisis in Anglo-Argentina relations long predicted by their Foreign Office and Intelligence officials. And that, as all military intelligence reports over the previous sixteen years had warned, was bound to lead to military confrontation. Indulging in another exercise of brinkmanship for its own domestic reasons, the Argentine Junta embarked upon a military adventure which neither it nor the British Cabinet proved politically capable of controlling.<sup>21</sup> Despite these developments, and in an equally notable display of what happens when diplomatic crises are not controlled by crisis management, British reactions through the Winter of 1981/82 remained confused and contradictory.

The immediate origins of the invasion of the Islands lay in the despatch of an Argentina expedition to a British dependency in the South Sandwich Islands, the Island of South Georgia. As it became evident that this expedition was designed to contest British sovereignty, rather than engage in commercial activity, the British Government in London tried to marshal a response. Without effective political supervision or co-ordination of policy, however, its reactions were dangerously confused and unco-ordinated. Diplomatically, Argentina was challenged. Then, as the crisis mounted, United States intercession was sought. But all this was too little too late, as well as inadequately led politically. Britain's military responses were equally ineffective and disorganised.<sup>22</sup>

On the evening of 31 March, with the Foreign Secretary on a visit to Israel, the Defence Secretary belatedly convened a private meeting in the Prime Minister's rooms in the House of Commons to announce that an Argentine invasion of the Falklands was certain and imminent. At the same meeting the Chief of Naval Staff (CNS) argued that the Navy was capable of retaking the

Islands and his advice for the despatch of a large Naval Task Force was accepted. An extensive mobilisation of British maritime forces then gathered momentum, including units which the CNS had already alerted in anticipation of the Cabinet's decision, and the final order for the fleet to sail was given at 7.30 pm on 2 April. Thereafter, the logic of conflict took over as the Carrier Group sailed South and plans were made to reinforce the amphibious forces despatched in their wake.

Lead elements of the Royal Navy's Task Force reached Ascension Island shortly before 16 April, to be joined on that date by the carriers HMS HERMES and HMS INVINCIBLE. As the British destroyers and frigates left the Island to press on to the South Atlantic, on 17 April, so the amphibious assault ship HMS FEARLESS arrived, followed by other elements of the Amphibious Assault Force. In consequence, over 16-17 April the Task Force commanders agreed on the strategy for the recapture of the Islands and specified 16 May as the day for the reinvasion. Shortly afterwards that date was put back to 19-20 May to await the additional reinforcements which were being sent from Britain, as well as to accommodate the progress of the Carrier Group's operations.

HMS HERMES and INVINCIBLE left Ascension Island on 18 April after a stay of just two days, and rendezvoused with their pickets of destroyers and frigates on 24 April. A second naval group, which had been diverted to recapture South Georgia, then rejoined the main battle force and the re-formed Carrier Battle Group arrived in the Falklands Exclusion Zone at the very end of April. On 1 May, as British ships and aircraft opened their attacks to begin preparation for the landings later in the month, so the leading elements of the Amphibious Force left Ascension. A week later the main units of the landing force sailed from there and, on 12 May, received their order to go ahead with the landings as soon as possible. British troops actually went ashore on 21 May (one day after the target date) immediately after the Amphibious Force had regrouped and rendezvoused with the Carrier Battle Group for the final run into the Islands.<sup>23</sup>

At no stage was the momentum of conflict moderated by the prospects of the diplomatic negotiations which were simultaneously underway seeking a peaceful solution to the crisis. Britain's Task Force was despatched upon a military gamble at the end of an 8,000 mile logistical train where it was to be committed to battle at the limits of its operational endurance and capability. With inadequate aircover it was to engage in an amphibious landing at the beginning of the Antarctic winter under orders to recapture the Islands as soon as it was able. It simply lacked the power and flexibility for what theorists of deterrence and crisis management call coercive bargaining. Committed to what the land force commander described as a "one shot operation," the margin between defeat, stalemate, or victory was exceedingly narrow. If the British Task Force

was to win, it had to act swiftly and decisively. Delay would not only have jeopardised the prospect of victory, but also the survival of the force itself. All this quickly became evident to the members

of the British War Cabinet, which was immediately formed to act as the agent of executive decision making throughout the conflict.

Britain's response to Argentina's invasion was co-ordinated through this powerful device of a War Cabinet, which served also to bring the direction of policy very closely under the supervision of the Prime Minister. The outcome was a remarkable individual and collective political performance on the stage both of national and international politics. Many motives were involved and the British response, though cleverly and extensively orchestrated, was as genuine as any socio-political drama is ever likely to be.

The War Cabinet, however, was not engaged in the rational crisis management upon which so much of the management of deterrence presumes. Mrs. Thatcher's opportunity to do that had been squandered between January and March 1982. Neither was Britain's political leadership simply engaged in a plan to save the Government. In the context of the crisis, political expediency for Mrs. Thatcher quickly became fused with the national reputation of the country. Instead something much more traditional but quite uncalculated had taken place. Argentina's invasion had breached the peace and the despatch of the British Task Force was, in effect, an ultimatum to the Junta to withdraw. Furthermore, the duration of the ultimatum was determined by the speed of the British Fleet because, for military reasons, that ultimatum had to expire when British forces reached the Falklands. The passage of the British Task Force to the South Atlantic, therefore, was a rite of passage to war.

All rites of passage are periods of confusion and contradiction.<sup>24</sup> Thus the search for a diplomatic solution, through the language and texts of negotiation, was genuine, despite the way the Prime Minister embraced the logic of conflict, because it was an integral part of the complex process of transition. Serving many different political considerations simultaneously, it consolidated Britain's international position, helped to unify the War Cabinet, played its part in the mobilisation of domestic opinion and, most of all, contributed towards the United States declaration of support for Britain. Conceivably, also, it offered some prospect, however slim, of avoiding a military outcome. But, as Mrs. Thatcher repeatedly insisted, in one form or another, "I cannot rule out the use of force. The process of negotiations could go on endlessly."<sup>25</sup> Military necessity thus determined the time available for diplomacy just as the Prime Minister's political requirements circumscribed the limits of any possible agreement.

### **Character of the Belief System**

There are many general observations to make about the character of defence discourse during the Falklands conflict. First, there was the evidence of a radical reinterpretation of an issue, a profound and total restructuring of the significance of a particular dispute. Second, there was the new interpretation of the dispute as *causus belli*. Third, the Prime Minister's response to

Argentina's invasion displayed many of the classic features of the impact of crisis on decision makers and the way they simplify their views. Fourth, however much contrived the propaganda and rhetoric of Britain's response appeared to be, led and voiced in particular by Mrs. Thatcher, the contrivance of it was, so to speak, genuine. Fifth, as the Prime Minister expressed her view of what the issue was about, so her interpretation was reflected in the opinions of other politicians, the media, and the public. There was, in the language of the conflict a peculiar resonance between individual and collective belief systems, the one amplifying the other. Finally, the symbolically threatening nature of the attack was exploited not only to organise a powerful nationalistic military response to the seizure of the Islands, but also to turn the conflict into a celebration of certain national values. And that celebration was further exploited as an opportunity to advance a certain form of national revival. Once activated, Thatcher's revivalist conception of the meaning of the war flowed over into domestic and economic issues.<sup>26</sup> It became a motif of national political life. Less a simple filter, even less an independent variable given its historical origins, here we had a belief system constructed by discourse which was improvised from certain themes prominent in Britain's political and defence culture enlivened into a full scale political production.

Throughout the Falklands Conflict language and symbol were central. In the process the nature of language as constitutive of beliefs, political community, and identity, rather than merely reflective or referential, was fully displayed.<sup>27</sup> *Thatcher's War*, as one of her domestic critics labelled it, was language in action.<sup>28</sup> But language in action is drama.<sup>29</sup> So, in the political drama of April-July 1982 the vocabularies of Britain's political and defence culture were customised to define and meet the challenge presented by Argentina's attack.

Sixteen years of negotiations with Buenos Aires had naturally led to the formation of a particular conception of the Falklands dispute in Whitehall. Foreign Office briefings, Joint Intelligence Committee Reviews, and the compilation of advice and analysis from other diplomatic and military sources all contributed to an "official view" of the question. It might have been expected, from behavioural and psychological traditions of policy analysis, that Argentina's invasion would have provided evidence of the way in which such a collectively held and long established interpretation of the dispute had encouraged individual decision makers into a classic misperception of Argentine actions, and the effect in turn of British reactions on them, between 1980 and 1982. Superficially it has been argued that the proposal to withdraw HMS ENDURANCE and the denial of citizenship rights to many Falkland Islanders under the new British Nationality Act of 1981 were evidence of this. Mrs. Thatcher among other British decision makers, it has been suggested, misperceived the situation because their existing views encouraged them to believe that Buenos Aires was not seriously concerned to test British power in the South Atlantic.<sup>30</sup>

All the evidence from the British Commission of inquiry into the outbreak of the Falklands Conflict, however, points to a quite different conclusion.<sup>31</sup> It was well known, for example, that Argentina had interpreted the proposal to withdraw HMS ENDURANCE as a sign that Britain was no longer concerned to defend its position in the area. Britain's official view of the dangers and dynamics of the dispute, though deficient in certain respects, was perfectly adequate in general terms and provided an entirely accurate forecast of how relations would deteriorate if sovereignty negotiations were abandoned and Britain's position not reinforced by military means.

British decision makers were caught by surprise when Argentina captured the Islands *not* because their belief system had fostered misperception but because their political leaders, notably the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, had not absorbed the advice available to them and had failed to exercise the political leadership and judgement integral to their Departmental and Cabinet Responsibilities. Their failure was one of political oversight not misperception. That oversight was encouraged by many factors too numerous to catalogue here, but it was evident that where the Prime Minister was concerned, at least, they included, in a tacit rather than explicit way, the obduracy and nationalism which characterises her political style and which were to find full expression in her response to the conflict. Between 1979 and 1982 she had clearly been disinclined to negotiate about sovereignty, had delayed Cabinet consideration of the Falklands issue, and acquiesced in the Foreign Office's proposal to explore leaseback only because there was no other to oppose it with, and other political issues obviously demanded more of her political attention.<sup>32</sup> With the collapse of the leaseback proposal, in January 1981, the Prime Minister's hostility to any further development of Falklands policy, diplomatically or militarily, immobilised her Foreign Secretary who in turn immobilised his Department. Britain's management of the dispute then drifted leaderless and directionless until Argentina's invasion galvanised the Prime Minister into a war-like response.

The Junta's seizure of the Islands in fact confirmed the accuracy of the Foreign Office's interpretation of the dynamics of the Falklands dispute. But in exposing the miscalculation, diplomatic poverty, and political immobility that had finally ruined British policy under Thatcher, the invasion suddenly demanded an entire rewriting of the whole issue, its history, and its current significance. A failure of political leadership pre-invasion set the scene for a distinctive exercise in political discourse and political leadership post-invasion.

For Mrs. Thatcher, however, the corollary of interpreting the invasion as a *causus belli* was a war policy. Her belief that a range of basic national and international political values were at stake required her to find the best means of defending them. Her definition of the problem, as often happens, entailed a complementary definition of the solution. Victory was to exonerate her from the charge of political incompetence before the invasion, and political irresponsibility afterwards in taking the enormous military risk entailed in the despatch of the Task Force. Triumph in the



Falklands thus validated her belief system, enormously enhancing her reputation and that of her party with long term consequences for British politics and its values. Thatcher did not merely retrieve the Falkland Islands, therefore, she enacted a form of politics both nationally and internationally, because foreign and defence policy making takes place at the interface between the two.

Britain's reputation and resolution were widely thought to be at issue, as was that of the Prime Minister herself. But because no state has a conception of its domestic order which does not simultaneously entail some corresponding conception of its preferred international order, the future of the rule of law in international affairs was also thought to be at stake. For Mrs. Thatcher the Falklands was not just a test of British potency, it was also a challenge to the peaceful conduct of international relations. Thus for her the drama was played out for a global as well as a national audience.

The eyes of the world are not focused on the Falklands Islands. Others are watching anxiously to see whether brute force or the rule of law will triumph. Wherever naked aggression occurs it must be overcome. The cost now, however high, must be set against the cost we would one day have to pay if the principle went by default.<sup>33</sup>

As this quotation also reveals, however, it was not merely the rule of law that had to be upheld internationally. Clearly, the efficacy of deterrence was an additional theme woven into the Prime Minister's reactions. If the peaceful resolution of disputes was a principle to be maintained before particular international audiences, such as the United Nations, the determination to meet force with force was addressed to others; especially Britain's allies, the home base, and the Soviet Union. "Throughout the Western World and beyond there is realisation that if this dictator succeeds in unprovoked aggression other dictators will succeed elsewhere. We are fighting a battle against that type of aggression, and once again it is Britain that is fighting it."<sup>34</sup>

As with all belief systems, and the symbolic means through which they find expression, several sets of values were in evidence, but each was valued differently by Mrs. Thatcher's different audiences, and her speeches, like British policy, were artfully crafted to appeal through the various rhetorics of national and international politics to all of them.<sup>35</sup> On balance, however, the Prime Minister's attention was trained more on the domestic context and the United States, whereas her new Foreign Secretary (Francis Pym) carried the burden of argument and diplomacy internationally. If there was latent contradiction in reliance on force while espousing the rule of law, that too was typical both of symbols and discourse. Again, what was at issue, and therefore in the process of being reproduced, was a form of political life. Internationally it was one where the rule of law ought to run but where in the end, it is always argued, deterrence has to be maintained. Nationally it was about a political culture, political will, resolution, and power.

Improvised and refined as the conflict developed, the Prime Minister's response necessarily drew upon the symbolic vocabulary supplied by the legends and myths of Britain's defence culture. Here it is vital to remember Wittgenstein's proposition that those who share a language share a form of life.<sup>36</sup> Belief, language, and identity are all intimately connected, as the Falklands demonstrated for both combatants and as all contemporary students of language consistency argue. To quote just one of them, "we live in and through the act of discourse."<sup>37</sup> Without language broadly conceived as a system of signification we have no means of communication, and only through the medium of communication does identity, including the values and beliefs which comprise it, take shape.<sup>38</sup> As Anthony Cohen put it, people "construct community symbolically making it a resource and a repository of meaning and a requirement of their identity."<sup>39</sup> Thus "the reality and efficacy of the community's boundary — and, therefore, of the community itself — depends upon its symbolic construction and embellishment."<sup>40</sup>

Sharing a language, however, does not entirely prescribe what we should say. What and how we communicate is not entirely dictated by the medium, despite the well known impact which the medium has upon the message. Instead there is an opportunity for creative performance within the bounds of what a language or system of communication makes possible. Thus it was with Mrs. Thatcher's response to the Falklands, improvised out of the language and beliefs of Britain's defence culture according to the needs and circumstances of the conflict; a culture whose inheritance was shared if, through political analysis and discourse, it remains a contested and questioned corpus of symbols, myths, and interpretations concerning Britain past, present, future.

The symbolic inheritance of a belief system, however, is largely one of empty forms and this goes for deterrence as much as any other symbolic structure.<sup>41</sup> These have to be appropriated by individual human actors and invested with specific meanings in particular circumstances. This was why the Falklands provided a distinctive illustration of the resonant link that can exist between individual and collective belief systems. For the language of Britain's defence culture, in this instance finding expression particularly through the classical idiom of Churchillian rhetoric, is common property. There was constant reference, therefore, (not only by Mrs. Thatcher) to its categories of "fascist dictators," "unprovoked aggression," and a "courageous Britain" standing alone against forces which threatened to envelope freedom.<sup>42</sup> With few but important exceptions, Parliament, the media, and the public reached for their common vocabulary in order to make common sense of Argentina's attack.<sup>43</sup> Sharing a common language and resorting to it independently in the first instance they soon found themselves investing the crisis with the same sentiments and saying the same things about it. Thatcher's response was thus reflected in that of other opinion leaders and found widespread support in opinion polls.<sup>44</sup> Her message was amplified in the process. Britain would fight for the Falklands to resist aggression, re-establish the

rule of law, retrieve its territory, prove its potency, preserve the freedom of the Falklands Islanders, restore its international credibility, and revive its national spirit. Through this idiom of cultural discourse, therefore, the prospect of fighting for obscure islands with no intrinsic value was normalised.

Of course there was more than the usual degree of hypocrisy and meretricious nonsense in all this. Opinion polls consistently supported Thatcher's position but, analysed closely, also revealed an important degree of ambiguity and some moderation.<sup>45</sup> Not all newspapers turned the conflict into a comic strip war.<sup>46</sup> For a time the BBC tried hard to analyse the crisis objectively. But the orchestration of opinion, though greatly facilitated by the circumstances of the conflict, was also exercised over a willing Parliament and public. "We are all Falklanders now," declared a leader in *The Times*, linking the Falklands, Poland, and World War II in a remarkable but typical display of rhetorical elision.<sup>47</sup> If the passage of the Task Force was a rite of passage to war, the British people, by these means, became willing initiates.

As the meaning of the crisis penetrated different categories of values within international as well as national politics, testing in addition, for example, the dependability of allies both foreign and domestic, so, in a classically dramatic way, the interdependence of many themes ultimately rolled into one; Britain's/Thatcher's resolution, and the determination to do what was thought to be right whatever the cost. The elision of distinction between political expediency and national reputation, the survival of the Government and the credibility of the country, between Thatcher and Britain was also a typical result of the dynamics of the drama. Another newspaper, *The Economist*, gave direct expression to one final elision of the analytical and practical distinctions that would otherwise have provided a quite different rendition of the dispute, by embracing the conflict as an opportunity to advance the "cultural revolution" which it declared Britain had long needed.<sup>48</sup>

This became the main theme of Mrs. Thatcher's rhetoric as victory in the Falklands looked assured. It found its fullest expression in a triumphalist speech to a Conservative rally at Cheltenham race course on 3 July 1982. Drawing a parallel between the battle of the South Atlantic and the battle for Britain's rejuvenation, she used the Falklands War as a metaphor for national revival:

When we started out, there were the waverers and the fainthearts. The people who thought that Britain could no longer seize the initiative for herself .... that Britain was no longer the nation that had built an empire and ruled a quarter of the world .... we have to see that the spirit of the South Atlantic — the real spirit of Britain — is kindled not only by war but can now be fired by peace. What has indeed happened is that now once again Britain is not prepared to be pushed around. We have ceased to be a nation in retreat. We have instead a new-found confidence — born in the economic battles at home and found true 8,000 miles away .... Britain found herself again in the South Atlantic and will not look back from the victory she has won.<sup>49</sup>

The language of the Falklands might have been improvised but it was also all embracing and closed. Three things, however stood a chance of breaching it, and so breaking its grip on the construction which it placed upon the crisis. One was Argentine diplomacy. For example, had the Junta been as organised and effective as the War Cabinet it might have exploited potential divisions within Mrs. Thatcher's council, in particular by accepting the Haig peace formula. It was by no means certain that the Prime Minister was willing to abide by the Secretary of State's suggestions for a compromise, but it is evident that Argentina's acceptance of them would have placed the Conservative leader under considerable political pressure.<sup>50</sup> As a peace formula Haig's plan granted Argentina some limited concessions. Its principle advantage to the Junta, however, would have been in placing Britain on the diplomatic defensive, so helping to defuse London's powerful and unified national response to the invasion. There is no space for arguing this point further, but the result of diplomacy meant that the Junta consistently failed to challenge Britain's interpretation of the conflict effectively.<sup>51</sup> After invading the Islands Argentina never regained the initiative politically (rhetorically) or militarily.

A second breach in Mrs. Thatcher's system may have come, however, through some catastrophic military set back in the South Atlantic. The British fleet was vulnerable, as its heavy loss of surface vessels was to demonstrate. The sinking of one of its two carriers, or of a large troop ship, would have jeopardised the whole campaign and in all probability led to some reappraisal of the symbolic importance of the conflict through a review of its costs and risks. Fortunately for the British they suffered no such loss. The Task Force delivered Mrs. Thatcher a swift and unconditional victory relieving her of all the dangers and dilemmas that would have followed from a broken-backed expedition and delivering the country from the need to reappraise the symbolic relevance of the whole adventure.

One other source, finally, could have provided a means of challenging the interpretation of the Falklands as a drama of national credibility. That was Britain's political culture itself. For, out of a political culture arises the vocabulary of opposition as well as that of conformity. The absence of effective internal opposition to the Thatcher view of the conflict was, therefore, most revealing. It exposed, of course, the political weaknesses and divisions within the Government's Parliamentary opposition: deficiencies that were both personal and ideological, and evinced most of all within the declining Labour Party. More deeply it exposed something about the innate character and intractable weaknesses of Britain's political culture, especially its pre-occupation with an imperial and heroic past. No alternative vocabulary was powerful enough to carry the argument that the Falkland Islands were a post-imperial anomaly that should have been given-up long before. And no alternative voice was persuasive enough to assert that abandonment of the Islands together with repatriation of the few colonists eking out a precarious existence there, was more acceptable

than bloodshed. No one, finally, was able to advance the argument that Britain's political ambitions would not be fatally compromised by the loss of international reputation consequent upon such a retreat because they were concerned with political values and goals unaffected by the martial and power politics excited by the war. As Thatcher unwittingly but accurately confirmed, "The lesson of the Falklands is that Britain has not changed."<sup>52</sup> For too few to challenge Thatcher's view of the Falklands effectively, that was precisely the problem. Finally, closed but vindicated, Thatcher's interpretation of the dispute persists post-war in the guise of Fortress Falklands, and the continuing refusal to negotiate with Argentina about the future of the Islands.<sup>53</sup>

### **Impact and Operationalisation of British Interpretation of Argentina's Invasion**

Argentina's assault upon Britain's symbolically constructed self-image thus led to an ultimatum that was to expire when Britain's Carrier Battle group reached Falklands waters. Ultimatums, however, have to be translated into action, and this is where we move from the character of Thatcher's view of the conflict to its impact upon the course of events, the actual production of a political reality. Determining the broad structure of the United Kingdom's response to the invasion, and so providing the parameters within which it was to develop, the Prime Minister's immediate reaction had nonetheless to be operationalised in policy terms that would see her and the country through the days which followed. Once more this was less a rational and calculative process than an improvised political performance within a particular genre and context. Cliche and inventiveness distinguished it politically, militarily, and diplomatically. Churchillian rhetoric we have already referred to, and noted how, together with Britain's imperial heritage, its link to national rejuvenation was adapted to the crisis. Accounts of the war have similarly noted the odd correspondence between the traditional character of the military campaign — an amphibious assault followed by classic infantry combat — combined with the latest technology in, for example, guided weapons and satellite communications.<sup>54</sup> Operationally trained for such an expedition, Britain's amphibious forces had nonetheless to improvise throughout the entire conflict. Diplomatically, Haig, the UN Secretary General, and Peru's President Belaunde reached for international solutions of a classic sort. Arresting the momentum of conflict, interposing some international mediation between the protagonists, establishing a forum for future peaceful negotiations, seeking as Haig put it to discover and exploit "constructive ambiguities" in each side's position.<sup>55</sup> Such moves, however, had to be customised for the conflict as well. All action seems to take place in this way, within established practices and codes of conduct, so the combination was not so much novel as newly exposed and illustrated in a crisis which highlighted the dramatic character of language in action.

Practically speaking, the Prime Minister's first requirement was to provide people with a con-text, favourable to the Government, within which they could formulate some reaction to the invasion. What was needed was a new meta-narrative of the Falklands dispute. Projected to the top of the public agenda, some story had to be swiftly concocted to explain how it had got there, what it all meant, and what was likely to happen next. The Islands were so remote and the issue so obscure that almost literally nobody, with the exception of a few specialists in Whitehall, knew what the dispute was about, or how seriously to take it. Consequently many opinion leaders, less in Parliament more in the media, struggled to make sense of it and formulate appropriate responses.

Thus Falklands history was carefully re-written to serve crisis needs. Typically the Prime Minister led opinion, beginning the process in the emergency House of Commons debate which was held on Saturday 3 April. Her speech blamed Argentina for "unprovoked aggression," implied that Britain had been negotiating in good faith about the future of the Islands, and insisted that the Falklands were British sovereign territory. The Islanders wished to remain British and were to be freed from occupation at the earliest possible moment. Previous incidents had tested British restraint, notable and lastly South Georgia, but the assault was pre-meditated and the Government had no knowledge of an intended attack until just days before Argentine forces seized the Islands. A large Task Force has been despatched and the goal of the British policy was the restoration of sovereignty over the Islands in order to give effect to the paramountcy accorded to the Islanders' wishes.<sup>56</sup> All the foreknowledge, political indecision, contradiction, and sheer prevarication that had distinguished British policy, especially under her own administration, and which had contributed so much to precipitating the crisis, was naturally expunged from the record; though not without a glancing blow at the conduct of the previous Labour Government.<sup>57</sup>

More substantially, the terms of the ultimatum had to be specified, the ground upon which it had been issued defended internationally as well as domestically, and the terms and conditions under which it might be revoked documented. Each of these three tasks had their own textual bases and all were achieved largely through diplomatic means. But they quickly became reliant most upon UN Resolution 502, which was proposed by the British delegation in New York and passed by the Security Council on 3 April.<sup>58</sup>

In addition to these requirements the War Cabinet had also to determine how the ultimatum would be implemented if an Argentine withdrawal was not achieved before the Royal Navy reached the Falklands. That required a military policy to complement the diplomatic effort. And the texts of military planning provided the technical means by which this was provided.

Overall, one factor was of decisive importance. United States support, militarily as well as politically, was central. Without it the prospects of the Task Force would be seriously diminished. Indeed, active US opposition to British policy, as at Suez, might well have fatally compromised the entire expedition. Washington's assistance, by no means a foregone conclusion, had, therefore,

to be negotiated through a powerful rhetorical performance by the British Embassy in Washington.<sup>59</sup> Thus the principle instruments of Thatcher's ultimatum were UN Resolution 502, a Royal Naval Task Force, and United States backing for the whole enterprise.

Each element was closely interdependent with the others, and each was comprised of many sub-components. But the interdependence was neither simple nor entirely harmonious. Without making an effort to achieve a peaceful solution, the War Cabinet might not have achieved US support as unambiguously and as conveniently as it did; the President coming out in favour of the British just as Admiral Woodward's Carrier Group reached the outer limit of the Falklands Exclusion Zone on 30 April. As members of the War Cabinet were briefed by their military advisers none of them could have relished the prospect of an amphibious assault. Diplomacy, therefore, served amongst other goals to secure US support and offered a possible escape from the military impasse.

But diplomacy was also designed to isolate Argentina and stigmatise it with the blame for provoking the conflict, thus legitimising Britain's resort to force and diminishing the prospect of a settlement. In addition, together with the language of Exclusion Zones and Thatcher's insistence on the "measured and controlled" use of force, all of which drew upon the performativity rhetoric which comprises much of the technical idiom of defence decision making, diplomacy raised false expectations about the capacity of decision makers to manage the crisis below the level of military conflict.<sup>60</sup> Equally, the progress of the Task Force did not serve to pressure Argentina into making a peaceful solution more likely. Instead, it consolidated each side's commitment to War.

As British ships sailed South, so the Junta reinforced its Falklands garrison and prepared to intercept Woodward's fleet. This then confirmed Thatcher's belief in the Junta's bad faith and the remoteness of reaching any acceptable agreement with it. On 26 April she complained:

More than three weeks have elapsed since the United Nations Security Council resolution was passed calling upon Argentine forces to withdraw. During that time, far from withdrawing, the Argentine Government have put reinforcements of men, equipment, and materials on the islands. If we have not yet reached a settlement the blame lies at the feet of the Argentine Government.<sup>61</sup>

Known to the most hawkish within the War Cabinet, the progress of the Task Force, combined with Argentine diplomatic and military responses to it, reinforced her initial instincts:

We have not allowed Argentine military activities to halt the measures which our task force is taking. We will not allow their diplomatic obstructionism to do so either.<sup>62</sup>

Once they had left the fail-safe point of Ascension Island, however, there was effectively no place for the British forces to go but ashore on the Falklands. If diplomacy required time and "constructive ambiguity" to achieve a peaceful denouement, achievement of Woodward's military objective conversely demanded speed, decisiveness, and the maximum use of the forces

available to him. The logic of conflict and the logic of diplomacy (to the extent that it was aimed at a peaceful outcome) were necessarily at odds, and the former was always destined to triumph over the latter given the structure of the crisis.

The Prime Minister's conviction that basic values were at stake, and that military force might have to defend them in due course, held the issue constant so that military and diplomatic planners could work on it according to their own technical professional perspectives. For the military, especially, the Falklands proved to be an almost unique example of symmetry between political and military objectives.<sup>63</sup> There were individual battles which were quite clearly demanded more by political pressure than military logic. Goose Green appears to have been the most obvious, but arguably the recapture of South Georgia was another.<sup>64</sup> Nonetheless, in general terms, a classic military campaign resulting in unconditional military victory was conducted without (for the armed forces) the ruinously diverting complication of political indecision over the character of the issue and the relation of military force to its resolution.

The terms of the British ultimatum, together with the conditions for its revocation, were each contained in UN 502, and passage of the resolution had been a major achievement for British diplomacy. Preventing the definition of the crisis as a matter of decolonisation, it classified Argentina's attack as an issue of international order, first by demanding an immediate ceasefire and, second, by demanding the withdrawal of Argentine forces. Calling, finally, on both sides to seek diplomatic solution to the dispute, UN 502 immediately became the lynch-pin of British policy and the Prime Minister persistently based her position on it.

She told the House of Commons at the beginning of the third emergency debate on the Falklands on 14 April, for example, "our immediate goal in recent days has been to secure the withdrawal of all Argentine forces in accordance with resolution 502 on the United Nations Security Council..."<sup>65</sup> On 20 April she again insisted. "We are trying to secure implementation of United Nations resolution 502, which is clear but not so easy to implement."<sup>66</sup> Then, on 27 April, shortly before Woodward's forces arrived off the Falklands to begin preparations for the amphibious assault, she effectively announced the expiry of the ultimatum.

I am well aware of the Secretary-General's request and that the Security Council's resolution must be complied with. It is Argentina that has flagrantly failed to comply, and it is because of that failure that we must now be free to exercise our right of self-defence under Article 51.<sup>67</sup>

If Resolution 502 had specified the terms of the ultimatum — Argentine withdrawal before long-term negotiations could begin — Article 51 of the UN Charter specified the right to self-defence which it was argued legitimised the use of the Task Force. Article 51 is carefully phrased and demands, amongst other things, the exhaustion of diplomatic means and the proportionate use of force. Reference to it, therefore, encouraged the idea that diplomacy might run its course first,



and that military pressure would follow some rationally managed escalation of conflict so reinforcing the language of Exclusion Zones and the measured use of force. Despite this, Mrs. Thatcher never allowed the first suggestion to encumber War Cabinet decision making. She insisted from the beginning, and more explicitly as British forces approached the Falklands, "I cannot rule out the use of force. The process of negotiations could go on endlessly."<sup>68</sup> Acknowledging the logic of conflict on 26 April she concluded:

Time is getting extremely short as the task force approaches the Islands. Three weeks have elapsed since the resolution. One cannot have a wide range of choice and a wide range of military options with the task force in the wild and stormy weathers of that area.<sup>69</sup>

Reconciling force with restraint became a prominent feature in the rhetoric of British policy because it satisfied many domestic and international needs in the transition to conflict. It was an integral part of that public rationale which was required for the mobilisation of domestic and international support for the Task Force. Allied to the idea that a combination of means were being employed to effect a peaceful solution — "our strategy has been based on a combination of diplomatic, military and economic pressures ...."<sup>70</sup> — it also served to convey the impression that British policy was governed by political goals, not driven by military necessity. The language of Exclusion Zones was an additional component of this rhetorical ensemble, but the dominance of military expediency over War Cabinet decision making was unambiguously exposed as the logic of conflict climaxed in the sinking of the Argentine cruiser, the GENERAL BELGRANO, outside the Falklands Exclusion Zone, on 2 May.<sup>71</sup>

On the military side this pattern was repeated. Mobilisation of the British Task Force was based upon military contingency planning which was first conducted under Callaghan's Government in the 1970s. Reviewed during a Foreign Office attempt to revive Falklands policy in 1980, these recommendations subsequently provided the British Fleet with an outline of the size of the force needed to repossess the Falkland Islands but they did not provide a blueprint for their recapture. The contingency planning merely specified what was likely to be required in general terms. In particular it did not specify how British forces would be used or what further reinforcements they would require in order to defeat an Argentine occupation force. Quite simply, "in the critical first days of April, there had been no hard-headed calculations about the difficulties of fighting a major war in the South Atlantic, far less of conducting an amphibious landing."<sup>72</sup>

Task Force headquarters, at Northwood near London, had to improvise the precise plan of campaign, therefore; though from the outset its overriding concern was with the reinvasion of the islands. Only a force capable of retaking the Falklands would serve as an effective demonstration of strength, but only the determination to use it would actually give effect to the British ultimatum. The mobilisation, despatch, and employment of such a force created its own compelling category

of needs from which the logic of conflict was derived. Any suggestion that a dangerous amphibious landing was to be attempted only after proceeding up a ladder of escalation which would have threatened the operational endurance and survival of the forces required for that assault seems to have been fanciful. Such was the abstract language of strategic theory, not that of the operational requirements of the actual campaign. *Thus the use of the British Task Force was logically entailed in its mobilisation as well as operationally entailed in its despatch.*

As the Task Force commanders provided the strategic design for the recapture of the Islands, so they also sought the military licence to proceed with it. This too was textual. It took the form of Rules of Engagement (ROE), which were progressively relaxed to match arrival of units of the British fleet in the South Atlantic. Finally, on the morning of 2 May, Admiral Woodward was empowered to wage general war in and around the Falklands up to twelve miles from the Argentine mainland; a final relaxation of ROE that *inter alia* sanctioned the attack on the BELGRANO, which in turn marked the end of the rite of passage to war.<sup>73</sup>

### Postscript

There is no meaning without language games; and no language games without forms of life.<sup>74</sup>

"Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun," and he spins them through language.<sup>75</sup> While the social bond is linguistic, it is also through language that man "constitutes himself as subject."<sup>76</sup> But neither the individual or the collective is "woven with a single thread."<sup>77</sup> If the categories of analysis offered by the realist school of international relations can be replaced by those of language in action, so we can also displace the ideas of the behavioural psychologist whose concept of the "individual" is allied to the realist school in models of decision making.<sup>78</sup> Mrs. Thatcher, for example, is best conceived, therefore, not as a totally autonomous "individual" but as an historical subject. By that I mean she was a particular sort of political actor, in a certain type of political system which possesses its own political culture. That, in turn, offers a limited political vocabulary through which the world can be understood and action motivated. The United Kingdom, moreover, is a political system at a particular stage in its historical existence.

British politics, therefore, had shaped Mrs. Thatcher as much as she has shaped British politics. But so has accident and circumstance, because in the symbolic production and reproduction of political identity (individual or collective), "men plug the dikes of their most needed beliefs with whatever mud they can find."<sup>79</sup> In 1982, for Britain and for Mrs. Thatcher — for Thatcher's Britain — it happened to be Falklands mud.

And this last point is one of the general conclusions to be drawn out of the illustration provided by the war in the South Atlantic. The development of defence discourse and the production of political reality can be as much fortuitous as structured. Moreover, within these related processes there is room for a form of individual agency, though that agency, as we argued at the beginning of the paper, is essentially mediumistic. Much the same can be said for the development of the theory and practice of deterrence since 1945; as a genealogy would demonstrate if it addressed the historical evolution of the discourse of deterrence institutionally, politically, and ideationally in response to the ideological conflicts of the post-war world, the economic, bureaucratic, and technical dynamics of weapons acquisition, the philosophical antecedents of deterrence, and, finally, its rhetorical elaboration.

A further point is worth emphasising. I referred earlier to the interplay between the cultural and technical idioms of the discourse of policy making as a double helix which carries its hereditary and operational codes. I haven't dealt with either idiom in great detail; by elaborating from anthropology, for example, the symbolic nature of culture. There it is argued that symbols possess many significations simultaneously, exemplifying the multi-valency of language, mediating for men between ideas and actions in social and political fields full of cross purposes and competing interests, and embracing "a multi-million things" even within a restricted and small vocabulary.<sup>80</sup> Neither have I elaborated much upon how symbols help to comprise the linguistic instruments of political solidarity;

the grandiose complexities and practical simplicities of ideology, myth and ritual.<sup>81</sup>

On the technical side, I need also to examine further the rationalism and positivism which, while characterising much strategic and defence policy analysis, nonetheless find their most forceful expression and impact in the bowels of defence bureaucracies. It is there, through the ethic and process of management (which are as unreconstructed in their Enlightenment rationalism as Clausewitz ever was), that the cultural codes of deterrence find technical and operational complements from the language of management science; and where the discourse of deterrence as a whole is routinely and pervasively translated into political and military reality.

Finally, though the metaphor of a helix can only carry us so far, the interplay between culture and technique, characteristic of policy making in general and deterrence in particular, is going through a process of genetic mutation. At the present time that process is being driven in particular by the information and communications technologies that are changing the material basis of defence policy making; both institutionally (its authority, command, control, and bureaucratic structures and processes) and in terms of its weapons technologies. Since 1945, institutional and managerial change has been a constant feature of the defence policy

communities of the United States and the United Kingdom (and also of West Germany, France, and the Soviet Union). And these developments have been closely allied to the adoption of deterrent strategies. If your military posture demands large-scale forces in being, constantly refurbished not to fight but to preserve peace by continuously posing a full range of military threats (Flexible Responses), then you also need the management structures required to operationalise this policy. More than that, in an age of deterrence and conditions of scarcity, the central question, "How Much is Enough?," is decided through the elaborate organisational and managerial processes called into being by, but also servicing, deterrence policy.<sup>82</sup> These structures, and thus ultimately the way the question how much (and what) is enough? is addressed and decided, are undergoing changes comparable to those which the new technologies are bringing in other forms of life. Here, too, the genealogy of deterrence is evolving; and in the obscure, piecemeal, and detailed ways that Foucault would recognise.

## Notes

- 1 George Steiner, *Language and Silence*, London: Faber and Faber, 1967, p. 13.
- 2 Michael Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith, New York: Pantheon Books, 1972, p. 23.
- 3 Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Post-modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986.
- 4 H.G. Gadauner, *Truth and Method*, London: Sheed, 1975. See also Beiner's discussion *op. cit.*; Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Science: Essays on Language, Action Interpretation*, London: Cambridge UP, 1981.
- 5 This is the only sensible conclusion that can be drawn from the findings of the British inquiry into the outbreak of the Falklands conflict. See *Falkland Islands Review, Report of a Committee of Privy Counsellors*, London: HMSO, 1983, Cmnd. 8787.
- 6 Quoted in H. Felperin, *Beyond Deconstruction*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1985, p. 152.
- 7 R. Barthes, *S/z*, London: Jonathon Cape, 1975, p. 146.
- 8 Quoted in M. Shapiro, *Language and Political Understanding*, New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1981, p. 106.
- 9 See W.H. Greenleaf's discussion of character and tradition, *The British Political Tradition. Volume One. The Rise of Collectivism*, London: Methuen, 1983, especially pp. 5-14. Steiner also notes that language is "the constantly tested carapace of a distinct identity." *After Babel*, p. 173. And for a short but excellent essay on the idea of political identity and its relation to language, see W.J.M. Mackenzie, *Political Identity*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978.
- 10 Ronald Beiner, *Political Judgement*, London: Methuen, 1983.
- 11 Steiner, *After Babel*, London: Oxford University Press, 1975 p. 461.
- 12 Felperin, *op. cit.* The idea of criticism rather than science is just one aspect of this paper which needs developing. It begs discussion of how criticism should be done and what it might aim to achieve. What is or is not to be included in a canon is itself, of course problematical. See, E.H. Gombrich, *Ideals and Idols. Essays on values in history and in art*, Oxford: Phaidon, 1979, especially, "Canons and Values in the Visual Arts: A correspondence with Quentin Bell."
- 13 There are numerous accounts of the Falklands War. The best of the first wave of literature is Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins, *Battle for the Falklands*, London: Pan Books, 1983.
- 14 For an account of the media's response see Anthony Barnett, *Iron Britannia*, London: Allison and Busby, 1982; Robert Harris, *Gotcha, The Media, The Government and the Falklands Crisis*, London: Faber and Faber 1983; and Valarie Adams, *The Media and the Falklands Campaign*, London: Macmillan 1986.

- 15 Nietzsche's last sentence in his *Genealogy of Morals*, quoted in William Barrett, *The Illusion of Technique*, London: William Kimber, 1979, p. 198.
- 16 Thatcher 8 April 1982. See, *The Falklands Campaign. A Digest of Debates in the House of Commons 2 April to 15 June 1982*, London: HMSO, July 1982, p. 70. Hereafter referred to as *Digest of Debates*.
- 17 Anthony P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, London: Tavistock Publications, 1985.
- 18 See especially P. Williams, *Crisis Management*, London: Martin Robertson, 1976.
- 19 The following summary account is based on G.M. Dillon, *The Falklands Politics and War*, London: Macmillan, forthcoming 1988.
- 20 See also the British inquiry into the invasion of the Islands, *Falkland Islands Review. Report of a Committee of Privy Councillors*, (chairman the Rt. Hon. The Lord Franks), London: HMSO, 1983 Cmnd 8787. Readers should read the report and ignore the conclusion.
- 21 On brinkmanship see R.N. Lebow, *Between Peace and War, the Nature of International Crisis*, London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981.
- 22 Dillon, *op. cit.*, Chapter 2, "Ministerial and Cabinet Politics."
- 23 *Op. cit.* Chapter 4, "The Structure of Crisis."
- 24 Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1960.
- 25 22 April. *Digest of Debates*, p. 124.
- 26 Barnett, *op. cit.* See also Paul Chilton, "War, Work and Falk Talk." Category B Papers from the Alternative English Co-operative, P.O. Box 229, Magill, South Australia, No. 4, March 1983.
- 27 The main theme of Wittgenstein, the semiologists, the structuralists, and post-structuralists; i.e., of almost all language theory of this century.
- 28 Tam Dalyell, *One Man's Falklands*, London: Cecil Woolf, 1982; and, *Thatcher's Torpedo*, London: Cecil Woolf, 1983.
- 29 Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968; and Malcolm Kelsall, *Studying Drama. An Introduction*, London: Edward Arnold, 1985.
- 30 Hastings and Jenkins, *op. cit.*
- 31 Cmnd 8787.
- 32 Cmnd 8787; and Dillon *op. cit.* especially Chapter 2. <sup>33</sup> 14 April. *Digest of Debates*, p. 77.
- 34 8 April. *Digest of Debates*, p. 70.

- 35 On symbols see especially V. Turner, *The Forest of Symbols*, London: Cornell University Press 1973; and also Turner's, *Dramas Fields and Metaphors*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974; Abner Cohen, *Two Dimensional Man*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974; also Cohen, *The Politics of the Elite Culture. Explorations in the Dramaturgy of Power in a Modern African Society*, London: University of California Press, 1981. Finally, see also H.D. Duncan, *Symbols in Society*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1968; and Duncan, *Symbols and Social Theory*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1969.
- 36 The literature on Wittgenstein is as voluminous as that on symbols. But of particular relevance here are Derek Bolton, *An Approach to Wittgenstein's Philosophy*, London: Macmillan, 1979; John W. Danford, *Wittgenstein and Political Philosophy. A Re-examination of the Foundations of Social Science*, London: University of Chicago Press, 1978; and D.M. High, *Language, Persons and Belief*, London: Oxford University Press, 1967.
- 37 George Steiner, *Language and Silence*.
- 38 A point on which W.J.M. Mackenzie concludes his useful little book *Political Identity*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978.
- 39 Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, p. 118.
- 40 *Ibid.*, p. 15.
- 41 *Ibid.*
- 42 Barnett, *op. cit.*
- 43 Dalyell was one of the most persistent and, in the circumstances, courageous of critics. But there were others. See especially the first House of Commons debate on 3 April 1982 in *Digest of Debates*.
- 44 Dillon, *Public Opinion and the Falkland Conflict*, Lancaster; Bailrigg Paper on International Security, Number 7, 1984; and Dillon, *The Falklands, Politics and War*, Chapter 4.
- 45 See also Glasgow University Media Group, *War and Peace News*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1985.
- 46 Harris, *op. cit.* See also, *Testing the Power of a Media Consensus: A Comparison of Scots and English Treatment of the Falklands Campaign*, Glasgow; Strathclyde, 1983.
- 47 *The Times*, 5 April, 1982.
- 48 *The Economist*, 19 June, 1982.
- 49 Quoted in Barnett, *op. cit.*, pp. 199-153.
- 50 See the remarks made by the Chief of Defence staff, Admiral Lewin, before the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee Session 1984-85. *The Events Surrounding the Weekend of 1-2 May 1982*, HC II-iv, para 485. "Those proposals would indeed, I think, have been very difficult for the War Cabinet or the British Government, of all parties to accept."
- 51 Dillon, *The Falklands Politics and War*, Chapter 5, "War Cabinet Diplomacy."

- 52 Quoted in Barnett, *op. cit.*, p. 150.
- 53 Dillon, *The Falklands Politics and War*, Conclusion and Appendix.
- 54 See, for example, Julian Thompson, *No Picnic*, London: Secker and Warburg, 1985. 55  
See, A. Haig, *Caveat*, London: Macmillan, 1984, for his own account of his mediation. 56 3  
April, *Digest of Debates*.
- 57 *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- 58 See, Sir Anthony Parsons, "The Falkland Crisis in the United Nations, 31 March — 14 June 1982," *International Affairs*, Volume 59, No. 2 (Spring 1983).
- 59 See, Sir Nicholas Henderson, "America and the Falklands. Case Study in the Behaviour of an Ally," *The Economist*, 12 November 1982.
- 60 29 April. *Digest of Debates*, p. 146.
- 61 26 April. *Digest of Debates*, pp. 127-128.
- 62 7 May, *Digest of Debates*, p. 223.
- 63 See Thompson, *op. cit.*, together with Major General Sir Jeremy Moore and Admiral Sir John Woodward, "The Falklands Experience," *Royal United Services Institute Journal*, March 1983.
- 64 Neither Thompson, Moore, or Woodward say so explicitly but there are strong implications in their accounts. See also Hastings and Jenkins, *op. cit.*
- 65 14 April. *Digest of Debates*, p. 73.
- 66 20 April. *Ibid.*, p. 111. 67 27 April.  
*Ibid.*, p. 137. 68 22 April. *Ibid.*, p. 124.
- 69 26 April. *Ibid.*, p. 129.
- 70 14 April. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
- 71 Dillon, *The Falklands Politics and War*, Chapter 6, "War Cabinet Military Policy," and Chapter 7, "The Climax of Conflict."
- 72 Hastings and Jenkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-90.
- 73 Dillon, *The Falklands Politics and War*, Chapter 7, "The Climax of Conflict."
- 74 Wittgenstein quoted in David Bloor, *Wittgenstein, A Social Theory of Knowledge*, London: Macmillan, 1983, p. 156.



- 75 Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, London: Hutchinson, 1975, p. 5.
- 76 Emile Benveniste's opening quotation in Kaja Silvermann, *The Subject of Semiotics*, London: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- 77 Lyotard, *op. cit.*, p. 40.
- 78 See, for example, some of the Thatcher literature, in Dennis Kavanaugh, *Thatcherism and British Politics. The End of Consensus?*, London: Oxford University Press, 1987.
- 79 C. Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*, New York: Basic Books, 1983, p. 80.
- 80 Susan Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969, p. 117.
- 81 W.J.M. Mackenzie, *Political Identity*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978, p. 164.
- 82 The question is also the title of Enthoven and Smith's recollections on defence policy and management reform in the Pentagon under McNamara. See A.C. Enthoven and K.W. Smith, *How Much is Enough?*, New York: Harper and Row, 1971.

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