

# Social Analysis and the Falklands Affair



By  
David Wasdell

An attempt to 'see through' the Falklands affair to those deeper unconscious driving forces which generate violence and threaten peace at all points of the world community. This article was first published in the June 1982 issue of 'Chronicle', the journal of the Dag Hammarskjold Information Centre on the Study of Violence and Peace.

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# SOCIAL ANALYSIS AND THE FAKLANDS AFFAIR

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The dynamics of conflict are rooted in the unconscious processes of social psychology. They are acted out against a backdrop of historical, ideological, political, social, economic, technological and military factors. This paper uses techniques of social analysis, some new, some not so new, in an attempt to "see through" the Falklands affair to those deeper unconscious driving forces which generate violence and threaten peace at all points of the world community.

## **DISTORTION OF HISTORY**

Memory is selective. Elements of the past are open to recall if they fit and reinforce the accepted world view. Events and processes which might challenge such a picture are elided, forgotten or repressed. Memory selectivity and repression are common defence mechanisms in individual behaviour but are just as dominant in social process. The "world view" is not generated out of history, rather history is a construct of the world view! Where two parties have a differing dynamic perspective they generate different histories as rationalisations for present position. In individual psycho-analysis study of the gaps, repressed parts, principles of selection and association indicates the neurotic defences. So also in social analysis study of differing historic perceptions compared both with each other and with an historic trace (researched as objectively as possible by a disinterested third party) provides pointers to the social dynamics and defences which unconsciously energise the conflicted interaction and render it so intractable to negotiation.

In individual, institutional and social systems, dynamic patterns laid down in the early formative period provide a matrix for subsequent behaviour. Unresolved early traumata persevere in later life in predictable cycles of re-enactment under repeated conditions of stress. Attempts to alter current behaviour patterns while maintaining repression of the formative traumata are ineffective since the process fails to gain access to the causal dynamics operating.

## **CLAIMS IN CONFLICT**

British claim to sovereignty over the Falklands is based on the fact that they 'have been continuously, peacefully and effectively occupied by Britain since 1833'. What is ignored is the manner in which British occupation was established in that year, together with the complex previous history. Conversely, Argentina bases its claim to sovereignty on succession to Spanish interests when Argentina gained independence from Spain in 1816, ignoring the fact that at that time Spain claimed sovereignty only over East Falkland.

The first known landing was by Captain John Strong in 1690 who named the islands after Viscount Falkland, Treasurer of the British Navy. French sealing in the area led to the establishment of a French colony on East Falkland in 1764 which was handed on to Spain 3 years later with agreed financial compensation. Meanwhile a British survey of West Falkland had been carried out leading to a settlement in 1766. 3 years later a Spanish task force evicted the British and nearly precipitated war between the two colonial powers. After protracted negotiation the Spanish withdrew from West Falkland and the British settlement was re-established only to be abandoned in 1774 on economic grounds. British sovereignty of the then uninhabited West Falkland was maintained and the customary lead plaque to that effect was left in place. East Falkland was reduced to similar uninhabited status under Spanish sovereignty following withdrawal of the Spanish settlement in 1811.

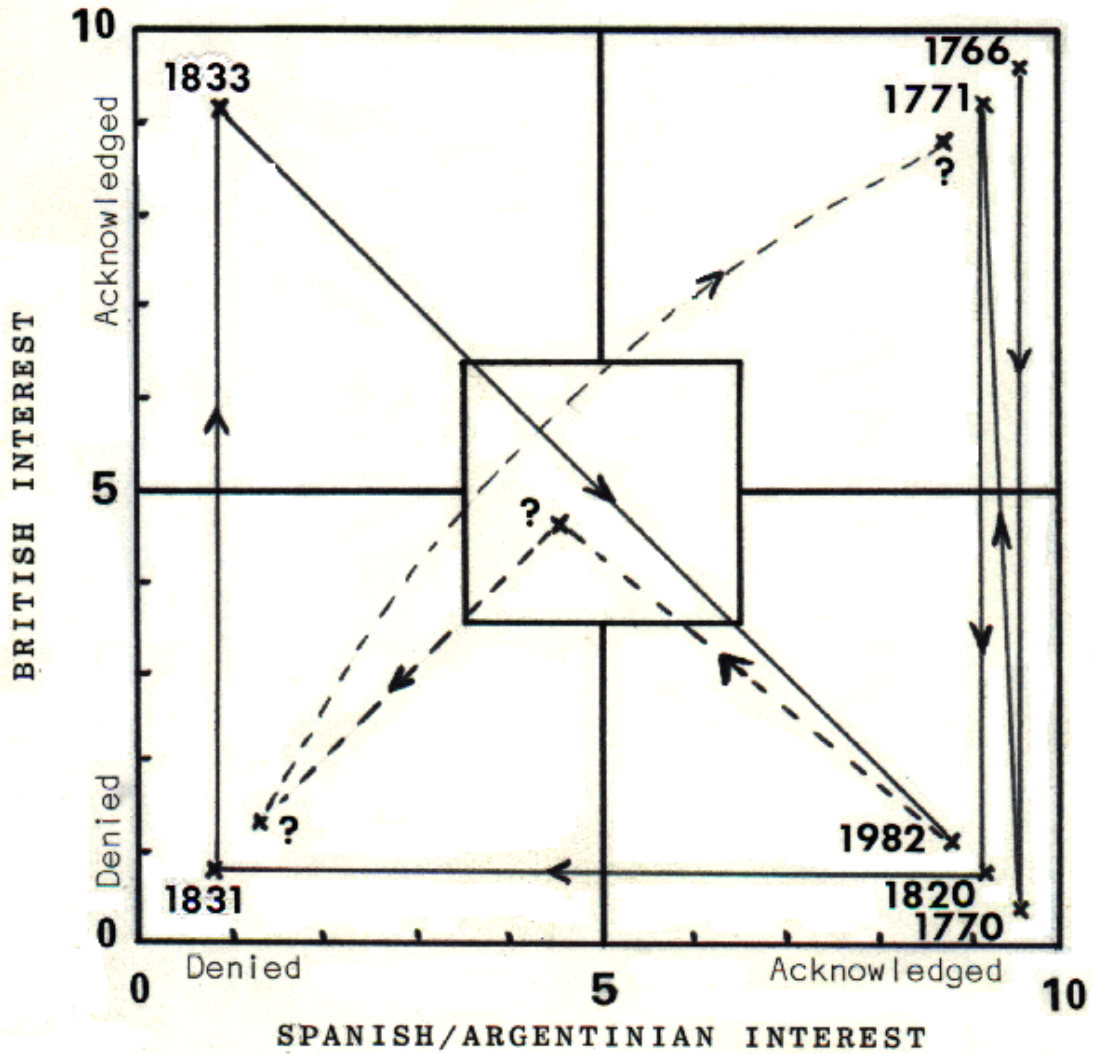
In 1816 the Argentinean government at Buenos Aires declared its independence of Spain and four years later sent a ship to the Falklands to proclaim its sovereignty. In 1826 Argentina re-settled the Spanish site on East Falkland under the leadership of Louis Vernet who was appointed Governor of the Falklands. The British protested at the implicit breach of their sovereignty of West Falkland. In an attempt to establish Argentine control of sealing (the main resource of the islands) Vernet arrested three American vessels. In 1831 the U.S. sent a warship, the Lexington (named after the town which saw the first shots fired in the American War of Independence), destroyed the fort, neutered the Argentinean administration and declared the Islands free of all government. 2 years later a British warship visited the islands, evicted the Argentinean garrison under protest and re-established British occupation, though this time both West and East Falklands were involved.

It is little wonder that the saga pre-1833 is studiously ignored in present British statements. The Argentinean position requires similar repression of her own confusion of Spanish and British interests in 1820. U.S. intervention in 1831 represented naval power usurping resources from a weaker nation followed by failure to sustain the neutrality in the face of subsequent British naval intervention. Use of the Lexington was a red rag to the bull of Britannia, still smarting just 50 years after the end of the American War of Independence. Events of the last few months have a stale air of déjà vue.

## **MODELLING METHODS**

A variety of techniques now exist for monitoring interactions between two (or more) parties. Lack of space prohibits their development and application in this article, but reference must be made to the Sovereignty Recognition Grid with its historical mapping of the six sovereignty conversion reactions or discontinuities (see following page). Pressure is now building towards a seventh move with the eighth and ninth positions already in sight. The Boundary Transaction Grid, developed from Transaction Analysis, enables examination of the benefits or losses to each party stemming from their inter-relationship. This model portrays the economic and trading balance and clearly demonstrates the pressures building up to an intolerably unstable position followed by regression to mutual destruction before returning to a more stable equilibrium. The changes in the underlying field factors (prospecting and recovery technology opening possibility of exploiting sea-bed resources of oil and other raw materials in the Falkland area, the Dependency zone and the Antarctic Continent) were more apparent and significant to the industrially developing but under-resourced Argentinean administration than to the British counterpart. This led to divergent views concerning the urgency of negotiation and precipitated unilateral military action.

## SOVEREIGNTY RECOGNITION GRID



DATE	POSITION	GRID REF	CONVERSION NO
1766	Spanish and British Settlements Co-exist	(9,9)	
1770	Spain annexes British settlement	(9,1)	1
1771	Parallel interests restored	(9,9)	2
1820	Argentina annexes both islands	(9,1)	3
1831	US removes Argentinean administration	(1,1)	4
1833	Britain annexes both islands	(1,9)	5
1982	Argentina reverses British position	(9,1)	6
?	? British attempt to restore 1833 position	(5,5)	7 ?
?	? UN Trusteeship during negotiation	(1,1)	8 ?
?	? Long term agreement reached	(9,9)	9 ?
NB: (9,9) is the only position of long-term stability			

New developments in Catastrophe Theory Modelling can be applied to the sudden discontinuities between the stable states of war and peace. They allow a certain amount of prediction of imminent change, give a clearer perception of the precipitating factors, indicate the high levels of energy required to reverse a change of state once it has occurred, and provide ways of modelling alternative approaches to problem resolution. Such tools are vital for mobilising diplomacy, negotiation and creative problem-solving initiatives at the identified potential flash-point prior to system breakdown with the massive costs to all parties which such an event involves.

## **PSYCHOLOGICAL DEFENCE**

Important though these developments in socio-economic modelling techniques may be, far more powerful and far reaching insights are now beginning to emerge from new developments in the psychoanalysis of social systems.

Under conditions of life-threat, resource deprivation and associated anxiety, individuals react by regression to patterns of previously learned response. Large scale social systems (groups, institutions, communities, nation-states or the global village) exhibit similar processes of regression under stress but act out 'norm' responses which have hitherto been treated as non-significant, instinctive or innate by therapeutic analysts.

As world population encounters the limits of the holding capacity of mother earth, and as exponential industrial development decelerates under the constraints of limited resources so pressures, stress, life-threat and resource deprivation are rising rapidly at all boundaries and for all sub-units of the world system. Under these conditions it becomes critically important to break through the problems of analysis, modification and management of the 'norm' patterns of social regression and to enhance the capacity of all levels of the human species to handle high rates of change under conditions of high stress without breakdown into dysfunctional, system-destructive responses of social psychosis.

Social system reactions are generated from the matrix of resonating common individual response. It is the most common experience of life-threat, buried most deeply in the human unconscious, that determines the corporate stress-response of the social system. Analysis of this material requires the recognition of the neurotic and psychotic character of 'norm' human behaviour previously ignored precisely because it is common. Progress in this area has massive implications for religion and political ideological systems as well as providing insight into the paranoid psychodynamics of the arms race, the class/race/sex struggles and the North/South trading, financial, development, survival impasse. It also looks like opening the door to advances in human potential development and realisation by reducing the energy vested in sustaining patterns of common collusion repression of unconscious material.

## **A QUESTION OF BIRTH AND DEATH**

The most universally shared experience of life threat is that encountered in the process of birth (though sub-groups of any community may share other experiences in common and act out accordingly). As boundary threat and resource deprivation build up the social group responds increasingly as a corporate, mega-humanoid foetus facing the trauma of birth. The environment (out-group) is depersonalised and the in-group loses any sense of identification

with it. The environment is constricting, the life support system is liable to failure. The future lies in a process of life and death struggle to find a way out of the mess through some violent engagement with a potentially crushing cervix. Pressure builds up in waves until the 'solution' is achieved either in the crushing annihilation of defeat and death or the victorious emergence into new freedom beyond the crisis.

Where two parties are caught in the psycho-drama of primal abreaction, each perceives the other as the persecuting cervix and itself as the innocently suffering victim. Each in-group arms to defend itself against the phantasy environment so confirming the persecutory phantasies of the other. In this position of crossed primal regression the system degenerates into psychotic feed-back, generating and responding to escalating signals of threat which have become quite independent of the original triggering events.

Primitive reactions dominate. All internal negativities are repressed and denied. All positive elements in the environment receive similar treatment. The system splits into good and bad across the transaction boundary with repression of the capacity for differentiation and functional problem-solving. In 'head-on' conflict, each sub-group struggles to be born through the matrix of the other. Success comes to the most powerful who can push through the other's defences at whatever cost to the self.

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Such are the dynamics of interaction between human groups, nation states and world powers, locked in crossed paranoid projection of common primal process. Unless the unconscious defences can be defused the East/West and North/South conflicts are leading into psychotic catharsis with birth for the battered few at the expense of the annihilation of the rest.

D. Wasdell  
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