

influence and wealth to the kingdom and meant that London long had contact with most of the world's countries.

Under such circumstances the United Kingdom developed an extremely sophisticated and experienced diplomatic service well versed in the vagaries of international affairs. Confidence building in forms closely related to the modern sense of the term was in no sense new to London when it resurfaced in its current guise with the Helsinki accords of 1975. The British had used means to build confidence with any number of foreign and colonial adversaries around the globe and had done so as recently as the great decolonizing era beginning with Indian independence in 1947 and not entirely over yet.

The UK was of course also a founding member of the United Nations, NATO and a large number of other post-war pacts, alliances and other international groupings which marked the cold war era, such as CENTO, SEATO and the like. It is also a member of the European Union, as well as of course the Commonwealth itself. And while no longer a power of the first rank as it had been for several centuries, it is still a nuclear weapons state, a major naval power, has a significant air force, a highly professional army, and these forces proven as recently as the Gulf War in 1991 and of course the Falklands victory of 1982.

Most interesting for the purposes of this study, Britain has of course been an active member of the confidence building process in Europe which accompanied the last years of the cold war, taking part in the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction talks before Helsinki, the whole CSCE/OSCE process, and also of course the wide ranging East-West and Europe-wide negotiations of a variety of kinds related to nuclear weapons, conventional force reductions and the like. Thus by 1982, and especially by late 1989-early 1990 the United Kingdom had both recent and long-term experience with confidence building and a foreign and defence policy which included the concept as part and parcel of its approach to a variety of international problems it faced.

British concerns over the Falklands were many. The island cost several millions of pounds to defend even if its real additional costs to the Treasury were probably much less than it was often thought in leftist circles in Britain and nationalist ones in Argentina. While the islands were far from the 'Fortress Falklands' of the Buenos Aires nationalist press, they were vastly more carefully defended than any similar British territory elsewhere in the world. A permanent British garrison that includes sophisticated air and naval elements as well, had been stationed in the islands since the end of the 1982 war. And a major base complex had been established in the centre of East Falkland Island over the years following that conflict. None of this was cheap and there was no doubt that Whitehall would have been pleased not to have to pay the extra costs this arrangement entailed. However, at no time was the financial cost issue a very serious one for a British government. Generally speaking, British politicians and the press did not question the need to maintain such a garrison in the region.

Of greater concern was the thought that an incident in the area might spark renewed fighting or at least worsen bilateral relations in a serious way. In the first seven years after the war, such