

independent American country and a European state ever to be developed, always excepting of course those between the Iberian mother countries and the colonies. Argentina was in the latter part of the last century on occasion termed the 'colonia sin bandera' of Great Britain and later on as the 'informal Dominion.'²

Argentine exports were destined in large part to British ports, travelled in British bottoms, were insured by London firms, and their proceeds were used to an extraordinary degree to buy British goods. British investment in the country was vastly greater than that of any other capital exporting state of the kind and the United Kingdom's role in the national development of Argentina can hardly be exaggerated. This does not of course mean that the relationship was always a positive one for either country. Argentines often felt exploited by London and Britain's affection for the republic could at times be uncomfortable or even costly as with US-UK relations during the Second World War.

Within a few years of that huge conflict, however, UK-Argentine relations had soured. Conflict dominated those between the dynamic dictator Juan Domingo Perón and his nationalist Justicialista movement and the post-war Labour and Conservative governments in London. The Falkland Islands became seen as a measure of the mistreatment Argentines had been receiving from the outside world, especially Great Britain and more recently the United States and a yardstick for the degree to which Argentine governments could be seen as patriotic and protecting national interests. At the same time, while decolonization became the watchword in London, territories which did not wish independence such as some of the West Indian and Pacific islands, Gibraltar, Bermuda, and with nuance Belize and Hong Kong could often not simply be abandoned against the wishes of their populations who were of course British subjects.

A number of incidents occurred over the years including individual and collective gestures by nationalist elements in Argentina to underscore the seriousness with which Argentines now took the matter of the 'recovering' of the islands and their 'reincorporation' into the republic. But British power, and occasional visible demonstrations thereof, were able to dissuade Buenos Aires from any rash effort to actually move militarily against them. Meanwhile, on occasion London hoped to convince the islanders of the wisdom of closer relations with Argentina and of accepting some sort of joint arrangement which would include Argentina in their political affairs.

² The 'colony without the flag' usually referred, not always positively, to the degree of dependence of the new republic on Great Britain, although on later occasions the term was used less frequently to denote the connection between Italy and Argentina based on the massive immigration from that other country to the River Plate. The informal or 'honorary Dominion' idea was based on Argentina's growing self-assurance and the interdependent relationship growing up between London and Buenos Aires as the 20th century dawned. See the wide literature on this theme including the excellent and concise handling of the matter in Heriberto Cairo Carou, *La Construcción social del conflicto territorial argentino-británico: una aproximación geopolítica crítica* (Mos (Pontevedra), Biblioteca Universitaria, 1995), pp. 48-53.