

international scene. This was not helpful for building confidence among neighbours or interlocutors farther afield. And Argentina moved from being a prosperous, stable and generally attractive place to economic and political instability and a hotbed of various forms of extremism. This would have an effect on the perceptions of not only the other members of the international community but also on the Falklanders as well.

Argentina was then for many years isolated from major parts of the international community, and especially from those with which it had enjoyed the closest of relations in the past. The military governments of the post-war era were anathema to European liberal democracies and to the United States even though relations with the Pentagon were often very close indeed and a variety of governments in Washington were willing to overlook massive human rights abuses as long as these military regimes were seen as sufficiently anti-communist. The juntas associated with the dirty war of 1976-83 were particularly vilified even when their anti-communist credentials were able to keep them from being complete pariahs in key circles in the United States.

The costs of such isolation were not lost on successive governments in Buenos Aires including those of men in uniform. The Non-Aligned Movement gave some scope for escape from such a status even if that body seemed to many to make odd bedfellows for more rightist Argentine regimes. And as mentioned, the right in the US was able to help here as well. But few in Argentina, even on the right, were unaware of the extent of Argentine isolation, especially as the 'dirty war' gave way to the Falklands adventure.

The 1982 war led to even further isolation, this time virtually complete. Abandoned by the United States after that country had tried a few weeks of neutrality between the two sides, Buenos Aires faced a hostile United Nations, a furious European community and Commonwealth, a divided Organization of American States, and an indifferent or even hostile Non-Aligned Movement. Even Latin America, while in the main at least verbally supportive, had significant holes in its solidarity. And when talk moved to any support at all other than verbal, no Latin American capital was willing to move to help Buenos Aires.

The war took place at a time of considerable discussion of confidence building on the European and East-West scenes. Even the anti-communist drive of the Reagan government in the US was not able to shut down completely the post-Helsinki arrangements in Europe, even though many elements of confidence-building were abandoned or put on hold during the years of that government in Washington. But little of this discussion reached Argentina. Instead, in that country, the returned democracy of 1983 moved in its own contexts to improve its situation largely isolated from theoretical or extra-regional thinking on how to resolve disputes among states.

The Alfonsín government, as has been seen, favoured a multilateral approach on the Falklands issue itself in a context of national humiliation following the 1982 war. But elsewhere it proved much more flexible. It greatly accelerated the process of building bridges with its traditional rival Brazil begun under the last military governments, opened more communications links with Chile on a broad range of outstanding issues, began negotiations for the founding of Mercosur, a