

How Have These CBMs Worked So Far?²¹

There has not been a total end to mutual suspicions surrounding the Falklands conflict and few proponents of confidence building would have suggested that such a thing was possible in the circumstances underlying this dispute. Falklanders remain overwhelmingly convinced that Argentina is playing a waiting game and will return to whatever means it needs to eventually obtain the islands. In addition, the view is often if privately expressed that real confidence building should also occur between the islands and London as many Kelpers remain wary that the UK government is merely waiting for a convenient moment to be rid of the Falklands problem once and for all. And any resolution of the crisis which moves in any way closer to eventual Argentine sovereignty is seen as anathema and rejected out of hand by the vast majority of the population. Indeed, some speak of independence for the islands if Britain were to press them for acceptance of solutions moving in that direction.

Argentine public opinion is still absolutely convinced of the rightful place of the Falklands as an integral part of the Republic. Rare is the Argentine citizen who will risk public ire even today by suggesting that a compromise can be found which results in anything other than full Argentine sovereignty over the archipelago. The only acceptable questions are *when* and *how*, not *if*.

Have the CBMs then worked? It is the belief of this author than they clearly have. While a complete transformation of elite views of the opponent has not of course occurred, it is nonetheless true that when compared with the situation prevailing before or during 1982, or indeed that prevailing before 1989; there has been a vast change in public and elite perceptions of the context of the dispute.

The place of the Falklanders as responsible and legitimate interlocutors is clearly accepted by both sides now, a situation unthinkable before 1989. The idea that a peaceful solution must be found is widespread in Argentina where other options are usually ridiculed in Congress, the press and the public at large. That living with the British, and a British Falklands dependency is possible and necessary for the near future is likewise something most Argentines have accepted, however unhappily.

Falklanders have also learned that it is possible to trust the Argentines, at least where they have made formal agreements on specific issues. Few Falklanders believe that there is any real

²¹ This assessment is largely based on a series of interviews with British and Argentine diplomats, military officers and academics specializing in strategic issues, as well as with Falkland Island officials and normal residents over the months between May 1997 and October 1998. These interviews were conducted in London, Buenos Aires, and on the Falklands. This work has also benefited from the fine analysis provided in the articles of the excellent *Seguridad estratégica regional*, especially its article "Medidas de confianza en la región", VIII (October 1995), pp. 86-8, and the work of Rut Diamint, already cited as well as her "Argentina y los procesos de verificación de las medidas de fomento de la confianza", in Francisco Rojas Aravena (ed), *Medidas de confianza mutua: la verificación* (Santiago, FLACSO, 1996), pp. 197-232.