I thought and we thought we were old enough to make our own decisions. ■ Leopoldo Galtieri, 7 June 1982

It would have been absurd to despatch the fleet every time there was bellicose talk in Buenos Aires. ■ Margaret Thatcher, 3 April 1982

The recent war in the South Atlantic was neither a deterrence nor a reassurance failure. Britain did not practice either strategy of war prevention. The war broke out because of two serious and mutually reinforcing misjudgments: the belief in London that Argentina would not invade the Falkland Islands and the expectations in Buenos Aires that Britain would accommodate itself to a military takeover of the islands.* The former illusion made British policy makers unresponsive to warnings of invasion while the latter encouraged the Argentine junta, dissatisfied with the progress of negotiations, to seek to resolve the question of sovereignty once and for all by force.

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*I have used the term Falklands as opposed to Malvinas or Falkland-Malvinas as a matter of convenience. It should not be construed as an indication of preference for either side in this controversy.