

Important Lessons From The Falkland/Malvinas War: Perspectives On Weaponry Resources And Military Equipment

Supriadi Siregar¹⁾, Novky Asmoro²⁾, Mas Ayu Elita Hafizah³⁾, Heri Budi Wibowo⁴⁾
^{1,2,3,4)} Weaponry Technology, Study Program, Faculty of Defense Science and Technology,
The Republic of Indonesia Defense University, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author

Email: supriadi.siregar@tp.idu.ac.id

Abstract

This research focuses on the analysis of the Falkland/Malvinas conflict that occurred in 1982 with the aim of understanding the differences in armament and military equipment resources between Argentina and the United Kingdom, as well as its impact on the outcome of the war. In the introduction section, we outline the research problem, which is the comparison of armament and military equipment between both sides, and describe the purpose and objectives of the research. This research uses a qualitative methodology with a literature review approach to gather data from various secondary sources such as books, scholarly journals, and research reports. This allows researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of the Falkland/Malvinas war. The results of this research describe the superiority held by the United Kingdom in almost all aspects of armament, including the Sea Harrier fighter aircraft, which proved to be a decisive factor in their victory in aerial combat. The impact of these differences was Argentina's defeat and significant damage. The conclusion of this research highlights the importance of thorough military preparedness, advanced technology, and effective diplomacy in preventing armed conflicts. War will only bring great losses to both sides, as seen in the Falkland/Malvinas War. Therefore, diplomacy should be promoted as a solution to resolve international disputes and avoid unnecessary bloodshed.

Keywords : Military Equipment, Lessons Learned, Falklands/Malvinas War

INTRODUCTION

Since Argentina's defeat in the Falklands/Malvinas War, bilateral diplomatic relations between Argentina and the United Kingdom regarding the dispute over the Falklands/Malvinas Islands have gone through various periods of both good and bad conditions. Both countries have decided to sever diplomatic relations or freeze diplomatic relations (Permata in Adiwibowo, 2018). In what seems to be a period without political tension between the two countries currently, there was a fierce armed confrontation in 1982. Even the island itself has two names: Falkland, given by the United Kingdom, and Malvinas, given by Argentina.

In 1982, Argentina, then ruled by a military junta, claimed the Falklands/Malvinas Islands as its territory. On March 19, 1982, an outdated ship sent by the Argentine government invaded the South Georgia Island and raised the Argentine flag, a provocative act. The British government responded by deploying its military forces to the islands, triggering a war between the two countries that lasted for about two months and resulted in tragic consequences for both the military and civilian populations. On the Argentine side, there were around 649 deaths among Argentine military personnel during the war (Lorenz, 2020). In addition, civilians in the Falklands/Malvinas Islands also suffered, both in terms of loss of life and infrastructure damage. On the British side, about 255 British military personnel died during the conflict (Bellot, 2021). Although the number of military deaths was lower than on the Argentine side, these casualties still left a deep sorrow in both countries. The Falklands/Malvinas War was a bloody conflict that left scars on the history of both countries. To this day, the dispute over the Falklands/Malvinas Islands between Argentina and the United Kingdom has not been fully resolved (Panggalo, 2013).

The differences in views between Argentina and the United Kingdom regarding the Falklands/Malvinas Islands are not only due to geographical factors, such as the proximity of the islands to Argentina while the center of the British government is in Europe. Differences also lie in the perception that Argentina believes the Falklands/Malvinas Islands were a Spanish colony when Argentina gained independence from Spain in 1816. In contrast, the United Kingdom claims the Falklands/Malvinas Islands based on the British conquest of the islands from Spain in 1833 and later taking them as its territory (Panggalo, 2013).

The undeclared war ended with Argentina's defeat and the victory of the United Kingdom. When viewed from the perspective of armaments at that time, Argentina had less modern and less prepared weaponry. Most of the weapons they had were from the previous generation or produced locally and had not been tested in battle. Meanwhile, the United Kingdom had more modern weaponry and experience in using advanced technology (Middlebrook, M., & Everitt, C. (1985). Argentina's bold move to confront the United Kingdom in the war, considering the weaponry used, raises questions about the lessons that can be learned from the events in terms of armaments. In the end, the 2013 referendum among the inhabitants of the Falklands/Malvinas Islands resulted in over 90% of the population choosing to remain under the governance of the United Kingdom (BBC, 2013).

RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used is qualitative research through a literature review approach. The research method involving a literature review is a way to collect secondary data and information, which are information obtained from existing sources such as books, scholarly journals, research reports, and other sources of information (Creswell, 2014). The purpose of the research method involving a literature review is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the topic or issue being studied through a review of published literature (Arikunto, 2010). This method is used to gain an understanding of previous research, theories, concepts, and related findings that can assist the researcher in developing a theoretical framework and creating a better research design.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Causes of War and British Power Conditions

According to Freedman (2005), the territorial dispute between Argentina and Britain over the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands was one of the main factors that triggered the Falklands War in 1982. Additionally, Hastings and Jenkins (1983) noted that economic and political factors also influenced the occurrence of this conflict. The Argentine military government, facing an economic crisis, attempted to divert public attention from internal issues by showcasing foreign successes. Meanwhile, the decision of Margaret Thatcher, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom at the time, to send troops to the Falklands was also driven by increasing political pressure in the UK.

The British armament during the Falklands War consisted of various weapon systems, including warships, fighter aircraft, and infantry weapons (Freedman, 2005). The warships used by Britain during the war included the aircraft carriers HMS Hermes and HMS Invincible, destroyers such as HMS Sheffield, HMS Coventry, and HMS Glamorgan, as well as other warships. The fighter aircraft used by Britain during the war included Harrier and Sea Harrier fighter planes, equipped with weapons such as AIM-9 Sidewinder missiles and cannon weapon systems. As for infantry weapons, the British forces used rifles like the L1A1 SLR, light machine

guns like the L7A2 GPMG, and sniper rifles like the L42A1. British forces also utilized hand grenades and mortars (Middlebrook & Argentine Losses, 1982).



Figure 1. HMS Hermes During the Falkland/Malvinas War
Source: Wikipedia



Figure 2. HMS Invincible During the Falkland/Malvinas War
Source: Wikipedia

The Falklands War began on April 2, 1982, when Argentine forces invaded the Falkland/Malvinas Islands, which were then under British control. This invasion triggered the war. In the following three weeks due to the invasion, three British nuclear-powered attack submarines were reinforced with a task force on the surface. Nevertheless, the submarines continued blockade operations temporarily. By the end of April 1982, 65 British ships were dispatched to the Falklands, consisting of 20 warships, 8 amphibious vessels, and 40 logistical ships from the Royal Fleet Auxiliary and the Merchant Navy. The British task force carried 15,000 personnel, including a landing force comprising 7,000 Royal Marines and soldiers. Additionally, the logistical ships carried supplies for three months of combat.

Argentina's Strength and War Outcome

During the Falklands War in 1982, the Argentine Armed Forces utilized a variety of primary weaponry systems (alutsista) in their operations (Freedman, 2005; Middlebrook, 1989). Several types of warships, such as the aircraft carrier ARA Veinticinco de Mayo, the destroyers ARA Santísima Trinidad and ARA Almirante Brown, and the submarines ARA San Luis and ARA Santa Fe, were used by Argentina during the conflict. Argentina also possessed various fighter aircraft, including Mirage III and Dagger fighter planes of French make, as well as armored combat vehicles such as the Panhard VCR and M113 (Middlebrook, 1989). The Argentine Army was equipped with artillery weapons like the M101 105 mm howitzer and the

OTO Melara Mod 56/105 mm, along with 107 mm M30 mortars and 60 mm M2 mortars (Freedman, 2005).



Figure 3. Mirage III During the Falkland/Malvinas War
 Source: Wikipedia

According to Freedman (2005), the lack of adequate armament was also a contributing factor to Argentina's defeat. Most of Argentina's military equipment at that time was old and outdated, while the United Kingdom's equipment was more modern and regularly updated. In terms of fighter aircraft, Argentina also faced significant deficiencies. The French-made Mirage and Dagger fighter aircraft used by Argentina were not equipped with the modern air-to-air missiles needed to counter British fighter planes.

In the end, the war was won by the British. Argentina surrendered on June 14, 1982, after the British successfully recaptured the Falkland/Malvinas Islands. Subsequently, Argentina also relinquished control of the nearby South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands. This war resulted in a significant loss of life and material damage. Approximately 649 Argentine soldiers and 255 British soldiers were killed during the course of the war. Additionally, many facilities and infrastructure were destroyed due to attacks and battles (Britannica & Globalsecurity). Currently, diplomatic relations between the United Kingdom and Argentina tend to be normal, but the issue of sovereignty over the Falkland/Malvinas Islands remains an unresolved and ongoing debate.

Comparison of Armament and Military Equipment Resources

The following is a comparison of several elements of military equipment used by both countries during the war. It should be noted that the following data does not list all military equipment but serves as a sample comparison to assess their capabilities.

1) Air force military equipment

Table 1 Air Force military equipment

Element	Argentina	Inggris
Transport	C130, KC-130H, Boeing 707, F-28, Guarani II, and F-27, LADE and Pucarás	C-130 Hercules: Used for transport and airlift operations. C-130K Hercules: A variant of the Hercules used for aerial refueling and transport. Boeing 707: Likely used for strategic airlift and aerial refueling
Reconnaissance and Bombing	4 Learjets and 5 Guarani II for reconnaissance and 10 Canberras for bombing	Avro Vulcan: A strategic bomber used for long-range bombing missions. Canberra: A tactical bomber used for reconnaissance and bombing missions

Fighter	19 A-4C Skyhawks, and 16 F-86F Sabres, 26 A-4B Skyhawks, 35 Daggers;	Harrier GR.3: Vertical/Short Takeoff and Landing (V/STOL) ground attack aircraft. Sea Harrier FRS.1: V/STOL fighter used for air defense and ground attack
Helicopter and Special Operations	Chinook, UH-1H-, Bell 212, H-369, H-500, Lama, Sea King and Merlin IV A	Sea King: A versatile helicopter used for various roles, including anti-submarine warfare and transport. Wessex: Used for transport and utility roles
Interceptor	17 Mirages	McDonnell Douglas Phantom FGR.2

Source: Data Processed by Researchers, 2023

As an interceptor, the McDonnell Douglas Phantom figure 2 is a larger aircraft with greater payload capacity compared to the Mirage. Due to its higher takeoff weight, the Phantom can carry more weaponry and fuel. The Mirage, on the other hand, is a lighter and more agile fighter aircraft compared to the Phantom. Although their maximum speeds are nearly equivalent, the Mirage tends to have better maneuverability. The Phantom excels in terms of range and endurance, making it capable of long-range strike missions.

The fighter aircraft from Argentina (A-4C Skyhawks, A-4B Skyhawks, and Daggers) tend to focus more on ground attack and bombing roles. In contrast, the British fighter aircraft (Harrier GR.3 and Sea Harrier FRS.1) have short takeoff and vertical landing (V/STOL) capabilities and can also be used for air defense, making them more versatile in combat roles. During the Falklands War, British fighter aircraft, especially the Sea Harrier FRS.1, had superior technology and tactics compared to Argentine fighter aircraft. The Sea Harrier FRS.1 proved to be a highly valuable asset in air combat and air defense against Argentine aircraft, including A-4 Skyhawks and Daggers.

2) Navy military equipment

Table 2 Navy military equipment

Element	Argentina	Inggris
Warships	Destroyer Class "Admiral Brown": ARA Santisima Trinidad. Cruiser Class "Brooklyn": ARA General Belgrano. Submarine Class "Guppy": ARA Santa Fe.	Destroyer Class "County": HMS Antrim and HMS Glamorgan. Destroyer Class "Type 42": HMS Sheffield and HMS Coventry.
Patrol Ship	ARA Sobral (P-5): A "Murature" class. ARA Alferes Sobral (GC-82).	HMS Endurance (A-171): A patrol ship of the "Endurance" class. HMS Clyde (P-257): A patrol ship of the "River" class.
Submarine	ARA Santa Fe (S-21) and ARA San Luis (S-32) are "Balao" class submarines.	"Churchill" Class Submarine: HMS Conqueror. "Valiant" Class Submarines: HMS Valiant and HMS Spartan.

Aircraft carrier	-	HMS Invincible dan HMS Hermes
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Source: Data Processed by Researchers, 2023

ARA Santísima Trinidad was a destroyer originally from the US Navy with the name USS Brooke (DD-468). The ship was equipped with Exocet anti-ship missiles and Sea Cat anti-aircraft missiles. Although it was a formidable warship when launched in 1942, by 1982 during the Falklands War, ARA Santísima Trinidad was already an old and less modern ship compared to contemporary destroyers. ARA General Belgrano was a cruiser that previously belonged to the US Navy as the USS Phoenix (CL-46). This ship was relatively larger than destroyers and had heavier armament. However, during the war, ARA General Belgrano was already old and had more outdated equipment compared to modern warships.

The aircraft carriers HMS Invincible and HMS Hermes were equipped with Sea Harrier fighter jets and attack helicopters. These British aircraft carriers utilized modern technology and had superior capabilities to support air operations, including air surveillance and ground attacks. HMS Antrim was equipped with the Sea Dart air defense missile system and Exocet anti-ship missile system for long-range combat. This ship also had cannons and anti-aircraft guns for close-range combat. During the Falklands War, HMS Antrim played various roles, including supporting troop landing operations and air defense. HMS Endurance was an "Endurance" class patrol ship designed for polar exploration and icebreaking. It was specially designed for operations in polar environments and had the capability to sail in icy waters around the Falklands. HMS Endurance carried helicopters for monitoring and patrol missions, as well as supporting other military operations. HMS Conqueror was a "Churchill" class submarine and served as the primary British submarine during the Falklands War. This nuclear-powered submarine had exceptional operational capabilities and was equipped with modern weapon systems, including anti-ship missiles and cruise missiles. On May 2, 1982, HMS Conqueror successfully sank the cruiser ARA General Belgrano, a significant achievement in the conflict.

3) Army

The Argentine Army relied on infantry forces as their main component in military operations in the Falklands. Argentine infantry units were equipped with rifles, machine guns, and mortars, but they did not possess advanced combat equipment like that of the British forces. The British Army had highly trained and experienced infantry units equipped with modern gear. Argentina faced limitations in terms of logistics and supplies. The long distance between Argentina and the Falklands made it difficult for them to obtain logistical support quickly and efficiently. Some of the military equipment used by Argentina was also outdated. During the Falklands War, the Argentine Army used several light tanks like the TAM (Tanque Argentino Mediano), which were not comparable to the British Chieftain tanks. The powerful Chieftain tanks were equipped with 120mm cannons, giving them an advantage in tank-to-tank battles and the ability to withstand threats from lighter Argentine tanks.

CONCLUSION

The statement by Sun Tzu, "Know yourself, and know your enemy. In a hundred battles, you will never be defeated," appears to be quite relevant to Argentina during the Falkland/Malvinas War. Argentina relied on armaments such as destroyer ships and Mirage and Super Etendard fighter aircraft, supported by the United States and France. However, their lack of skill in operating these weapons and inadequate preparation in terms of logistics, fuel supplies,

and aircraft maintenance posed significant obstacles. Furthermore, Argentina did not fully comprehend the strength of the formidable British defenses.

On the other hand, the United Kingdom possessed superior armaments and expertise in their utilization, including destroyer ships and Sea Harrier fighter aircraft, along with Sea Skua missiles. They were also more experienced and trained in operating their weaponry. Additionally, the UK had the advantage in terms of logistical support, supplies, and better intelligence regarding Argentina's weaknesses. Some lessons that can be drawn from the Falkland/Malvinas War are the importance of military readiness and advanced technology. Nevertheless, diplomacy is crucial to prevent war because warfare only results in significant losses for both sides.

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