

The renewed struggle over the Falkland Islands, and implications for Israel

written by Prof. Zaki Shalom | 27.04.2026

In 1982, the Western world was shaped by two dominant leaders with a shared ideological outlook: US president Ronald Reagan and British prime minister Margaret Thatcher. Both advanced a distinctly right-wing agenda grounded in free-market economics and a firm opposition to socialism.

Their ideological clarity, combined with strong political authority and broad public support, enabled an exceptionally close US-UK partnership throughout the 1980s.

This partnership was tested during the Falklands War. At the time, Argentina was ruled by a military junta led by General Leopoldo Galtieri, which governed through repression and the suppression of dissent. On April 2, 1982, Argentinian forces invaded the Falkland Islands – territory under British control since 1833. Britain responded decisively, deploying a naval task force across roughly 13,000 kilometers.

After more than 70 days of fighting, British forces defeated the Argentinian military and restored control over the islands.

Since then, British control has become an established political reality. Although the United States never formally recognized British sovereignty, it effectively accepted Britain's de facto control. For decades, the dispute remained largely dormant, with Argentina avoiding concrete efforts to alter the status quo.

Recent developments, however, suggest a shift. Under President Javier Milei, Argentina appears to be adopting a more assertive posture. Milei – who maintains close ties with US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu – has signaled renewed intent to reclaim the islands.

This position was articulated by Argentinian Foreign Minister Pablo Quirno, who called for renewed bilateral negotiations with the United Kingdom and demanded

an end to British “colonialism.”

He reaffirmed Argentina’s sovereign claims and rejected the applicability of self-determination in this case, arguing that the islanders constitute an “implanted population” rather than a recognized people under international law. Accordingly, he framed any future settlement around territorial integrity rather than the will of the islanders.

At the same time, a subtle but meaningful shift appears to be underway in Washington. While no formal policy change has been declared, the United States has signaled a willingness to reconsider its traditional alignment with Britain. Reports of Pentagon discussions regarding a reassessment of diplomatic support for British sovereignty, alongside US openness to arms transfers involving Argentina, point to a broader recalibration.

US critical of Britain’s internal political trajectory

This emerging shift must be understood in the context of growing tensions within the US-UK relationship. First, at the ideological level, American officials – including Vice President JD Vance – have voiced criticism of Britain’s internal political trajectory, questioning its standing as a leading liberal democracy.

Second, disputes within NATO have intensified friction, particularly following Trump’s demand for significantly higher defense spending from alliance members. Third, and most consequentially, Britain’s reluctance to participate fully in US and Israeli military actions against Iran has been interpreted in Washington as a lack of strategic commitment.

Against this backdrop, a more transactional American approach to alliances appears to be taking shape. As articulated by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, alliances are no longer viewed as one-sided arrangements. Allies are expected not only to benefit from US security guarantees but also to actively support American strategic priorities. Failure to do so may carry consequences.

In this context, the Falklands issue can be understood as a potential lever of indirect pressure on London – an implicit signal that US support is neither automatic nor unconditional.

It is plausible that recent Argentinian and American moves have been

coordinated, at least partially, with Netanyahu during Milei's recent visit to Israel. For Israel, these developments carry clear strategic significance. They underscore the depth of coordination with Washington and reinforce Israel's position as a central strategic partner of the United States.

More broadly, renewed tensions over the Falklands highlight how dormant disputes can reemerge when shifts occur in the balance of power. They also reflect a broader transformation in the international system, one in which alliances are increasingly conditional, interests often outweigh principles, and commitments are judged by actions rather than declarations.

From Israel's perspective, the policy implications are clear. Maintaining close coordination with the United States must remain a top priority while avoiding unnecessary friction. At the same time, Israel should adopt a pragmatic approach consistent with Ben-Gurion's doctrine – demonstrating flexibility on secondary issues while remaining firm on matters vital to its national security.

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