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Invasion of the Falkland Islands

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RESEARCH
REPORT



Forum: Historical Security Council (HSC)

Issue: Invasion of the Falkland Islands

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Introduction

“On 2 April 1982, Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands, a British colony since 1892 and British possession since 1833. The 1,800 Falkland Islanders, mostly English-speaking sheep farmers, awaited a British response” upon the invasion. When Britain retaliated, the war on the Falkland Islands began. The roots of the conflict go as back as the early 1800s when the British Empire occupied the Islands from Argentinan rule. Since then, the two nations have claimed sovereignty over the land, leading to the Falklands War of 1982. One thing to note is that our Historical Security Council will begin its discussion on 29 March 1982, and events after that date will be presumed not to have happened yet. Hence, in committee, the Falkland Islands are not yet invaded, and the war has not begun—in fact, there is no war! The events to be described in this resolution after the date 29 March 1982 do not have to happen in the same way, and delegates will have the freedom to change the course of history.



Image 1: Argentina, the United Kingdom, and the Falkland Islands highlighted on the map.¹

Definition of Key Terms

Colony

¹ Center for European Policy Evaluation. “The Falkland Islands – Diplomatic Dispute between Great Britain and Argentina.” *Center for European Policy Evaluation*, 9 Aug. 2012, <https://cepeoffice.wordpress.com/2012/08/09/the-falkland-islands-diplomatic-dispute-between-great-britain-and-argentina/>.

The National Geographic Society defines a colony as: “a country or area under the full or partial political control of another country, typically a distant one, and occupied by settlers from that country.”²

Colonization has been made illegal by the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR), and The Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) defines “colonialism as a crime against humanity where it involves transferring the nationals of an occupying power into occupied territory.”

Invasion

Cambridge Dictionary defines invasion as: “an occasion when an army or country uses force to enter and take control of another country,”³ or a territory. If the country is successful in its invasion and establishes its own regime in the territory or country, then it is further called occupancy.

General Overview

History of the Conflict

Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, a French navigator, first settled on East Falkland in 1764, and he has given the name Malovines to the Islands. In 1765, the British occupied West Falkland, from where the Spanish drove them off in 1770. The Spanish further bought the East French settlement in 1767. Therefore, Spain had maintained the sole settlement on the Islands until 1811.

“In 1816 Argentina declared its independence from Spain and in 1820 proclaimed its sovereignty over the Falklands.” Yet, a British force in 1833 re-attacked and occupied the Islands. By the 1880s, a British community of around 1,800 people on the islands was self-supporting. In 1892, the Falkland Islands were collectively granted colonial status.” Then, for 90 years, Falklands Islands remained under the British colony, whereas Argentina’s constant diplomatic efforts to regain Islands’ control persisted.

Past World War 2, Argentina’s diplomatic efforts resulted in the sovereignty issue over the Islands discussed in the United Nations decolonization committee in 1964. “Argentina based its claim to the Falklands on papal bulls of 1493 modified by the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494), by which Spain and Portugal had divided the New World between themselves; on succession from Spain; on the islands’ proximity to South America; and on the need to end a colonial situation. Britain based its claim on its ‘open, continuous, effective possession, occupation, and administration of the islands since 1833 and its determination to apply the principle of self-determination to the Falklanders as recognized in the United Nations Charter. Britain asserted that, far from ending a colonial situation, Argentine rule and control of the lives of the Falklanders against their wishes would, in fact, create one.”

² National Geographic Society. “Colony.” *National Geographic Society*, 7 Jan. 2020, <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/colony/>.

³ Cambridge, The Editors of Dictionary. “Invasion”. *Cambridge Dictionary*, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/invasion>.

The UN General Assembly has approved a resolution that invited Britain and Argentina to reach a peaceful solution. “In 1981, the Falkland Islanders voted in a referendum to remain British,” showing that the Island population identifies more with Britain. While British-Argentine discussions were still in process in 1982, Argentina proceeded to invade the Falklands on April 2, 1982. While the Argentine side did not kill any British troops due to orders from commanders, they suffered losses on their side. Regardless, this invasion has outraged Britain, “and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher assembled a naval task force of 30 warships to retake the islands.” This act started the Falklands War. As Falklands is 13000 kilometers from Britain, British warships had to spend weeks to arrive. “On April 25, South Georgia Island was retaken, and after several intensive naval battles fought around the Falklands, British troops landed on East Falkland on May 21. After several weeks of fighting, the large Argentine garrison at Stanley surrendered on June 14, effectively ending the conflict.”

Losing 5 ships and 256 troops in the Falklands War, Britain’s losses were less than Argentina, which lost 750 troops and the only cruiser it had. Argentina lost its control over the Islands, and civilian life in Falklands was restored. After the victory, Margaret Thatcher’s popularity drastically increased, and her party, the Conservative Party, won the 1983 parliamentary elections with a significant difference.

“Although Britain and Argentina reestablished full diplomatic relations in 1990, the issue of sovereignty remained a point of contention. In the early 21st century, Britain maintained some 2,000 troops on the islands. In January 2009, a new constitution came into effect that strengthened the Falklands’ local democratic government and reserved for the islanders their right to determine the territory’s political status. In a referendum held in March 2013, islanders voted nearly unanimously to remain a British overseas territory.”

Because the discussion will start from the pre-Argentine invasion, the committee again needs to disregard events that happened after March 29, 1982. Hence, it needs to be established that the tension between Britain and Argentina is currently very high and that Argentina is about to invade the Falklands any minute.

Timeline of Events

| Date of Event | <i>Description of Event</i> |
|----------------------|--|
| 1764 - 1811 | French, British and Spanish settlement of the Falklands. |
| 1816 | Argentina declares its independence from Spain. |
| 1820 | Argentina claims sovereignty over the Falklands. |
| 1833 | British occupancy of the Falklands. |

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1892 | Britain grants colonial status to the Falklands. |
| 1892 - 1982 | Diplomatic Argentine efforts to regain sovereignty over the Falklands. |
| 1964 | United Nations Decolonization Committee hears the conflict of the Falklands, passes the resolution inviting Britain and Argentina to reach to a peaceful solution through mediation. |
| 1964 - February 1982 | Diplomatic discussions to determine the sovereignty over the Falklands continue. |
| March 29, 1982 | JMUN Historical Security Council begins its session. |
| April 2, 1982 | Argentina invades the Falklands. |
| April 25 - June 14, 1982 | The Falklands War in which Britain wins and forces Argentina to leave the Islands. |
| 1990s | Britain and Argentina reestablishes full diplomatic relations. |

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Although there have been some solution attempts to resolve the issue, the international community has neglected the British-Argentinian tensions for the most part. The United Nations have discussed the issue, yet the resolution was an advisory opinion inviting the UK and Argentina to reach a peaceful conclusion through mediation. Because there has not been a strict order from the UN Security Council, the two nations were left on their own to settle the issue. Obviously, this measure by the UN General Assembly was ineffective, and the tension between the two nations in the years leading up to the war has been incredibly high.

In fact, at first, Britain was considering transferring the Islands' sovereignty to Argentina, yet due to domestic pressure the government of Britain faced, the government was forced to change its position and continue its claim over the Islands. Similarly, in Argentina, the new government in power aimed to establish political popularity by attacking and occupying the Islands. Hence, both regimes rejected a peaceful settlement due to political reasons.

Possible Solutions

First, it is essential to establish that this issue should be solved with diplomacy. Yet, an advisory opinion by the UN is not sufficient. Inviting sides to sign peace and non-aggression agreements

under the UNSC, with consequences in case of a breach by either side, holding UNSC based conferences, applying to the International Court of Justice to determine the rightful owner of the land are amongst the possible diplomatic solutions.

In addition, additional security measures may be taken to ensure that in case of a disagreement, an armed conflict will not break out. UNSC's role in this would be crucial, as UNSC is the only committee that can produce binding resolutions.

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