



**THE QUESTION OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS IN  
FEBRUARY 1982**

**SPECPOL - BATHMUN 2023**

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## Committee Introduction

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to BathMUN2023! It is our pleasure to join you all for this historical simulation of the SPECPOL committee, tackling The Question of the Falkland Islands in February 1982. In such uncertain times on the world stage, it is important to reflect on the past and what could have been done differently to prevent conflict, learning vital lessons that we can take into the future. For this reason, we have chosen this dispute, which has persisted for centuries and continues into the modern day - unresolved, despite many attempts from the states directly involved and international organisations.

It should be remembered while reading this study guide that the committee is set in February 1982 - just before Argentina would invade the Falklands. Therefore, all states will be from that period (e.g. the Soviet Union, not the Russian Federation) and all delegates should do their best to represent their country's foreign policies from February 1982. For example, the delegate of Argentina will not be representing the interests of the democratic government of present-day Argentina, but instead those of the military dictatorship that ruled Argentina at the time.

The Question of the Falkland Islands is a territorial dispute over a group of islands, around

300 miles from Argentina's southern coast. In February 1982, the islands were under British control, however Argentina has continuously stated its claim over the sovereignty of the Falklands (known as 'Las Malvinas' in Spanish). The British claim over the islands originates from British settlements on the island, and the Argentine over a combination of geographical and historical factors, with the two sides unable to come to an agreement. Tensions had recently been heating up with more negotiations yielding no results, war seemed like a real possibility. This is a chance for you to put yourself into the shoes of a divided international community, uniting them through diplomatic effort and hard work.

As your chairs we are here to help you along your BathMUN experience. Whether this is your first conference or one too many, we are here to help.

Feel free to send any queries you have to:  
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We are looking forward to welcoming you to Bath soon.

Best Regards,  
Aryaman and Charlie

## Chair Introductions

I'm Aryaman (you can call me Arya though), a first year European Studies student at KCL, from East London. I love football, being a lifelong Dagenham & Redbridge fan, and play way too much Rocket League in my spare time. I also have a passion for languages and foreign cultures - I know Spanish and am currently learning Catalan.

Having started MUN in university last year, I've met many great people and look forward to continuing that in BathMUN 2023! :)



Hi, I'm Charlie, a third year Politics and International Relations student at the University of Bath. After drifting to MUN as a superior form of debating in 2017, I am yet to escape. Having done far too much MUN throughout secondary school and university, I thought I'd take a break during my placement. However, life finds a way and here we are. Outside of MUN, I can be found in a pub quiz team or organising my (modest) book collection. I'm looking forward to welcoming you to bath in December for a lively debate on the Falkland war.



## Statement of Intent

As a beginner committee it may feel daunting to tackle a historical committee and we recommend that you use the key stakeholders' section as a starting point for your research, then doing more in-depth research into your specific country knowing their general position.

When approaching historical committees, it is important not to mention any events that take place after the current date of debate (27<sup>th</sup> February 1982). What is interesting is the difference between reflection and breaking the "meta". Using your knowledge of modern-day, on what failures directly impacted peaceful resolution, you can step into the shoes of

diplomats and do better. However, you cannot break the "meta" and use events that have not occurred yet.

Remember that your country not having had a large direct impact on the dispute is not negative. It means that you could be less tied down by a strong foreign policy stance and more able to suggest innovative and unique solutions to the committee, so do not feel discouraged! Finally, we do not expect perfection – all that counts once you are in committee session is hard work, and we will do everything in our power to make sure that your effort does not go unnoticed.

## Committee Mandate

The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL) is the Fourth Committee of the UN General Assembly. It covers a very wide range of issues, ranging from peacekeeping to the use of space and, most relevant to this committee's topic, matters of decolonisation. [1]

Being a UN General Assembly committee gives it the following main powers:

- Consider and make recommendations on the general principles of cooperation for maintaining international peace and security, including disarmament
- Initiate studies and make recommendations to promote international political cooperation, the development and codification of

international law, the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and international collaboration in the economic, social, humanitarian, cultural, educational and health fields

- Make recommendations for the peaceful settlement of any situation that might impair friendly relations among countries [2]

The Special Committee on Decolonisation (C-24), a subsidiary body that reports to SPECPOL, has been considering the question of the Falkland Islands since 1964, with Resolution 2065 (XX) being adopted by the General Assembly on the recommendation of C-24 in 1965. [3]

## Timeline of Events

1494: The Treaty of Tordesillas is signed between Spain and Portugal, dividing the 'New World' between themselves, with the Falkland Islands unknowingly in, according to the treaty, Spanish territory

1600: First undisputed sighting of the Islands by Dutch explorer Sebald de Weerdt

1690: First recorded landing on the Islands, made by English sailor John Strong, naming the islands the Falkland Islands

1764: French navigator Louis-Antoine de Bougainville founds the first ever settlement on the islands, located on East Falkland

1765: A British settlement is established on West Falkland

1770: The Spanish drive the British settlers off the island, having bought out the French settlement previously and maintain a settlement on East Falkland until 1811 – the British still maintained their claim over the islands [4]

1790: The Nootka Conventions (also known as the Treaty of San Lorenzo de El Escorial) are signed between Great Britain and Spain, in which both parties agreed to not make any new establishments on either coast of the Americas and on any islands nearby Spanish territory [5]

1820: After declaring independence in 1816, the government in Buenos Aires claims sovereignty over the Falklands, due to its proximity to South America and as a succession from Spain, originating from the Treaty of Tordesillas

1831: A U.S. warship destroys the Argentine settlement on East Falkland in response to the detaining of three U.S. ships that were hunting seals in the area, the Argentine government claims that the hunting was illegal

1833: A British force expels the remaining Argentine presence on the island without any casualties

1833-85: A British settlement of around 1,800 people had been established and become self-sustaining, while Argentina regularly protested the British occupation of the islands

1964: The question of the Falkland Islands is handed over to the United Nations, with the Special Committee on Decolonisation debating the issue

1965: The UN General Assembly passes a resolution inviting the UK and Argentina to negotiate for a peaceful solution to the dispute, in the interests of the local population

1973 (September): Argentina joins the Non-Aligned Movement.

1973 (December): Resolution 3160 is approved recognising the lack of progress in negotiations between the two governments. The General Assembly for the first time requested to expedite negotiations and set a deadline for recommendations by the two countries on an agreement. The deadline was set at the 29<sup>th</sup> Session. [6]

1976 (August): The Non-Aligned Movements adopts a Political Declaration recognising Argentinian sovereignty over the Islands [7].

1969-1982: Discussions continue informally, with Argentina to increasingly turn to the UN instead of bilateral talks which were becoming a stalemate

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February 1982: Negotiations are mostly halted, with the UK not giving any response to the most recent Argentine proposal [8] [9]

## Past attempts to solve the issue

After the establishment of the United Nations, attempts to recognise and address the issue had been under the purview of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries [10] and Peoples of 1960 as stated in A/RES/2065(XX) [11]. Previously, the Argentinian Government claimed the Islands on the basis of them succeeding the Spanish Empire, as the Treaty of Tordesillas split the New Continent longitudinally (alongside a meridian) making the Islands fall inside the Spanish territories. The Islands being closer to Argentina than to the UK was also employed as an argument.

The interpretation of the Declaration, which by itself effectively interprets and extends the UN Charter [12], has been a point of contention for both the British and Argentinian Governments. The former maintains that the inhabitants of the islands have the right to self-determination as provided by the Charter and Declaration, while the latter invokes clause 6 of the Declaration stating that partial disruption of their territorial integrity is incompatible with the Charter [13]. The Argentinian government further supports its position by arguing that the interests of the population of the Islands do not include the principle to self-determination.

The years succeeding Resolution 2065 saw slow negotiations between the UK and Argentina.

Their slow pace led the Argentinian government to bringing the topic to the General Assembly again for discussion, this time after having joined the Non-Aligned Movement. For the first time, the General Assembly recognised Argentina's willingness to "facilitate the process of decolonization" and urged both countries to expedite negotiations [14].

In August 1976 at the 5th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in Sri Lanka, the organisation fully recognised Argentinian claims to the Islands, demanding the UK to comply with the relevant UN resolutions and to end the "illegal situation" on the Islands [15]. In December, the General Assembly approved resolution 31/49. This is the last time a topic under "Question of the Falkland Islands" has been discussed. The Political Declaration of the Non-Aligned Movement was noted by the Assembly, a weak and implied endorsement of Argentina's position, while restating gratitude towards the government of Argentina and reiterating the need to accelerate negotiations.

Perhaps more notably, the resolution included a request for both parties to "refrain from taking decisions that would imply introducing unilateral modifications in the situation" during negotiations [16].



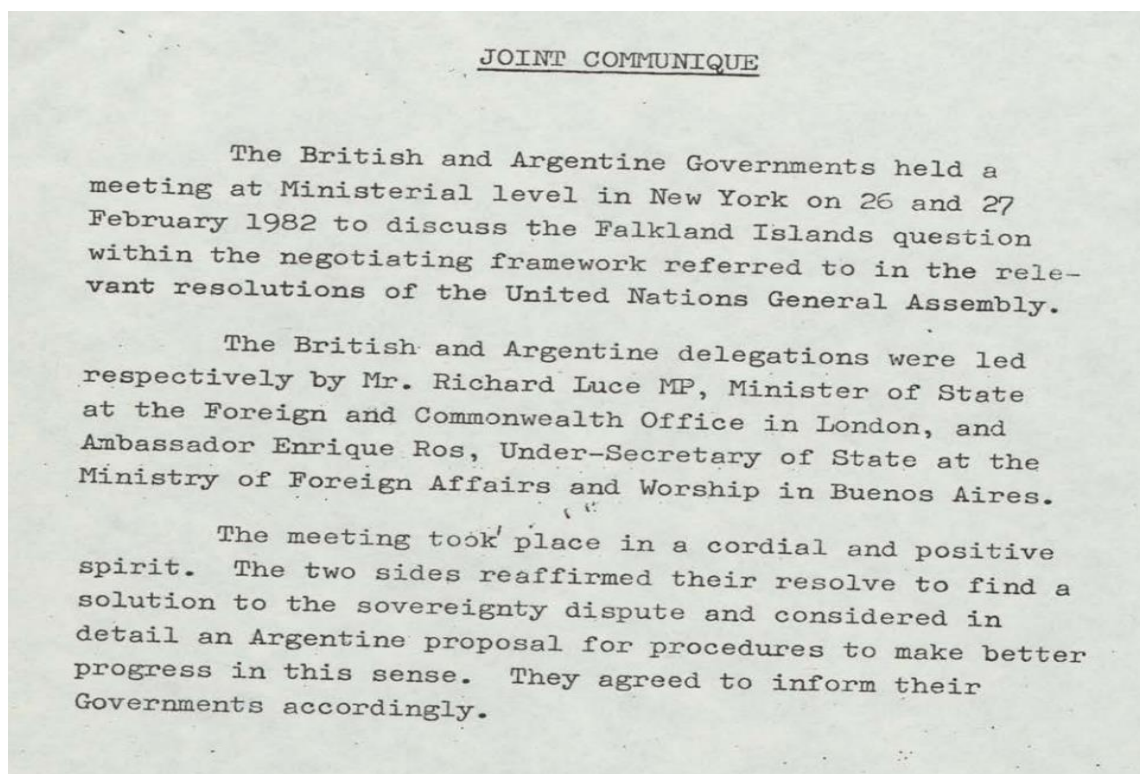
## Current Situation

The current situation for the committee is the 27<sup>th</sup> of February 1982. At this time, a bilateral meeting between Argentina and British ministers had taken place in New York to discuss the matter, which yielded some small results, such as the proposal for a Commission between the two states, even including the Islanders, in order to consider the Question and propose solutions that can lead to a peaceful resolution (This information was classified until 2012) [17].

However, in reality, this led to little success in finding an agreement, as both sides would still find themselves in deadlock, with the Argentine

government now even more frustrated by the lack of results and what they saw as contradicting signals from the British government over their willingness to help resolve the dispute [18].

The Argentine leader, Galtieri, was also under extreme domestic pressure from the public over economic woes and dictatorial rule, causing his government to look for any way to turn attention away from the country's troubles – with this dispute, and its inability to be resolved thus far, serving as a perfect way to unite the deeply turmoiled country.



## Expected points of discussion / Potential solutions

With the power of reflection, we can identify some of the factors that impacted the ability of policymakers to come to an agreement.

In theory, a lease-back formula could have been considered. Much like how the Sino-British Joint Declaration set conditions meaning that the territory would be gradually passed back to Chinese control. Certain elements such as the "one country, two systems" policy were adopted, meaning that Hong Kong would keep its existing government structures for a period of 50 years.

A similar proposal to this (which was signed in 1984 so after the Falkland war broke out) was initially considered by a minority within the British Foreign Office. However, with poor political backing it quickly became forgotten.

However, considering why such a proposal failed to catch on is important. Firstly, there would be no solution to the split of resources. The Falkland Islands was one of the UK's ways to join the territorial claims in Antarctica. The Falkland Islands has plenty of untapped natural resources such as oil and both sides were unlikely to accept a settlement that reduced their claim to these assets.

Ultimately what this debate aims to do is consider what tools the international community had that could potentially solve this issue. The UN passed several conclusions regarding the Falkland Islands but did not prevent the outbreak of war.

## Key stakeholders / Blocs

- UK – The UK wishes to re-establish control over the Falkland Islands and is seeking diplomatic support based around the UN's previous support for British control of the Islands. Although there was an abortive attempt to transfer sovereignty to the Argentinians by the Callaghan Government in 1977, the Conservative Opposition shot it down, and Margaret Thatcher and her government are completely opposed to any outcome that includes de-facto Argentinian authority over the Falklands and South Georgia.



- Argentina- Argentina's seizure of the Falkland Islands (2 days before the setting of this debate) is in its eyes simply a realisation of their legitimate claim. Argentinian claims over the islands date back to the Colonial Period where Spanish Colonial control of South America included the Isles Malvinas. The UK's continued possession of the Islands is an affront to the national pride of the Argentinian people and especially their military government, which seeks to use the Islands to reinvigorate popular support.
- US- The United States finds itself in a very difficult position in this debate owing to its longstanding support for both the UK and Argentina. Argentina has long

been a reliable ally in opposing the spread of Communism in South America but the importance of preventing the collapse of the Thatcher Government and the potential of a more socialist Foot Government cannot be understated. This combined with Ronald Reagan's close personal relationship with Margaret Thatcher means that the US leans strongly towards the UK although it would favour a more moderate response



- Soviet Sphere- The Soviet Union and its Eastern Bloc allies find themselves in an even more awkward position. Although the opportunity to strike at the remnants of the British Empire is an effective way to undermine the Western Bloc, the atrocities currently being committed by the Argentinian Dictatorship make it very difficult to justify an ideological intervention in favour of the Argentinian Junta. On a pragmatic side, as Détente with the United States is in the Soviet Interest, perhaps supporting the United States is in the National Interest?

- Japan + Other Neutral Nations- Japan may be a nation in the American Sphere of Influence but as a pacifist nation, the UK's substantial deployment of military troops and equipment goes directly against the UN's ideals and aims. On this

basis Japan and other neutral nations have to make a very careful consideration between the illegal invasion of the Falklands by Argentina and the escalating tactics of the UK

## Questions a resolution could address

- What concessions, if any, will be necessary from either side to ensure that imminent war is avoided?
- How can the international community work to ensure peace on the islands?
- How long can treaties be considered valid for and how can they be enforced?
- Should sovereignty only consider the land itself, or include the wishes of the islanders?
- Once short-term tensions are reduced, what can be done to ensure a long-term solution to the question?
- What steps should be taken for the Falklands, if any, to advance with the global agenda of decolonisation?

## Extra reading

Argentinian Propaganda Cartoon: [Argentine Falklands Cartoon - English Sub - YouTube](#)

Japanese Post-Falklands Evaluation: [09.pdf \(mod.go.jp\)](#)

JSTOR Article about the Soviet Union's Stance on the Falklands:  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44636371>

Historical Pattern of Events [The History Press | The Falklands War: A chronology of events](#)

House of Lords summary of British and Argentine claims to the Falklands:

<https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/sovereignty-since-the-ceasefire-the-falklands-40-years-on/#heading-2>

Insight into the interesting and complex Chilean position at the time:

<https://www.theage.com.au/world/chile-admits-helping-uk-in-falklands-20050627-ge0ewn.html>

The positions of various European countries:  
[https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/105153/1/Solidarity\\_Sanctions\\_and\\_Misunderstanding.pdf](https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/105153/1/Solidarity_Sanctions_and_Misunderstanding.pdf)

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- [8] 'Período 1945-1965 | Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores'. <https://cancilleria.gob.ar/es/politica-exterior/cuestion-malvinas/antecedentes/periodo-1945-1965> (accessed Oct. 31, 2023)
- [10] [15] 'Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples'. [http://cns.miis.edu/nam/documents/Official\\_Document/5th\\_Summit\\_FD\\_Sri\\_Lanka\\_Declaration\\_1976\\_Whole.pdf](http://cns.miis.edu/nam/documents/Official_Document/5th_Summit_FD_Sri_Lanka_Declaration_1976_Whole.pdf) (accessed Nov. 18, 2023)
- [11] 'Question of Falkland Island 1966'. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/203558?ln=en> (accessed Nov. 18, 2023)
- [12] McWhinney, Edward. 'DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES'. [https://legal.un.org/avl/pdf/ha/dicc/dicc\\_e.pdf](https://legal.un.org/avl/pdf/ha/dicc/dicc_e.pdf)
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