



HISTORICAL SECURITY COUNCIL 1982

DESCRIPTION OF THE COMMITTEE

Under the United Nations Charter, the Security Council is charged with the responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. While other UN bodies can only make recommendations for action, the Security Council has the ability to pass resolutions with binding action for all member states. Such ability makes the Security Council the most important body within the United Nations.

The Council meets throughout the year and is made up of 15 states: five permanent members and ten rotating members chosen by the General Assembly for a two-year term. The so-called “Permanent Five” are China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Each of these nations has a veto, meaning that if any one of them votes “no” on a resolution, that resolution automatically fails. In order for a resolution to pass, therefore, there must be nine or more affirmative votes, and the absence of any vetoes from the five permanent members.

The Security Council may deal with international conflict in many ways. When fighting breaks out, the Council’s first response is usually to call for a ceasefire—an end to immediate hostilities. The Council may also send peacekeeping forces to a given area to ensure the safety of civilians and that the UN’s decisions are being carried out. The Security Council also has the ability to call for economic sanctions—measures that prevent a country from receiving money or conducting trade. In the most serious of circumstances, the Council is also authorized to call for the use of military force.

This committee will begin debate as if it were April 20, 1982. This date is significant because it is the date that the British War Cabinet ordered the repossession of the Falkland Islands, which Argentina has controlled since its invasion on April 2, 1982. The Security Council and several other international organizations have already begun commenting on the issue. Mostly, the Security Council issued a resolution condemning the invasion; however, the need to react to the imminent war that will be created due to Great Britain’s response is crucial.

TOPIC: THE SITUATION IN THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

INTRODUCTION

The Falkland Islands have received a lot of international attention despite their small size. Though the islands have changed hands between four governments, the islands have been at the center of historical tension between principally Argentina and Great Britain.

Today, once again, the islands are at the center of international debate. With the Argentine invasion of the islands just over two weeks ago, the United Nations Security Council is now challenged by a looming British invasion while the fate of the citizens of the Falklands hangs in the balance.



BACKGROUND

A Complicated History

The Falkland Islands have had a complex history since their discovery, involving France, the United Kingdom, Spain, and Argentina, all who claimed possession of the small string of islands at various points in history.

Though there is debate regarding the first sighting of the Falkland Islands (known in Spanish as the *Islas Malvinas*), most agree that the first recorded sighting was made on August 14, 1592 by English sea captain John Davis. It was not until 1690, however, that English navigator John Strong made the first recorded landing. Strong divided the islands into East Falkland and West Falkland, and named the channel dividing the two main islands the “Falkland Sound” after Viscount Falkland, then Treasurer of the British navy.

It was not until 1764 that French navigator Louis Antoine de Bougainville founded the first settlement on the Falkland Islands, Port Saint Louis, East Falkland. Unaware of the French settlement, British captain John Byron landed at Port Egmont on West Falkland and took possession of the islands for Britain in 1765. Then, in 1766, British captain John MacBride established a formal settlement for the British at Port Egmont on Saunders Island, West Falkland. The same year, Spain acquired the French colony at Port Saint Louis, and after assuming effective control in 1767 placed the islands under a governor loyal to the Spanish colonial government in Argentina.

In 1770 Spain attacked the British settlement in West Falkland, but the British returned in 1771 and stayed until 1774 when British military forces and settlers left the Falkland Islands due to economic and military constraints resulting from the increasing rebellion by the British colonies in America. Upon withdrawal, however, the United Kingdom left behind a plaque declaring its claim to the Falklands.

Spain maintained a settlement on the islands until its departure in 1811, when it too left behind a plaque stating its claim to the territory. When Argentina declared its independence from Spain in 1816, it laid claim to the islands, and in 1820 an Argentine captain returned to raise the flag of Argentina at Port Saint Louis.

An Argentine settlement was built in 1826, only to be destroyed in 1831 by United States warships after the Argentine governor of the islands had seized US seal hunting ships during a dispute over fishing rights.

Argentina continued to control the Falkland Islands until January 1833 when British forces returned and took control of the islands. The British sent Argentine settlers back to their home and began to repopulate the islands with British citizens.

The Era of British Control

The United Kingdom strengthened its jurisdiction over the Falklands when it officially took over the islands in 1843, appointing Lieutenant Moody as governor of the islands. The same year, work began on the construction of a new capital, Stanley, on the south side of Port Jackson (renamed Stanley Harbour in 1845).

The year 1845 brought large political changes for the islands, as Stanley was officially declared the capital and Legislative Council and the Executive Council were also completed as the headquarters for local political processes.

British **sovereignty** over the Falklands' was increased by the construction of a naval base at Stanley, the Falklands' capital. The naval base became a strategic point for navigation in the area and would prove to be an enormous military asset to the British during both World War One and World War Two. Moreover, the base provided a large economic opportunity for the sea trade, an important part of the islands' economy.



United Nations Diplomacy

After more than a century of nearly unquestioned British sovereignty over the islands, Argentina, which had never given up its claim to the Falklands, attempted to regain them beginning in the 1940s. With the establishment of the United Nations in 1945, Argentina saw the new organization as an opportunity to present its claims to the Falklands before the international community. Therefore, upon the signing of the UN Charter, Argentina increased its efforts to take back the Falklands by stating that it reserved its sovereignty over the islands and its right to recover them from Britain.

In 1960, the United Nations passed General Assembly Resolution 1514 calling for the **decolonization** of all territories still under foreign occupation. Britain used the resolution to counter Argentina's claims for the Falklands by stating that citizens of the islands first had to vote for the British withdrawal in a **referendum** before any political negotiations could take place to turn over control of the islands to Argentina. Knowing that the citizens of the Falklands were mainly British convinced the United Kingdom that even if a referendum were held, the result would keep the British Government in control.

In response to United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2065, which called upon Argentina and Britain to negotiate a peaceful solution, the two countries began diplomatic discussions in 1966. In 1967 influential British citizens created the Falkland Islands Emergency Committee to pressure the British Government to not weaken its claims to the islands. Thanks in part to such pressure, negotiations with Argentina collapsed after Britain refused to give up any sovereignty of the Falkland Islands.

Despite diplomatic failures, in 1971 Britain and Argentina were able to sign the Communications Agreement that allowed Argentina to provide external communications to the islands.

The Lead-up to War

By March 1982, Argentine citizens were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with a worsening economy and were threatening to overthrow Argentina's military council known as "**Junta Militar**" as a result. Hoping to unite the dissatisfied public behind a foreign diversion, ruling General Leopoldo Galtieri planned to invade the Falklands to further his political ends. He believed that such an attack would be successful because he assumed that Britain would be unwilling to send its navy halfway around the world to retake such a small piece of territory. As a result, he initiated the conflict by sending a group of scrap metal salvagers to raise the Argentine flag on South Georgia, a nearby group of islands, on March 19.

In response, on March 20, the British sent the HMS Endurance from Stanley to South Georgia. Although Argentina claimed they were seeking protection for the salvage workers when they sent their own naval vessels to South Georgia, it was a move meant to provoke the British. Finally, on April 1 Argentina began Operation Azul, the invasion of the Falkland Islands.



The Invasion

The Argentine invasion was swift and well coordinated. On the night of April 1 Argentine ships brought soldiers, vehicles, and equipment to the Falklands Islands under the cover of darkness. Meeting little opposition, the Argentine invasion continued without much British resistance.

The invasion was internationally recognized on April 3 when the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 502 condemning the Argentine invasion. A day later, on April 4, the British surrendered control of the Falkland Islands.

“I must tell the House that the Falkland Islands and their dependencies remain British territory. No aggression and no invasion can alter that simple fact. It is the Government's objective to see that the islands are freed from occupation and are returned to British administration at the earliest possible moment.”
–British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to the House of Commons on April 3, 1982

Source: The Margaret Thatcher Foundation

<http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=104910>

After the surrender, the British soldiers were brought onto big fields where pictures were taken to show the lack of British deaths or injuries. Though the pictures motivated the British public against the Argentines, they were also a painful reminder of humiliation. In London, the government pledged to retaliate.

In Argentina, on the other hand, the public rejoiced at the recapture of the islands. In Buenos Aires, huge flag-waving crowds flooded the Plaza de Mayo, the city's main square. To further excitement, Argentine forces also captured the island chain of South Georgia where the scrap metal workers had been sent roughly half a month earlier.

Current Situation

As it stands today, Argentina is in complete control of the islands. Argentine naval ships are docked around the Falklands and soldiers occupy the streets.

In Britain, the government is enraged. On April 12 the government declared a **maritime exclusion zone** 200 miles around the Falklands. Moreover, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher pushed the European Economic Community on April 10 to apply sanctions against Argentina and on April 19 to declare support for Britain.

In an attempt to mediate the situation, United States Secretary of State Alexander Haig has begun **shuttle diplomacy** between Britain and Argentina. On April 8, Secretary Haig arrived in London, and on April 9 traveled to Buenos Aires. So far, however, his efforts have not produced any meaningful results.



Today, April 20, the British War Cabinet has just announced its intentions to retake the Falkland Islands by force.

Political Issues

Argentina had not anticipated such a response by the British government. In fact, the reasons for plotting on the invasion were mainly: United Nations' doctrine of "fair war," several indicating Great Britain's disinterest on the territory, and the fact that the land was quite far away from the British mainland. Yet, there are several political and geopolitical issues that did not allow Great Britain to ease through the crisis through diplomatic means.

The internal political status of the government in power both in Argentina and Great Britain was a factor in responses to the crisis from both nations. The pressure put on Great Britain by the Cold War provoked a more heated response to the Falklands conflict from Great Britain than one would normally expect. More importantly, the idea that a peaceful cessation of colonies would spark rebellions throughout the world drove Great Britain to respond in a way that demonstrated that such activities would not be tolerated had to be implied.

Several countries who were indirectly involved in the situation nevertheless played crucial roles. One of the main contributors was Chile. Due to the recent lack of "realpolitik" between Argentina and Chile, Chile was partially forced to lean towards the British. On the other side, countries such as Peru and even Cuba chose to support their Latin American brother, Argentina. In Europe, France had sold several military aircrafts to Argentina, heightening tensions between Great Britain and France, as French-made aircraft could be used to harm British soldiers and citizens.

Objectives

The United Nations was widely discredited for its inability to act upon before the conflict worsened. The main objective of the committee is to properly mediate along the proposals from the delegations of Great Britain and Argentina, bearing in mind the magnitude of the crisis and the collateral nations that may choose to become involved in the conflict.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Which country does your government support, if any?
2. What can the Security Council do to enforce Resolution 502 calling for the withdrawal of Argentine forces from the Falkland Islands?
3. How would the Council respond to a British campaign to retake the islands?
4. In what capacity can the United Nations work to mediate between the countries?
5. Is there a role for the European Economic Community or the Organization of American States to play in resolving the conflict?
6. Who should determine what is best for the citizens of the Falkland Islands?

TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Decolonization: process by which colonies gained independence, particularly between 1945-1960.

Maritime exclusion zone: an attempt to prevent supplies or troops from reaching an opposing military force by having naval ships surround the opposing military. In this case, any Argentine ship found within the exclusion zone was subject to British attack.

Military junta: a government ruled by a committee of military leaders.

Referendum: a vote by a whole population on a specific question or set of questions.

Shuttle diplomacy: the use of a third nation to serve as a mediator between two governments that do not directly talk to one another.

Sovereignty: a concept that refers to a politically independent state with the right to self-government that is free from interference from other governments.

SOURCES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Global Security <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/malvinas.htm>

British Ministry of Defence <http://www.falklands25.com/abouttheconflict.html>

Falkland Islands Government <http://www.falklands.gov.fk/historical-dates.php>

CIA <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/fk.html>

