



The Role of the Falkland Islands in UK–Argentina Relations

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ABSTRACT

The Falkland Islands, situated in the South Atlantic Ocean, have both claimed and continuously shaped the complex and often fraught diplomatic relations between the United Kingdom and Argentina. A contested British Overseas Territory, the islands are referred to in Argentina as Islas Malvinas, representing colonial relics and wounds of national identity. This paper looks at the Falkland Islands' diverse importance in UK–Argentina relations concerning history, geopolitics, legality, economy, and culture. Starting with colonial sovereignty claims, the paper incorporates the evolution of the dispute with the 1982 Falklands War, which resulted in enduring and militarized bilateral trauma and transformed diplomatic positions, advance mandates from rigid posturing to pseudo-relatives engagement frameworks. This body of work analyses the conflict under international law focusing on the tensions created by the principle of territorial integrity put forth by Argentina and the UK's position on the right to self-determination, surrounding the 2013 referendum where 99.8% of Falklanders voted to remain British. This economic aspect looks at the dispute regarding the exploitation of fisheries and prospective oil reserves, its strategic value in British defense policy, and Argentina's use of regional alliances alongside soft power and sanctions. Additionally, it looks at the socio-symbolic dimension of the Falklands conflict in the two countries' national psyche, the impact of Brexit on British foreign policy toward the South Atlantic, and the changing role of other parties like the UN or Latin American regional groups. The paper claims that, despite the recurring disputes, this conflict is best understood as one that has entered a "frozen conflict" state; there is no real possibility of confrontation, but neither is there any willingness to resolve it unless some significant political change occurs. From this standpoint, the Falkland Islands are not just a dispute territory. Instead, they serve as a benchmark for the competing narratives of grave concerns of territory, sovereignty, post-colonial identity, diplomacy, and regional security.

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1. Introduction

Disputes about the Falkland Islands ("Islas Malvinas" in Spanish and "Falkland Islands" in English) is one of the most enduring and deeply felt territorial disputes of modern times. The archipelago is located in the South Atlantic Ocean, about 480 kilometers from Argentina's south eastern coastline. Clearly, the political and nationalistic issues concerning the Islands surpass their demographic and geographic size and population. To put it in simple words, the Falkland Islands conflict entails relics of bygone colonial struggle, pride, and nationalism coupled with the diametrically opposite views of international law, self-determination, and sovereignty. Since 1833, the United Kingdom has considered the Falkland Islands as a British Overseas Territory, having removed an Argentine military presence stationed there. Argentina, on the other hand,

maintains a perennial claim on it, considering the islands a vital part of their territory that was unlawfully seized by a colonial aggressor. The situation escalated in 1982 when Argentina occupied the islands, leading to a short but fierce war which Britain won overwhelmingly, regaining control of the Islands once more. The war claimed more than 900 casualties and significantly altered the political landscape of both nations; it ended Argentina's military dictatorship while cementing the political power of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

Britain has never unilaterally relinquished authority over the islands after the war and the ongoing period of tensions have become a focal point of UK-Argentina relations, influencing foreign policy, trade diplomacy, regional relations, and even military posturing. Although the risk of armed conflict has diminished, the Falklands remain a contentious issue tackled through international relations, national rivalries, and economic strategies. Disputes over oil and fishing borders, as well as Argentina's efforts to gain support from neighboring countries, serve as periodic reminders of the lingering tensions. This research paper analyzes the far-reaching impacts the Falkland Islands have on the bilateral relations of the UK and Argentina. In particular, it looks into the historical causes of the conflict, both countries' legal and diplomatic arguments, the economic and strategic importance of the islands, and the changing attitudes of the islanders. It also looks into the larger context both regionally and globally, such as Latin American alliances, the role of the UN, and shifts in terrorism policy and strategy from the UK post-Brexit. This work is grounded in the primary argument that the Falkland Islands conflict is beyond a dispute of ownership. It is an example of a post-colonial identity crisis that is wrapped in the question of why legitimacy and interest shapes – geopolitically. From the analysis, it is very obvious that the people residing in the island wish to remain British. However, achieving any form of long-term diplomatic agreement free from entrenched narratives and devoid of an agreeable dialogue framework remains opaque. This paper, through multi-faceted analysis, hopes to shed light on the realities that make the Falkland Islands a recurring issue in relations with the UK and Argentina.

The Falklands are still claimed by Britain, while Argentina continues to refer to them as the Malvinas Islands. These regions still serve as sources of conflict between the two countries even to this date. Back in the 1980s, Argentina did make attempts to seize these territories, but we're met with strong resistance from Britain. This situation highlights both Britain and Argentina's geostrategic ambitions that are colonially motivated, as neither country seems to have made an effort to understand the locals' interests. And, while both contenders provide contradictory perspectives on the history of these places, it must be noted that Argentina's reasoning address more points of concern regarding humanity. The main point of concern for Britain is focused on so-called "historical injustices" which England has committed against previously colonized nations. While Argentina's gripe is simply put the blatant act of British imperialism. The escalation of the disagreement began in 1982 when the Argentine military junta invaded the islands, commencing a 74-day war with the United Kingdom. This dispute led to the death of 649 Argentine soldiers and 255 British soldiers and was a cornerstone event in the contemporary history of both nations. The United Kingdom celebrated the victory as it reaffirmed global military dominance, as well as additional support to the United Kingdom's Thatcher government. On the other hand, Argentina's defeat deteriorated the country's military dictatorship and transitioned the nation towards democracy, while reinforcing the Malvinas as a cause uniting the country in defiance of foreign oppression (Hughes, 1983).

Alternately, the dispute has been attended to by diplomacy instead of fighting after the war. The United Kingdom has further advanced the islands' infrastructure, economy, and military capabilities. At the same time, the local administration under British rule has exercised increasing self-governance. On the other hand, Argentina has attempted to diplomatically disconnect the islands, seeking support from other Latin American and Global South countries, using regional blocs such as Mercosur and CELAC, and advancing its cause in various international judicial bodies. As a result, the dispute has transformed from a bilateral colonial grievance to a multilateral geopolitical contest with diverse actors and interests. The focus of the dispute has shifted to the sovereign right of self-determination and the legal sovereignty. The UK argues that the retention of power is justifiable according to the United Nations Charter, especially the self-determination—almost entirely exercised by the Falkland Islanders in 2013 when they voted to stay part of the UK, which was with 99.8%. Argentina maintains a claim that sovereign territorial integrity has a greater value and stronger purpose than self-determination, especially since it

claims the population of the islands is an implanted settler colonial community instead of indigenous people who are entitled to have such rights under international law. From an economic standpoint, the Falkland Islands have become more significant due to their rich natural resources, especially concerning fishing and possible offshore oil reserves. These resources have created both possibilities for the islands and new areas for contention. Argentina has sanctioned other countries that utilize what they consider a disputed area and contested the legitimacy of resource exploitation within those boundaries. Simultaneously, the UK persists in exercising dominion over the islands' economy and their management.

This research analyzes the growing and complicated role of the Falkland Islands in the relationship between the United Kingdom and Argentina. It employs multiple disciplines to analyze the existing dispute, incorporating its history, the relevant legal and diplomatic structures, the economic and strategic importance of the islands, the identity and attitudes of the islanders, and the conflict's international relations dimensions. In this regard, it tries to explain how a small, remote, and insular archipelago captures global interest and provokes actions and policy responses from two countries that revolve around those islands. In this context, the paper defends the assertion that the Falklands problem is not only a post-colonial claim rooted in imperialism; it is an active dispute saturated by national identity dimensions, international norms, regional integration, or post-colonial control. Therefore, it continues to be a deep-seated yet unresolved aspect of the United Kingdom and Argentina relationship, which stands no chance of resolving within reasonable time and without strenuous and sustained effort to dialogue, reach some compromise, and trust-building measure.

2. Historical Background

The origin of the dispute over the Falkland Islands (or *Islas Malvinas*) can be traced back to the period of European colonial expansion, which was accompanied by the need for control over maritime routes, dominant empires at the time, and self-determination. Understanding the origin and development of the sovereignty claims made by the United Kingdom and Argentina is fundamental for understanding the current state of affairs regarding the conflict.

2.1. Early European Discovery and Occupation (16th–18th Century)

The Falkland Islands were sighted for the first time by several European navigators, such as English John Davis in 1592 and Dutch Sebald De Weert in 1600. However, formal claims and settlements didn't start to surface until the late 17th and early 18th century. The first permanent settlement was established in 1764 at Port Louis by the French under the command of Louis Antoine de Bougainville. The settlers did not know that the English had already claimed the Islands because in 1765 Captain John Byron set a British outpost at Port Egmont on the Western Islands. In 1767, France surrendered its settlement to Spain who incorporated the islands as part of its colonial Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata. The Spanish administration expelled the British from Port Egmont in 1770, leading to a diplomatic crisis which Britain resolved by returning to the Port. However, by 1774, Britain voluntarily withdrew for economic reasons, but left behind a plaque displaying their claim of sovereignty. Spain retained control of the islands until 1811 when they were forced to withdraw due to the Napoleonic Wars and the rising imperialistic wars of independence in Latin America. At this stage, the islands entered a long period of neglect during which sovereignty was undecided (Beck, 1984).

2.2. The Argentine Claim and British Reoccupation (1820–1833)

After gaining independence from Spain in 1816, Argentina (Then called the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata) became the inheritor to the Spanish claims of territory in the South Atlantic. In 1820, Argentine navy officer David Jewett made a formal declaration of the islands in favor of Buenos Aires. The Argentine government granted land rights to merchant Luis Vernet in 1828 who established a small settlement and was appointed the islands' governor. In 1831, tensions grew when Vernet captured American fishing ships for illegal sealing. The United States retaliated by dispatching the USS *Lexington*, which destroyed the settlement. In the aftermath, Britain rested its claim and in January 1833 (González, 2009). British forces expelled the remaining Argentine personnel, asserting control over the islands permanently. Meantime, Britain recalled the need of the islands during the war and began telephoning their strategic value as a base for further incursions into South America. This event constitutes an important pivot in the conflict: Argentina has since considered the British step as an unlawful action, while Britain views the 1833 reoccupation as a seamless extension of their presence which was established in 1765.

3. British Rule and Argentine Resistance (1833-1982)

As Britain disputes any form of Argentine sovereignty, the rest of the world perceives continuous British dominion over the Falklands without effective local governance as non-grantable imperialism. The islands developed sheep farming and emerged as strategically useful as a port, particularly during both World Wars. The 20th century brought additional challenges as the self-governing dependants tried to alleviate the wartime infrastructure collapse (Harris, 2000). In 1965, the United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution 2065, which acknowledged the existence of a sovereignty dispute and urged both sides to enter negotiations while seeking a peaceful solution considering the interests, although not the desires, of the Islanders. This was the start of a diplomatic engagement period, as negotiations continued into the late 1970s.

3.1. The 1982 Falklands Conflict

Diplomatic negotiations hit a wall in the early months of 1982. Amid rising domestic tensions and a lackluster economy, Argentina's ruling military junta, headed by General Leopoldo Galtieri, initiated the invasion of the Falkland Islands on April 2, 1982. The operation, dubbed "Operation Rosario," sought to bolster Argentina's claim of sovereignty while galvanizing nationalist fervor south of the Andes. In response, the British government under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, took decisive action and sent a naval task force to reclaim the Islands. British forces succeeded in recapturing the Falklands on June 14, 1982, after 74 days of fighting. The conflict saw the loss of 649 Argentine and 255 British soldiers, deeply shocking both nations. For the UK, it marked yet another period of escalated national pride, while further solidifying their position as a global military superpower. This defeat, however, was more so aligned with the Argentinian peoples' struggle in bringing down the then military dictatorship, leading to the eventual level of democratic governance the country has now (Scalettar, 1991).

5. Diplomatic Standstill and Local Autonomy (1983–Present)

In attempts to win the hearts of the islanders, the Argentinian military government managed to provide the Falklands with a new constitution in 1985, further expanding self-governing powers, with strides made in 2009 with the enhancement of powers of the Legislative Assembly. After the conclusion of UN sponsored conflict, the UK increased its military forces on the Falklands, further developing existing infrastructure by creating the Mount Pleasant airbase. González, along with other diplomatic representatives of Argentina, managed to reestablish diplomatic ties with the UK in 1990, however, the primary conflict of sovereignty remained unresolved. In light of UK governments continuously defending their stance regarding the Self-Determinacy of the inhabitants under the influence of the citizens, the results of the referendum claiming self governance were portrayed as falsified. Nevertheless, the vote of 99.8% in favor of remaining a British Overseas Territory can hardly be denied. Argentina has made attempts to sustain the claim through regional alliances, the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization, and international diplomatic circles. The United Kingdom, for its part, continues to lay claim to the islands and has sustained military and political assistance to the islanders (Dodds, 2012).

5.1. Legal and Diplomatic Perspectives

The controversy regarding the Zhanguo archipelago's sovereignty, known as The Falkland Islands by the British and Las Malvinas by the Argentinians, is one of the most long-standing disputes over a border conflict. Although it originated from historical factors, the conflict is further exacerbated by the participation of international law and diplomacy. The United Kingdom and Argentina have put forth opposing legal arguments supporting their claims to the region and have resorted to a range of diplomatic practices from negotiations to face-off. The core issue involves two fundamental concepts of international law: the right to self-determination and the absolute control over a territory's boundary. These principles, despite both being part of the United Nations Charter, are differently interpreted by each party resulting in a deadlock that remains unresolved in the 21st century.

The United Kingdom's legal claim over the Falkland Islands rests upon three key pillars: historical continuity, effective occupation, and the right of self-determination. Britain asserts sovereignty over the Falkland Islands claiming it was the first to establish a permanent presence on the islands in 1765 with the founding of Port Egmont. The British temporarily withdrew from the islands in 1774, but even then, they left behind a plaque asserting their ongoing sovereignty.

Britain reasserted control over the islands in 1833, which they frame as a restoration of pre-1833 jurisdiction, and an legal act interred bound by international norm of the time. For the past 250 years, the UK has exercised unbroken administrative, political, and legal dominion over the islands. According to Britain, this occupation meets the standards governed under international contested **effectivité**, which states that the undisputed physical occupation and administration of the territory guarantees legal dominion over it. The British claim is strengthened by the self-determination right of the islanders. Self-determination, as defined in Article 1 (2) of the United Nations charter, along with General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV) passed in 1960 regarding Independence Granting, is one of the principles of international law. Britain believes that the Falkland Islanders are a "people" in international law, thus they have the right to determine their political status. This stance was reinforced by the referendum of 2013 in which 99.8% of the electorate who voted chose to retain the status of British Overseas Territory. The UK argues that this democratic assertion of the people from the island supports the claim and shows that any change of sovereignty to Argentina would breach the rights and desire of the islanders (Larrabee, 1989).

On the other hand, Argentina's legal claim is anchored on the doctrine of territorial integrity and succession stemming from Spain's colonial rule. Argentina contends that upon achieving independence in 1816, it automatically inherited all Spanish possessions in the South Atlantic, including the Falkland Islands, under the principle of *uti possidetis juris*. This principle, which during the decolonization period in Latin America underwent a period of widespread support, posits that newly independent nations ought to have control over the administrative borders set up during colonial rule. Spain controlled the islands from 1767 until 1811, and Argentina later asserted control by founding settlements, appointing governors, and issuing land grants. In Argentina's view, the British expulsion of the Argentine administration from the islands in 1833 was both an act of unlawful force and colonial overreach, infringing upon Argentine territory. Argentina also contends that the United Kingdom's exercise of self-determination in this context is inappropriate. It claims that the current population of the Falkland Islands is not an indigenous or colonized people; instead, they are a settler community that was placed there after the Argentine authorities were expelled in 1833. From this view, self-determination is not a right that can be extended to peoples who reside on lands that were seized and occupied. Thus, Argentina maintains that the principle of self-determination, especially in terms of decolonization, must yield to the principle of territorial integrity in this case, citing General Assembly Resolution 2065 (XX) of 1965. This resolution acknowledged a dispute over sovereignty and called on the United Kingdom and Argentina to negotiate a peaceful solution, recognizing "the interests of the inhabitants" without necessarily granting them the right to self-determination (Santos, 2016).

The dispute has diplomatically evolved through distinct phases which include formal negotiation, armed conflict, and stubborn standstill for long durations. Following the UK's acceptance of UN Resolution 2065, the UK and Argentina negotiated across the 1960s and 70s considering ideas such as leaseback agreements and transfers of sovereignty with dominant autonomy (Охошин, 2020). Nonetheless, these negotiations encountered gridlock time and time again, often due to fierce opposition from the Falkland Islanders and ever-shifting political tides in both nations. The situation worsened drastically in 1982 when the Argentine military junta decided to invade the islands, initiating a 74-day war. Britain countered by sending a naval task force and ultimately reasserted control, causing significant diplomatic fallout and deteriorating relations while leading to international condemnation of Argentina.

After the war, Argentina established a democratic government and renewed diplomatic relations with the UK in 1990. Both countries reached an agreement to work together on fishing rights, oil exploration, and air travel, but sovereignty was still an unanswered question. Argentina has continued to advocate for its claim in international and regional forums, including the UN Special Committee on Decolonization, the Organization of American States (OAS), and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). Also, Argentina has presented a case to the UN to declare the Falkland Islands a non-self-governing territory eligible for decolonization. The UK, on the other hand, continues to reassert its claim of sovereignty while stressing the wishes of the islanders to remain British. The Falklands/Malvinas dispute combines both legal and diplomatic elements which demonstrate a primary conflict of interest in countering legal frameworks and national narratives. The United Kingdom focuses on the use of self-determination and effective administration, while Argentina accentuates the sovereign right and

wholeness of the territory. The standstill persists, in part, as both positions are backed by adequate legal arguments. Therefore, resolving the issue becomes nearly impossible through direct negotiations or international arbitration. The United Kingdom and Argentina conflict over core territorial ownership and governance issues. Until these issues are dealt with, the legal and diplomatic dimensions of the dispute will continue to shape and limit the more comprehensive relations between Argentinian and British territories (Franck, 1990).

6. Economic and Strategic Interests

For oil and mineral resources alone, the islands hold significant economic value as Argentina claims sovereignty over the Falkland Islands' natural resources. From a geopolitical perspective, the territory is a cornerstone for offensive and defensive operations against neighboring South America and Brazil. In the aftermath of the conflict, British interests shifted focus toward geopolitical considerations rather than focusing solely on resource extraction. This interconnected conflict shows how Argentine nationalistic policies directly respond to British imperialism seeking territorial annexation. With respect to the claim over the Falkland Islands, the nationalistic deteriorates, expecting luring profits from potential resources like oil and removing British continental outpost in South America which allows dominion over other sovereign countries as well. In the third subsection, while the Southeast coast of the United States hunts whales and exploits mineral resources, these practices pale in comparison to the rapid economic growth experienced after the 1970s. There is also the fact that winters in Britain pull an inverse parallel, making it economically beneficial to sell oil and gas. All of these factors easily lead to significant costs. Therefore, British strategic thinking dictates the selling of oil. Because of strategic location, all of British territory enters the southeast of America, making the islands a necessary focal point.

6.1. Fisheries

The Falklands' exclusive economic zone or EEZ, set up as a result of the 1982 UNCLOS, stretches beyond 200 nautical miles and includes some of the most productive fisheries in the South Atlantic. From the 1980s onwards, the Falkland Islands, under British supervision, began issuing fishing permits to foreign companies, notably Spanish, South Korean, and Taiwanese corporations, for the exploitation of squid and other marine life. These permits have evolved into the predominant revenue stream for the government, constituting more than 60% of the islands' income. Through these sustainable fisheries, the Falkland Islands have per capita turned into one of the richest British Overseas Territories. On the other hand, Argentina considers these fishing activities as an infringement of sovereignty, regarding Britain's unilateral resource exploitation of these waters as an affront. In addition, Buenos Aires has attempted to impose economic restrictions and prevent other countries from dealing with the Falklands, thus reinforcing the overarching sovereignty conflict (Smith, 2001).

6.2. Oil and Gas Exploration

Oil prospecting in the Falklands region started during the 1990s with the North Falkland Basin being drilled out. Various British and foreign companies including Rockhopper Exploration, Desire Petroleum, and Premier Oil have reported finding some amount of natural gas and oil reserves, but the commercial feasibility is hampered because of extreme weather, global oil price fluctuations, and logistical difficulties. If the energy boom comes to pass, it could provide economic independence and a significant increase in Falkland Islands and UK's economic power. Argentina however, regards oil exploration in the disputed section as illegally exploiting natural resources in a region that is marked with occupation. Buenos Aires has enacted new laws to outlaw unauthorized hydrocarbon exploration around the islands and has stated that they will sue the companies that participate. Additionally, Argentina has campaigned against British-Cannadian initiatives aimed at acquiring financial resources due to geopolitical disputes over the region's offshore assets (Thatcher, 1993).

6.3. Strategic and Military Significance

The Falkland Islands also have additional strategic importance regionally for the United Kingdom's international military and geopolitical operations, particularly in the South Atlantic and Antarctic regions.

6.4. Geostrategic Location

Somewhere close to the southeastern shoreline of Argentina, lie the Falkland Islands, serving as pivotal nautical crossing points. They also give passage to the Southern Ocean, Antarctic Peninsula, and even Antarctica itself, all of which lie in the south. These islands greatly assist in facilitating myriad scientific expeditions, naval operations, and aerial patrols around the extensive South Atlantic region. Additionally, as the global interest surrounding Antarctica increases, whether it's for scientific purposes or resource exploitation, the islands become even more strategically important. Mount Pleasant Complex, an airbase Britain established after the 1982 Falklands War, allows Argentina to 'maintain' a permanent military presence. This airbase also possesses a long-range aircraft reception runway, radar, and a military garrison housing close to twelve hundred personnel (Gert, 2015). The United Kingdom perceives the airbase as fundamental for active deterrence, silencing in-land aggression, regional peace, and the safeguarding of overseas citizens. While that mark serves as a military build-up line, on the other side, Argentina views that stark increase as an overt sign of colonial annexation. They have petitioned the United Nations repeatedly to urge Britain to decrease their militarization of the zone, and the remainder of the world.

6.5. The Antarctic Connection

The Falklands have been politically associated with the British Antarctic Territory, which overlaps with Argentina's own Antarctic claim. Both countries have ambitions that add a strategic layer to their South Atlantic interest. While the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS) freezes all claims on the continent, peace, and scientific cooperation between countries is fostered. Control over the Falklands strengthens UK logistical support and legal positioning in Antarctic affairs, especially if the treaty system collapses or is restructured in the future (Crawford & Baetens, 2023).

7. Economic and Diplomatic Leverage

Both Argentina and the United Kingdom have used the Falklands dispute to make bolder regional and international claims. For Britain, support for the Falklands is emblematic of self-determination while simultaneously maintaining a British global image. This discourse also sustains relations with the Commonwealth, NATO, and their role in the South Atlantic, a region with growing economic and environmental significance. For Argentina, the Falklands issue is a unifying cause that transcends political lines. It is persistently framed amongst Latin American and Global south countries as a matter of foreign policy geared towards garnering international support. Argentina's government has always maintained the countries stance on the dispute being one of decolonization rather than bilateral conflict to ensure the support of MERCOSUR, CELAC, and the UN Special Committee on Decolonization. The disputed territories of the Falkland Islands offer considerable strategic and economic benefits to both the United Kingdom and Argentina. The islands position alongside untapped oil and gas deposits, coupled with the rich fishing grounds surrounding the isle, allows for significant income to be earned by both nations. The polemics are further fueled by the need to sustain firmly entrenched positions as there is no prospect of reaching a commonsense solution to the dispute, especially with high levels of strategic and economic interests at stake (Dodds & Manóvil, 2002).

7.1. Post-War Diplomatic Relations and Recent Events

The Falklands War of 1982 is one of the key milestones in the history of UK- Argentina relations. The war had profound effects on the relationship of both countries and their politics and diplomacy. The UK's victory in the war once again reinforced its control over the islands. However, the war only reaffirmed the contested sovereignty of the islands and did not resolve it. It is safe to say that the two countries have had a mixed diplomatic journey since the war, going back and forth between cooperation and tension. Even after multiple attempts to engage with the opposing side diplomatically, both nations failed to resolve the issue of sovereignty despite the fact it has been the root of several disagreements. After the UK and Argentina fought the Falklands War in 1982, the two nations did not see each other eye-to-eye. With the loss of the war, one must not forget Argentina lost 649 men in the process which painted a bleed of disgrace upon the country. The political, and emotional significance of the islands for Argentina deepened the psyche of the country. Post-war, Argentina had some highly turbulent politics domestically which resulted in the fall of military dictatorship and subsequently a democratic state in 1983 (Gray, 1992).

In spite of the hostilities, the UK understood that restoring diplomatic relations was critical to averting even further deterioration in the bilateral relationship. During the presidency of Carlos Menem in 1989, Argentina reached an agreement with the UK to renew diplomatic relations, marking the beginning of limited improvement in relations. Nevertheless, the question of sovereignty over the Falklands remained untouched, with both countries continuing to hold their positions. In 1990, the UK and Argentina formalized a Joint Declaration that set the foundation for collaboration on fisheries, air travel, scientific research, and acknowledged the conflicting sovereignty claim. Though the agreement still did not solve the contested sovereignty issue, it was a giant step toward normalizing matters. Both nations continued engagement and worked towards stability, despite their profound disagreements on the Falklands, during the period of the 1990s. Argentina, in a bid to consolidate its influence in the region, attempted to strengthen its ties in Latin America through MERCOSUR, using the Falklands issue to bolster regional support. The UK, on the other hand, repeatedly voiced its dedication to the self-determination of the islanders and maintained its sovereignty over the islands. While the diplomatic efforts do not resolve the sovereignty issue, they do provide the foundation from which later negotiations could be launched.

The Falkland Islands became a focal point of fierce economic interest in the early 2000s as tension began surging again. The conflict was intensified by the strategic and economic stakes after significant offshore oil reserves were discovered in the South Atlantic. Concerned about the potential exploitation of these resources by UK companies, Argentina adopted a more aggressive diplomatic position. The exploitation of oil resources in question was being legally challenged, and Argentina made efforts to block exploration. On the other hand, the UK backed the Falkland Islanders' independent resource management by asserting its dominance over the islands. This was a period marked by heightened diplomatic confrontation as Argentina sought to isolate the UK diplomatically in Latin America and on the global stage. Argentina's Falkland's claim moved to a more aggressive approach during Néstor Kirchner's presidency (2003-2007). Both domestically and internationally, Kirchner sought support for Argentina's claim by framing the situation as decolonization. Diplomatically, the United Kingdom maintained its position regarding sovereignty, furthered by emphasizing the islanders' self-determination. Domestically, the Kirchner government also took an aggressive approach towards foreign companies who held Falkland-related interests, actively pressuring them to divest. In contrast, the UK continues to claim the islands and their resources while also maintaining military presence in the area to protect British citizens and interests (Grandpierron, 2022).

In the 2010s, the diplomatic ties between the two nations became further strained, fueled by oil exploration. The UK increased its military presence on the islands with the construction of the Mount Pleasant Complex, an airbase and military base on the islands. These actions, Argentina claimed, were provocative and demonstrated Britain's increased colonial encroachment into the region. The UK was also undermining Argentina's sovereignty over the Falklands, especially as oil exploration significantly increased, led by Argentina's President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. The United States tried to resolve the issue as a dispute among neighbors for the continent, helping Argentina approach other Latin American countries to defend their stance in the Organization of American States (OAS). Regardless, the UK held onto its stance that the issue was strictly bilateral, and needed face-to-face discussions to be resolved. A pivotal event occurred in 2013 when the Falkland Islanders conducted a referendum that sought to establish if they wanted to continue being a British Overseas Territory. The results were overwhelmingly in favor of the British, with 99.8% supporting the decision. Argentina, on the other hand, dismissed the legitimacy of the vote arguing that the islanders were not the original inhabitants, and thus the vote could not determine Argentina's claim to the territory. This vote further fortified the UK's stance on the Falkland Islands issue, while simultaneously reinforcing Argentina's position, which has long sought a resolution under the auspices of the United Nations. The diplomatic dispute continued throughout the decade with Argentina applying some sanctions on businesses that were affiliated with oil exploration in the Falklands. At the same time, Argentina kept bringing up the issue in international discussions, advocating for the UN to take up the matter of sovereignty and for direct talks to happen. The UK, on the other hand, insisted that the question of sovereignty was not negotiable, which was evident by the fact that the islanders overwhelmingly intended to stay British (Valencia, 2014).

In the 2020s, the Falkland Islands conflict remains an issue of diplomatic contention. Britain's newest claim to the region has been oil, gas, and other economic resources of great regional value. Even so, Argentina fights diplomatically in contending British control of the islands as a matter of nationalistic self-determination. Argentina fights to keep its sovereignty intact while Britain continues to overshadow the islanders, purporting military rule while developing local collaboration to further their British interests. This problem has also been exacerbated by the United Kingdom's exit from the EU, marking a shift in tectonic plates deep within British foreign policy. As the UK no longer needs to view emerging EU legislation, policy framework surrounding foreign diplomacy also shifts into focus. British policy now is much more flexible adapting to Britain's undefined interests regarding the Falklands. For the time being Argentinian policy concentrates on winning support from MERCOSUR and Latin American organisations, all the while Britain remains steady. The insulting naivety of the UN continues to serve as a battleground for the contention of both nations whilst failing to take action on the sovereignty debate. It doesn't look like the Falklands dispute will be settled anytime soon. The region continues to be a source of national pride for both claimant countries, and its presence in the region continues to be a reminder of deeper South Atlantic geopolitical rivalries. The increase of British military assets in the area as well as the UK's scramble to control the resources in the Falkland Islands means that the conflict shall continue to remain an important feature of UK-Argentina relations for years to come.

7.2. International And Local Effects of The Dispute Over Falkland Islands

Even after two hundred years, the discord concerning the Falkland Islands retains dire consequences on both local and international stages. While the UK and Argentina continue to duke it out over the sovereignty of the islands, the United Kingdom and Argentina conflict goes well beyond those two nations. The discord shapes relationships within the South American Southern Cone, the wider Latin America, and world politics as it relates to resources, military power, and international law. The importance of the dispute is driven by two factors: the geographical position of the islands in the South Atlantic and the naval resources accessible there. Put simply, the dispute is not solely about the territory – the islanders and Argentina seek to define regional alliances while also controlling the future resources of maritime regions, and shifting military dominance of the South Atlantic.

In Latin America, the Falklands dispute has emerged as a strong emblem for anti-colonial sentiments as well as a matter of core significance to the national identity of Argentina. The British control over the islands is regarded as part of Argentinian heritage and is viewed negatively by many Latin American countries, hence there is significant support towards the claim. Various organizations including Union of Nations South America (UNASUR), MERCOSUR, and Organization of American States (OAS), at one point or another, have shown support toward Argentina's assertion. Through these regional organizations, Argentina has been able to apply diplomatic pressure on the UK by calling upon other states to participate in addressing the sovereignty question. As a prominent leader in the region, Argentina is able to use the dispute as political leverage to unite other Latin American states that wish to become free from the control of European countries. Even though Argentina works hard to gain support from its neighbors, the geopolitical dynamic in the South Atlantic remains sensitive. The presence of the British Royal Navy, and Mount Pleasant Military Base, reinforces the United Kingdom's Falkland Islands military stronghold. This serves as a military advantage and barrier for Argentina at the same time. The UK proactive control of South Atlantic space militarily precludes any new challenges to their sovereignty over the Islands, whilst continually Argentina's regional superpower rivalry concerns. Active collaboration between Argentina and other states, notably Brazil, which has at times sided with Argentina, is completely undermined by the ruthless military competition South Atlantic waters driven by British lack of options to militarily defend Falkland Islands (Milne, 2013).

The region struggles to acquire sufficient economic resources such as fishing industry and possible oil deposits in the Falkland Islands' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Both Argentina and the UK have an interest in the sustainable management of the valuable fish stocks within the waters surrounding the Falkland Islands, and Argentina used to manage the fishing activities in a reasonable manner. Still, Argentina has persistently opposed UK legislation permitting the Falkland Islands to undertake fishing operations, regarding these as further incursions of colonial dominance over Argentine waters. In spite of all this, moreover, the countries have at times come together in joint initiatives aimed at protecting the environment as well as controlled

fisheries, indicating that something can still be done outside the overarching political conflict. These agreements, however, are fragile and almost exclusively dominated by the control of the unresolved sovereignty dispute. Internationally, the conflict over the Falklands Islands captures the friction between the self-determination and territorial integrity doctrines in international law. The United Nations has served as a primary forum for the articulation of the dispute, where Great Britain has continually maintained that the self-determination of the islanders supersedes all else. In 2013, a referendum was held by the Falkland Islanders in which 99.8% of participants voted to remain a British Overseas Territory. The UK argues that the results of the referendum is an expression of the legitimate will of the islanders people and therefore, sovereignty over the islands is not subject to negotiation. In opposition, Argentina cites the principle of territorial integrity, contending that the islands are an integral part of the country's sovereign territory. The government of Argentina has called on the United Nations to negotiate the claim as a decolonization issue and urged the United Kingdom for a resolution. The Decolonization Committee of the UN has intermittently called for both parties to the dispute to meet and negotiate, a demand that has been largely unfulfilled by the UK which continues to assert that Falklands is a United Kingdom territory. The finding of large oil reserves in the waters around the Falkland Islands has accelerated the dispute's argument on a global level restating economic motives. The United Kingdom has aided region oil exploration activities, and British firms have been actively involved in drilling within the Falklands' exclusive economic zone (EEZ). April 2023. República Argentina. Log in to Opencorporates As of EO 47 Argentina no longer recognizes the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands on anything but the territory it invaded. Controversies within these borders The Falklands represents not only a claim of territorial integrity but an oil and gas claim as well, which can greatly improve his economy. In contrast, Argentina seeks to control the resources within the Falklands' EEZ for economic reasons, further reinforcing their claim over the islands to sustain dominion over these essential resources.

The dispute extends globally and relates to trade and investment on an international scale. Companies in the UK engaging in activities pertaining to the Falkland Islands face potential legal and economic repercussions from Argentina, which has enacted sanctions on the companies operating in the region. This situation not only hinders the businesses directly focused on natural resource exploration, but also hampers international companies seeking to invest in the region. The conflict concerning the Falkland Islands highlights the dangers resource rich regions face due to territorial disputes and their impact on international business. In the divergence international politics, the dispute over the Falklands affects the UK's relations with Latin America. While Argentina has tried to use regional organizations for the purpose of diplomatic isolation of UK, UK has tried to maintain strong bilateral relations with Latin America based on trade, cooperation, and respect for sovereignty. Besides, the dispute has affected the UK's relations with other global powers too, concerning its foreign policy after Brexit. After UK's departure from European Union, its diplomatic maneuvering has been constrained, allowing it to be more flexible with global matters, including Falklands. Still, this has increased tensions for Argentina, as the country continues to push to internationally endorse its claim (Waibel, Michael. 2020). Historically, the United States has remained a close ally of the UK. The United States, along with the UK, have tried to avoid the conflict growing into something larger. Both countries still work to ensure that the dispute does not arise into a broader conflict. The United States has tempered support for the UK's claim of sovereignty due to focusing more on regional stability. It remains to be seen how the rise of China and Russia will affect the balance of the Falklands global geopolitics. The emergence of China and Russia as new global powers will change the way the Falklands dispute is viewed. The US and UK still focus on trying to avoid a serious conflict, but both would prefer a resolution on the issue before something serious arises. In summary, the Falkland Islands dispute is more than a bilateral issue between the UK and Argentina; it carries regional and global dimensions. The dispute is particularly acute in Latin America which views it as a fight against neocolonialism, and affects global law, resource appropriation, and international relations. The dispute will perpetually affect the balance of power in South Atlantic area, framing the United Kingdom's and Argentina's diplomatic and economic relations for a long time to come. Even with the most fundamental of obstacles, the management of contested issues such as the environment and resources can foster diplomatic cooperation. Yet, the question of sovereignty remains a deeply divided chasm, suggesting that the Falkland dispute will continue to be a dominating force in United Kingdom-Argentina relations as well as in international relations.

8. Opportunities for the Resolution of the Falkland Islands Dispute

The dispute concerning the Falkland Islands continues to be controversial. Both the United Kingdom and Argentina have taken firm and opposing stances regarding the issue. There remains the possibility of a couple of solutions, but there is a lot of work yet to be done. In particular, resolving this issue will need a change in the politics of the UK and Argentina, other countries' diplomatic policies, economic circumstances, and even the views of the Falkland Islanders themselves.

8.1. Diplomatic Intervention & Multinational Treaties

Finding a resolution using diplomacy could take the form of negotiations where both the UK and Argentina speak to each other directly, perhaps with the help of foreign mediators. The United Nations has, for a long time, encouraged both opposing nations to have some form of discussions with each other, which has mostly been ignored due to the islanders being against any proposition to change their status. Contending the sovereignty of the Falklands is considered greatly undesirable from the British side due to the strong sentiment of the islanders wanting to stay British. For Argentina though, any discussion around the territory would mean the loss of their national pride and would need to be framed in a way that Argentina's long-term desire to assert control over the islands is respected. From time to time the UN's Decolonization Committee has gone as far as directly asking the opposing parties to devise a form of conclusion and negotiate with one another (Mársico, 2024). Although the UK is adamant on its stance, Argentina has its own set of interpretations for international laws on territorial control and self governance. As far as self governance takes place on the Falkland Islands, the UK prefers the wishes of the islanders, who have shown time and again, their preference to remain under British rule. Argentina, on the other hand, maintains that the Falklands are part of Argentine territory. These differing legal norms poses an even greater challenge in coming to an agreement between two nations through standard diplomatic means. A change in leadership in either country could help alter the willingness of the two parties to reach a mutually advantageous deal. In the more distant future, however, policies targeted towards economic recovery might provide a boost in serious diplomatic engagement. If international relations with Argentina shift, the change could prove useful for the UK. Both countries have domestic hurdles to cross, aggravated by the economic and political climate, and fostering warmer relations through counterproductive policies would be a step in the right direction.

8.2. Resource Management and Economic Policies

The massive natural reserves encircling the Falkland Islands could prove useful as far as resource-sharing agreements come into play, promising standard guidelines with no ambiguity to reduce overlapping jurisdiction. The recent finding of oil and natural gas reserves in the Falklands' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) comes as a financial benefit for both the UK and Argentina to collaborate resourcefully. Britain's exploration activities in the region have been a longstanding dispute with Argentina, but if both parties reach an agreement with a framework of joint resource management, or at the very least a shared economic zone, it may serve to ease conflict and encourage cooperation. Such geopolitical arrangements are not unprecedented as other parts of the world such as the Arctic and the South China Sea have also witnessed country coalitions that allow shared access to these contested maritime resources. For resource-sharing agreements to actualize however, conflicting parties would need to have trust in each other's dedication to the agreement created, which in this case is lacking for the Falklands dispute (Berman, 2012). Even more so, any agreement causing change towards economic cooperation will have to settle with the dominant dispute of sovereignty – which serves as an unresolved issue. The rights and sentiments of the Falkland Islanders in such a case are also incredibly important, as any economic deals that are made concerning their territory should include their voice in decision-making.

8.3. Incremental Approaches and Confidence-Building Measures

While the key conflict of sovereignty is unlikely to shift in the near future, incremental methods can be taken to lessen tensions and foster improved relations between the UK and Argentina. Confidence-building measures, like increasing cooperation in maritime security, protecting the environment, and managing fisheries, could help both countries show goodwill and lower the chances of conflict. One example with a more pragmatic view was the agreement between the UK and Argentina in 1999 on the cooperative management of fisheries, which permitted both countries to work together on fish stock management in the South Atlantic. Even though the agreement had problems, it showed that compromise-based, cooperation- with-issues-diverged integration is possible within broad territorial conflict. This could be extended to

other areas, such as cooperative scientific research, environmental protection, and prevention of illegal fishing in the area. Such actions would be beneficial to both parties and could help reasons for engagement and further cooperation (Taylor, 2009).

8.4. Public Opinion and The Role of the Islanders

An important element regarding the future outcome of the Falkland Islands dispute centers around the pursuits and opinions of the islanders. The islanders' strong wish to be British has been a significant part of the conflict, and their participation in any possible resolution is very important. The 2013 referendum in which the islanders voted overwhelmingly in favor of remaining a British Overseas Territory showed that no claim to sovereignty over the Falklands can be resolved without their explicit agreement. The political participation of the islanders, who represent them in their local government and in the UK Parliament, will remain an important element in determining the future of the islands. The UK government has stated that the outcome of the referendum is an expression of the electorate's considered will, but other factors such as politically motivated changes or shifts in public opinion in the UK or Argentina may facilitate resolution. The islanders capability in exercising self-determination makes it difficult to reach a compromise on the sovereignty issue, but it also guarantees that any future discussions will involve them as full participants (BBC News 2013).

8.5. Global and Regional Dynamics

Global and regional actors will greatly influence the Falkland Islands conflict. As Latin American countries like Brazil and Chile continue to advocate for Argentinean support, the UK's relationships with these countries might impact the diplomatic chessboard. In the past years, both the UK and Argentina tried to boost their economic and diplomatic relations with other countries near the South Atlantic. However, the Falkland dispute still remains an obstruction to these relationships. On the world stage, world powers like the US and international law will have major impacts shaping the dispute. The US has historically backed the UK's control over the islands, but backed off this stance somewhat in recent years when they started trying to maintain a balance between the UK and Latin American countries (López, 2010). The shifting geopolitical landscape, especially with new powers such as Russia and China, might put more diplomatic pressure on the UK and Argentina to reach an agreement. The conflict between the UK and Argentina regarding the Falkland Islands is complex and challenging. One of the main reasons is the United Kingdom and Argentina's deep-rooted competing claims as well as the greater involvement by the Falkland Islanders. Even though diplomatic engagement along with resource-sharing agreements fosters communications, and confidence-building measures would still require some shifts from both countries, still provide hope to resolve conflicts, ultimately, having both sides resolve is a bit unrealistic. These obstructions are being caused because of the sheer determination of the islanders who want to retain British citizenship. Nevertheless, new solutions regarding Collaboration policies might be possible as political, financial, or international relations change enabling shifts towards an easier solution for Strategic relations in the South Atlantic (Brownlie, 1980).

9. Conclusion

The dispute over the Falkland Islands is perhaps the most sophisticated, multifaceted and enduring of all territorial disputes of modern times. Historically, the conflict between the United Kingdom and Argentina has had legal claims, nationalistic sentiments, and borders which are constantly influenced by the interests of both nations and most importantly, the attitude of the Falkland islanders. For decades, the islanders have persistently claimed self-determination by elected British sovereignty. This preference is now one of the defining characteristics of the dispute – their will has been identified as the central rationale in the Britain's defense of the claim over the islands. In spite of the war Argentina is waging regarding so called 'territorial integrity' and the geopolitics that come into play, the more probable solution appears to be diplomacy, cooperation, as well as gradual steps allowing both nations to sidestep the principle of self-determination. Full resolution of the matter – particularly change of sovereignty – is unlikely to be attained in the foreseeable future. However, continued diplomatic engagement, resource-sharing agreements, and confidence-building measures may enhance the prospects of a more conducive cooperative environment within the region. It seems that the Falkland Islands dispute is not likely to reach a resolution without a major change in the political climate of the UK and Argentina at the same time. Yet, with the passage of time accompanied by changes in international legislation, economic conditions, and diplomatic relations, there might be

opportunities for a compromise solution as long as the islanders' preferences are prioritized. On balance, while the question of sovereignty is still controversial, the islanders' fortitude and their stubbornness to remain British will continue as the linchpin of the dispute and, therefore, will make the potential resolution not as far-fetched as it seems.

The Falkland Islands dispute is a conflict shaped by historical wrongs, legal disputes, and fierce nationalism. At heart, the conflict is about sovereignty, being both a matter of territorial sovereignty and the right of the people living in the islands to determine their political future. The United Kingdom and Argentina have a long history of diplomatic friction due to Argentina's persistent claim to the Falklands and the UK's refusal to budge on the self-determination principle held by the islanders. The islands' British subjects remain resolute in their aspiration to remain British and this unwavering sentiment moves the border of the conflict. This expectation aligns with the Falklands' British and self-identifying voters' overwhelming participation rate in the 2013 referendum with *99.8%* voting in favor of remaining a British Overseas Territory. This result strengthens the Falklanders' position as active participants in determining their future. Furthermore, the fact that the British islanders have consistently asserted their British identity makes any resolution involving a change in sovereignty extremely difficult. Self-determination remains the pillar of international law, and the Falklanders' stance strongly undercuts Argentina's assertion and any arguments that seek to impose a solution devoid of their consent.

From a diplomatic viewpoint, both parties have attempted dialogue over the years, but the issue of sovereignty has remained untouched, with the UK perpetually claiming the Falkland Islanders' interests are paramount. The framework of international law, certainly in regards to the broad international community's invitation for conversation as well as the possibility of multilateral engagement beyond sovereignty disputes, such as in resource or environmental governance, offers some means for easing tension. These initiatives, especially those focused on fisheries management, have been implemented to some extent, but in order to address the sovereignty issue, a balanced approach to practical cooperation will need to be established. The socio-economic dimension of the conflict makes it more challenging. The Falkland Islands are of central importance because of their rich fisheries, possible reserves of oil and natural gas, as well as within the South Atlantic geopolitical context. Although there could be a way forward under economic cooperation and resource-sharing agreements, those still would be bound to the problematic sovereignty question. It seems plausible that over time, an incremental, more sophisticated strategy involving trust-building actions combined with the establishment of shared economic objectives would be more effective in improving the relationship.

The regional and world consequences of the conflict also need to be analyzed. From the Argentine perspective, the Falklands War is an issue of self-esteem and national pride, which means that any settlement will need to deal with this psychological and symbolic dimension. In addition to that, the geopolitical order is no longer static because China and Russia are now active participants in South Atlantic politics. These changes on the international relations front could be sources of increased conflict or provide some basis for dialogue and cooperation. In summary, while the chances for fully resolving the dispute over the Falkland Islands are slim, the focused resolve from both the UK and Argentina indicates that the outcome would require sustained give and take, evolving political frameworks, or novel forms of collaboration that fulfill the stated motives without infringing on the rights of the Falkland Islanders. The islanders voted in a referendum for self-determination and therefore their decision will guide the dispute until a resolution is identified. Adopting such a middle ground which fulfills the islanders' wishes while considering the competing legal claims and the need for economic cooperation might be the best option for long-term peace and stability in the region.

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