

<b>Forum:</b>	Special Conference
<b>Issue:</b>	Ensuring political representation and/or self-determination in overseas territories
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<b>Position:</b>	Deputy Chair

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## Introduction

Commencing with the emergence of civilizations across continents, territorial disputes have always been a major setback for international diplomacy and efficiency. Territorial disputes may be rooted upon many different questions, such as *the allocation of natural resources, the ethnic or religious demography, colonization history, historical imperialistic claims, and even ambiguous treaties* (Global Security, par.1).

When two or more countries claim convergent territories because of aforementioned reasons, international relations are almost always harmed and the area can't be governed properly.

As this year's theme states, water is the fundamental source of life, wealth, and conflict: oceanic expeditions starting in the sixteenth century and gaining its utmost momentum at mid twentieth century is definitely an aspect of water's potency. With oceanic expeditions, countries discovered new continents, new lands, and new islands that they could establish new settlements and use its natural reserves for their mainland. As a result of these imperialistic efforts, these settlements survived to be overseas territories dependent to the country and its mainland. As a matter of fact, water became the source of prosperity for colonizers that departed from their mainland – it yielded them prosperous new lands. On the other hand, as the theme mentions, water once again causes conflict, as these overseas territories are also home to disputes between countries that have claims over the same land.

When two or more countries can't decide to whom the territory belongs to, these overseas territories, mainly islands, coasts of other continents, and archipelago, can't be governed properly because there isn't a clarity on which countries' government will the local government be autonomous to. Hence, in cases of overseas disputes, there are two main problems that bother claimant countries: *political representation of people residing in the land, and self-determination*.

The first question, **political representation**, is a question that addresses the people that reside in the overseas territory; because it's not clear to what country the territory will be autonomous to as well as which legislation will outline the rights and responsibilities of these people. Thus, because these people can't carry an internationally recognized citizenship to a country amidst a dispute, these people don't have comprehensive rights that grant them political representation. In other words, citizens are not granted a say neither in internal matters nor in the solution of the international conflict. In brief, the main challenge is to create a system by which residents of the overseas territories may form parties and raise their voices in the political area without their actions being overruled by any of the claimant countries. On the other hand, the question of **self-determination** is a more general question, which is already mentioned while

explaining the first question. To unfold self-determination, how will the territory be governed, how will the claimant countries reach an accommodation, and what will be the degree of autonomy granted are questions delegates must ask.

The chair report is now going to provide some tangible context for a better grasp of political representation and self-determination in overseas territories by focusing on case studies, namely the case of Falkland Islands and the case of Cyprus.

## Definition of Key Terms

**Political Representation:** According to Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, political representation is the action of citizens taking part in political arena as actors who advocate, speak, and act on the behalf of a specific segment. This way, citizens can act up in internal matters, as well as in the territorial dispute between countries by fighting for the rights of a segment (political representation, par 1.)

**Autonomy:** The power of self-governance and self-determination while being subordinate to another government in external matters; the degree of self-determination can vary (Cambridge dictionary, autonomy).

**Archipelago:** A set of small islands. For instance, Falkland Islands is an archipelago.

**Overseas Territory:** A small territory, island, or archipelago that is subordinate to another state, but is geographically divided from the main land by international seas and oceans.

**Exclusive Economic Zone:** A sea zone stated in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea over which a nation has rights to regarding energy generation, marine prosperities, natural reserves. It spares 200 nautical miles from the coast (UNCLOS, article 57).

## General Overview

Understanding why there are territorial disputes over overseas territories requires a basic comprehension of the colonization era and imperialistic acts. As sociologist Sandra Marker emphasizes, “The source of many of the protracted conflicts lies in past colonial policies, the treatment of indigenous populations, the privileging of some groups over others, the uneven distribution of wealth, local governmental infrastructures, and the formation of non-democratic or non-participatory governmental systems” (par. 1). Western colonial expeditions began when Spain and Portugal discovered new islands and coastal regions in the Americas and North Atlantic Ocean. Until twentieth century, western powers such as Germany, Italy, Great Britain, France, Belgium, Spain and Portugal had colonized many overseas territories and ingeniously utilized their natural reserves. However, some islands were annexed by more than one ethnicity; as a result, multi-ethnic states were born. These territories were consisted of the colonizers and indigenous populations, and resulted in the poor treatment of the latter. For instance, Robertson Lorant concluded from a set of family letters in the colonization era that “American missionary William Alexander, in 1835, established a mission in the Marquesan Islands only to excoriate the reputation of the Teii tribe as

savage and bloodthirsty cannibals (Lorant 107). In times, bloodshed was inevitable, yet, the only conflict wasn't between indigenous people and colonizers, but also between colonizers themselves, and these conflicts extended to twenty first century as countries couldn't negotiate who would lead the overseas territory. The chair report now is going to focus on two of these conflicts, the Falkland Islands Conflict and the Cyprus conflict, for delegates to spot problems in these specific case studies. Please keep in mind that your resolutions will not be based on Falklands and Cyprus only, and these case studies are explained just for you to make generalizations regarding overseas disputes. While writing your resolutions, don't refer to specifics of these conflicts and write your resolutions thinking of political-representation and self-determination amidst overseas disputes as a whole.

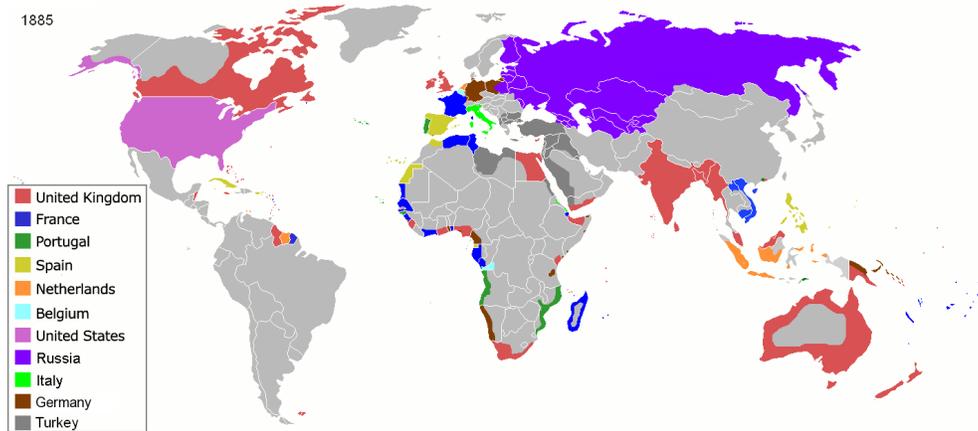


Image 1: At of colonization efforts in 1885, a focus on islands and archipelago

## Falkland Islands

Falkland Islands is an archipelago located on the South-west Atlantic Ocean and it's subject to a long-standing dispute between Argentina and Great Britain. Basically, the Falklands' internal self-government is connected to the overseas department of British government, and Britain is responsible for Falklands' defense and foreign affairs. However, Argentina doesn't recognize Falkland Islands as an overseas territory of Britain, because it says: "it has a right to the islands, which it calls the Malvinas, because it inherited them from the Spanish crown in the early 1800s. It has also based its claim on the islands' proximity to the South American mainland" (BBC, par. 2). As aforementioned, the reason beyond Argentina's claim on Falkland Islands is colonization history and geographical location.

As a matter of fact, the territorial dispute took the form of an unrecognized war, when Argentine forces occupied the islands in 1982, while military action continued for two months. In 2013, a *referendum* took place in the Falklands to ask residents whether Britain should negotiate with Argentina in terms of readjusting the archipelago's sovereignty state. 99.80% of the population voted for Falkland Islands to retain their current political status as an Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom. The referendum was definitely a progressive step that indicated the demographical righteousness of Falkland self-determination under Britain; unfortunately, Argentine didn't recognize this referendum, and the chairman of Argentine Foreign Affairs Committee claimed, "This has no value at all since Argentina rejects the possibility of self-

determination for an implanted population, such as the implanted British population in the Malvinas," (Mercopress). Unfolding this quote, the chairman was trying to point out that Brits illegitimately settled in the Falklands when the territory was under Spanish control; thus, Argentine considers the votes of residents to be illegitimate since they are not the original residents. Argentina is currently holding a campaign which aims to undermine the legitimacy of the referendum and sending diplomats to Caribbean and African countries in order to advocate for the Argentine claim on the Falklands. In summary, though the military conflict is over, the dispute continues unsolved, harming the international diplomacy.



Image 2: Britain and Argentina clashed on the Falkland islands for 72 days

Falkland Islands is just a specific case, yet overseas disputes show great variety. In the Falklands case, the political representation of people was achieved by the referendum because there is an ethnic uniformity; yet, Argentina didn't recognize the political representation of current residents and denied the self-determination power of the islands on whom should the archipelago should belong to. In these cases, delegates must seek for pathways for multilateral cooperation and negotiation between claimant countries. The possible solutions section will provide future insight on this issue.

## Cyprus

On the other hand, there isn't always an ethnic stability on the region; for instance, in an overseas territory of country A, 40% of the population might share ethnic bonds to country B. The percentages may vary, yet the question is how will the local government ensure that people from the other section speak up in internal and external matters? One of the most important examples of this kind of conflict is Cyprus. Basically, the Republic of Cyprus was divided into two local governments when Greek and Turkish islanders disputed over how should the island be governed. When Republic of Cyprus under the Greek control didn't satisfy the need of political representation of Turkish islanders and violence prevailed on both sides, a coup d'état occurred in 1974, which resulted with the invasion of northern Cyprus by Turkey. Turkish islanders have recognized this new territory as Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, a territory

that's not internationally recognized except by Turkey. Though the territory is not internationally recognized, peace has prevailed in the territory.

Basically, this is the second type of conflict that the delegates must consider: overseas territories in which there are ethnic divisions between residents that political representation of some groups is inhibited. More insight will be provided regarding this type of conflicts.

## UN Participation

**UN Committee of 24- Decolonisation Committee:** This committee works in order to grant self-determination and political representation to Colonial Countries and peoples. For instance, this committee has recently passed a resolution calling on Britain to open a negotiation dialogue with Argentina despite the referendum (Fiona Govan, Telegraph).

## Relevant UN Documents

**United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS):** This convention delineates requirements of claiming the benefits of an island or archipelago in terms of internationally recognized criteria. UNCLOS also describes what an exclusive economic zone is, which is fact the legal rationale between many overseas disputes.

**Question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), 27 November 1985 (A/RES/40/21):** This resolution called for a negotiation between Great Britain and Argentina regarding the Falkland Islands. It also asks for reports to be written to UN regarding the progress.

## Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Unfortunately, when there are overseas disputes, claimant countries generally follow a stubborn attitude and ignore UN resolutions, just like Argentina and Turkey ignored some resolutions. However, they have good reasons to ignore such resolutions, because these resolutions generally ignore the legitimate rationale of claimant countries. For instance, Turkey basically has a right to northern Cyprus because its' exclusive economic zone concordant with UNCLOS encompasses that territory. Basically, the previous attempts were unsuccessful because they were subject to inconsistencies. While writing clauses, make sure they take the rationale behind the claims of both of the parties into account.

The chair report is now going to focus on the successful attempts regarding the Falklands and Cyprus conflicts that may be taken as models for overseas territories in general.

## Possible Solutions

As the chair report has already mentioned, we must consider both of the conflicts in which residents are ethnically uniform and divided. Thus, as happened in Falkland Islands, referendums are valuable tools to

detect potential divisions among residents, providing extremely important data that can be used in the solution process.

First of all, if there are multiple ethnicities residing in the territory, delegates must make sure that they are politically represented. Every segment must have a right to open parties, take part in elections, and raise their voices in politics. An international legislation describing these requirements of democracy and political representation is vital; thus, delegates are encouraged to write such legislation that outlines the political rights of segments. Apart from suggesting such legislation, delegates must also make sure to present a mechanism in order to detect corruptions and exploitations of power of a government. For instance, it might be that a government is illegitimately suppressing a segment of the population and suspending their political representation rights. A possible solution is to send a task force who might examine the overseas territory's politics and send monthly reports to UN accentuating possible violations of democracy. This way, disputes between islanders don't grow out to be a war, just like in Cyprus. If the conflict grows out to be a war, delegates might consider suggesting temporary UN mandated buffer zones to cease paramilitary conflict and bloodshed.

On the other hand, delegates must stimulate dialogue between claimant countries regardless of the uniformity of ethnicities, and one way to achieve this is by organizing multi-partitate meetings under the supervision of UN. The foreign minister departments of the claimant countries must participate in these meetings to discuss the legitimacy of each other's claims in relation to historical actions and current conventions. For instance, claims regarding exclusive economic zones, etc. must be considered.

Moreover, research agencies provide insights on both the history of the territory and the current situation; thus, inferences on which party has a rightful claim can be done with the help of these agencies. However, agencies from all parties must be encouraged to participate in order to eliminate bias and encourage transparency.

Last but not least, the legal status of the government must be specified. At this point, chair would also suggest an assistance mechanism between countries who have previously solved overseas disputes and countries who are struggling with such problems currently; this assistance mechanism can help the claimant countries comprehend the compromises they must give for the maximum efficiency.

## **Notes from the Chair**

Dear delegates, congratulations on reaching the end of this chair report! This means that you have gained the background knowledge you will need during the conference; however, further research is highly encouraged. It might be hard to solve territorial disputes between countries and eliminate the negative effects on the rights of citizens; however, please have in mind that delegates' aim is to provide these countries the tools by which they may solve their conflicts. Thus, the possible solutions section provide comprehensive tools you might suggest; furthermore, it is required that delegates come up with their own solutions too. In this regard, knowing your country's policy is essential; thus, please make some research on your country's stance and know if your country has an unsolved overseas conflict. If so, your

delegation would find it beneficial to negotiate with the delegation you are having a dispute with while writing your resolutions.

If you have any questions on the topic or on the conference in general, or if you just want to say hello, you can email me from [okuezg.18@robcol.k12.tr](mailto:okuezg.18@robcol.k12.tr) - I will definitely respond. After you have done your preparations, just relax and get excited for this wonderful experience; I am looking forward to meet all of you. Thanks for investing your time on this research report!

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