



Falkland Islands Issue

For Prelims: Location of Falkland Island and its Neighborhood, Conflict of Falkland Islands.

For mains: Effect of Policies & Politics of Countries on India's Interests, India and its Neighborhood, Conflict of Falkland Islands.

Why in News

Recently, **Britain rejected a statement from China that affirmed it's support for Argentina's claim to the Falkland Islands.**

- Earlier, China and Argentina issued a joint statement that said China **“reaffirms its support for Argentina’s demand for the full exercise of sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands (Falkland Islands),”** using the Argentine name for the territory.



What and Where is Falkland Island?

- Falkland Islands, also called Malvinas Islands or Spanish *Islas Malvinas*, **internally self-governing overseas territory of the United Kingdom** in the South Atlantic Ocean.
- It lies about **300 miles northeast of the southern tip of South America** and a similar distance east of the **Strait of Magellan**.
- The capital and major town is Stanley, on East Falkland, **there are also several scattered small settlements as well as a Royal Air Force base** that is located at Mount Pleasant.
- The two main islands, East Falkland and West Falkland, and about 200 smaller islands. The **government of the Falkland Islands also administers the British overseas territory of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands**, including the Shag and Clerke rocks.

What is the History of the Falkland Islands?

- The **British, in 1765, were the first to settle West Falkland**, but they were **driven off in 1770 by the Spanish**, who had bought out the **French settlement about 1767**.
- The **British outpost** on West Falkland was **restored in 1771** after threat of war, but then the **British withdrew from the island in 1774** for economic reasons, without renouncing their claim to the Falklands.
- Spain maintained a settlement on East Falkland (which it called Soledad Island) until 1811.
- In **1820 the Argentina Government, which had declared its independence from Spain in 1816, proclaimed its sovereignty** over the Falklands.
- In 1831 the **US warship destroyed the Argentine settlement** on East Falkland in reprisal for the arrest of three US ships that had been hunting seals in the area.
- In early **1833, a British force expelled the few remaining Argentine officials** from the island without firing a shot. In 1841, a British civilian lieutenant governor was appointed for the Falklands, and by 1885 a British community of some 1,800 people on the islands was self-supporting.
 - **Argentina regularly protested** Britain's occupation of the islands.
- After **World War II** (1939-45) the issue of sovereignty over the Falkland Islands shifted to the **United Nations (UN)** when, in 1964, the islands' status was debated by the UN committee on decolonization.
- In **1965, the UN General Assembly approved a resolution inviting Britain and Argentina to hold discussions** to find a peaceful solution to the dispute.
- These protracted discussions were still proceeding in February **1982, but in April Argentina's military government invaded the Falklands**.
- This act started the **Falkland Islands War**, which ended 10 weeks later with the **surrender of the Argentine forces at Stanley to British troops who had forcibly reoccupied the islands**.
- Although Britain and Argentina reestablished full diplomatic relations in 1990, **the issue of sovereignty remained a point of contention**.
- In the early 21st century **Britain continued to maintain some 2,000 troops on the islands**.
- In January **2009 a new constitution came into effect that strengthened the Falklands' local democratic government** and reserved for the islanders their right to determine the territory's political status. In a referendum held in March 2013, **islanders voted nearly unanimously to remain a British overseas territory**.

What is the Basis of Different Claims on the Island?

- **Argentina** based its **claim** to the Falklands based on an official document of 1493 modified by the **Treaty of Tordesillas (1494)**, by which Spain and Portugal had divided the New World between themselves; on succession from Spain; on the islands' proximity to South America, and on the need to end a colonial situation.
- **Britain** based its **claim** on its "open, **continuous, effective possession, occupation, and administration**" of the islands since 1833 and its determination to apply to the Falklanders the principle of self-determination as recognized in the United Nations Charter.
 - Britain asserted that, far from ending a colonial situation, Argentine rule and control of the lives of the Falklanders against their wishes would in fact create one.

[Source: IE](#)