



KING ETHELRED'S COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

Established in 978 (ish)

DEPARTMENT OF STRATEGIC GEOGRAPHY, INTERNATIONAL LAW,
CROWN WORKS & APPLIED COMMON SENSE

THE FALKLAND ISLANDS SELF-DETERMINATION, PROXIMITY AND THE LIMITS OF HISTORICAL ENTITLEMENT

*A Crown Works monograph on sovereignty, strategic geography and the inadvisability of
deciding constitutional questions with a ruler*



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UPPER PIDDLINGTON - SEPTEMBER 2026

Fortitudine. Ingenio. Tea and biscuits.

CROWN WORKS MANDATE AND EDITORIAL NOTE

Why an engineering college is poking around in geopolitics

King Ethelred's College of Engineering is fictional. Its professors, committees, charter extracts and most claims concerning biscuits are parody. The history, referendum figures, legal materials and contemporary political events discussed below are intended to be accurate and are sourced. Where the College makes a joke, the joke is not invited to masquerade as evidence.

THE FOUNDING MANDATE - 978 (ISH)

College tradition holds that the Crown charged Ethelred's with advising on engines, bridges, roads, harbours, walls, fortifications, stores, navigation and such other practical matters as may prevent the Realm being taken by surprise before breakfast. No original charter survives. This is convenient for everyone concerned.

The modern College interprets that mandate broadly. The defence of a remote island community is not only a matter for lawyers and diplomats. It is also a problem of runways, ports, radar, fuel, power, communications, shelter, logistics, sustainment and the ability to move large quantities of people and matériel to an inconvenient latitude. In other words, it is exactly the sort of problem an engineering college would eventually wander into, particularly once someone mentions a harbour.

The present monograph therefore sits at the overlap between strategic geography, international law and Crown Works. It asks who should decide the political future of the Falkland Islands, and then - because this is Ethelred's - checks whether the arguments still function when turned around and applied to the person making them.

DEPARTMENTAL METHOD

1. Remove adjectives. 2. Check dates. 3. Separate a legal claim from a patriotic slogan. 4. Apply the proposed rule symmetrically. 5. If the rule produces a British claim on Calais, inspect it again. 6. Put the kettle on.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Professor Sir Peregrine W. Fortescue holds the fictional Regius Chair in Strategic Geography, Crown Works and Applied Common Sense. His research interests include expeditionary logistics, constitutional questions involving small islands, maps whose arrows have been drawn by politicians, and the chronic administrative under-provision of biscuits in forward operating locations.

He is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society in the same sense that King Ethelred's is a university: only within this parody. The letters after his name should not be relied upon when applying for planning permission.

WHY NOT H. A. FOTHERINGHAM?

Mr Fotheringham has already submitted dissertations on Apollo computing and corrugated aircraft skin. The College considered a third undergraduate thesis on South Atlantic sovereignty excessive, even by its own standards. The matter has therefore been escalated to a professor, which is the traditional academic response when nobody wishes to admit that the question belongs to several departments at once.

Fortescue's conclusion is not that Britain possesses an eternal mystical deed to the Islands. It is narrower and more modern: while the Islanders freely choose their present constitutional relationship with the United Kingdom, Britain has a strong political and moral obligation to uphold that choice. If the Islanders choose differently in future, the same principle points the other way.

ABSTRACT

This monograph examines the Falkland Islands sovereignty dispute through four principal categories of argument: historical title, effective administration, geographic proximity and self-determination. The United Nations recognises the existence of a sovereignty dispute and, since General Assembly Resolution 2065 (XX), has called for a peaceful negotiated solution between Argentina and the United Kingdom, taking account of the interests of the population. Argentina places substantial weight on succession from Spanish title, territorial integrity and the events of 1833. The United Kingdom places decisive weight on the Islanders' right to determine their own political status. [1]-[4]

The paper concludes that proximity is weak as an independent source of title. Argentina is the nearest continental state; that fact matters to transport, fisheries, weather systems and sensible neighbourly relations. It does not, by itself, convert kilometres into sovereignty. If it did, the 34 km gap across the Dover Strait would require the Foreign Office to open several extremely awkward files before lunch. The College also tests a deliberately absurd 'Climatic Fitness Doctrine': if similarity of weather counted, Wales would have to brief the Cabinet. It does not count.

The 2013 referendum provides exceptionally strong evidence of present political preference: 1,513 votes to 3, on 92% turnout, favoured retaining British Overseas Territory status. Argentina rejects the referendum's relevance to sovereignty, but it remains difficult to construct a democratic argument for transferring a settled population to a state it has overwhelmingly declined to join. [5]-[7]

Particular attention is paid to the 'implanted population' objection. Applied selectively, it removes political agency from Islanders whose families arrived by migration and settlement. Applied consistently across the Americas, it becomes unusable. Argentina's own demographic history includes Spanish colonisation, mass nineteenth- and twentieth-century immigration, and the incorporation of Indigenous lands in Patagonia. The *reductio* is not a proposal to send modern Argentines to Spain or Italy; it is an illustration of why ancestry is a poor constitutional voting system. [8]-[10]

The central recommendation is therefore conditional: Britain should continue to administer and defend the Islands while that is the freely expressed choice of the Islanders, while remaining open to peaceful cooperation with Argentina. The governing principle is not permanent British possession. It is permanent Islander consent.

ABSTRACT IN ONE LINE

If sovereignty is to be decided by the people who must live under it, the people who live there should probably be invited to the meeting.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For readers whose committee meeting starts in six minutes

Question	Finding
Does Argentina have a serious historical claim?	Yes. It should be presented accurately rather than mocked into weakness.
Does UN Resolution 2065 award the Islands to Argentina?	No. It recognises a dispute and calls for negotiations, taking account of the population's interests.
Does proximity create sovereignty?	No generally accepted rule says that it does. Geography is relevant context, not a title deed.
What did Islanders vote for in 2013?	1,513 to 3 to retain British Overseas Territory status, on 92% turnout.
Are current Argentine measures simply tariffs?	No. The September 2026 measures are sanctions, administrative proceedings and restrictions under Argentine law, not a general customs tariff on British goods.
Is the 2026 tougher line only because Argentina has a poor economy?	Too simple. Economic activity was up 2.7% year-on-year in June 2026; domestic politics are still relevant, including a reported 36.8% approval rating for Milei in August.
What should Britain do?	Maintain and defend the present status while the Islanders choose it; cooperate peacefully where possible; do not trade away their consent.

THE COLLEGE POSITION

Britain's best modern argument is not 'we have had it for a long time'. It is 'the people who live there have repeatedly chosen this relationship'. The former is history; the latter is consent.

CONTENTS

CROWN WORKS MANDATE AND EDITORIAL NOTE	2
ABOUT THE AUTHOR	3
ABSTRACT	4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
CONTENTS	6
NOMENCLATURE AND HOUSE RULES	8
1 INTRODUCTION	9
1.1 Why this question is back	9
1.2 Research question	9
1.3 The College's interest	9
2 HISTORY WITHOUT THE BUNTING	10
2.1 What happened in 1833?	10
3 THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK	11
3.1 Resolution 2065	11
3.2 Self-determination	11
3.3 What law does not provide	11
4 GEOGRAPHY: THE NEAREST-MAINLAND FALLACY	12
4.1 The European reductio	12
4.2 Genetic acclimatisation (rejected, regretfully)	13
5 THE PEOPLE WHO ACTUALLY LIVE THERE	14
5.1 The 2013 referendum	14
6 1982: SOVEREIGNTY BECOMES A LOGISTICS PROBLEM	15
7 THE "IMPLANTED POPULATION" ARGUMENT	16
7.1 The consistency problem	16
8 THE ARGENTINE CASE AT ITS STRONGEST	17
9 THE BRITISH AND ISLANDER CASE AT ITS STRONGEST	18
10 2026: SEA LION, SANCTIONS AND DOMESTIC POLITICS	19
10.1 What Argentina actually announced	19
10.2 Is this just a bad-economy diversion?	19
11 WASHINGTON, TARIFFS AND THE ABSENCE OF A TEA CLAUSE	20
12 WHY DEFENCE OF THE ISLANDS IS A CROWN WORKS PROBLEM	21
13 A CONSISTENCY TEST FOR TERRITORIAL ARGUMENTS	22

14 POLICY RECOMMENDATION	23
14.1 Britain	23
14.2 Argentina	23
14.3 Cooperation	23
15 CONCLUSIONS	24
REFERENCES	25
APPENDIX A CLAIMS AUDIT	26
APPENDIX B SELECTED DEPARTMENTAL NOTES	27
B.1 On biscuits during Operation Corporate	27
B.2 On Argentina's economy	27
B.3 On the United States	27
B.4 On genetic acclimatisation	27
B.5 On what would change the conclusion	27

NOMENCLATURE AND HOUSE RULES

FIG	Falkland Islands Government
GA	United Nations General Assembly
C-24	UN Special Committee on Decolonization
Sea Lion	Oil development north of the Falkland Islands
Kelper	Historic informal nickname for a Falkland Islander; not assumed to be every Islander's preferred term
Crown Works	Entirely fictional King Ethelred's category embracing engineering, fortifications, logistics and any problem involving a harbour
Tea	Hot beverage. Not recognised in international law as a source of title.
Biscuit	Critical morale component. Exact status under the Geneva Conventions remains under review by the Bursar.

TERMINOLOGY

The term Falkland Islands is used throughout. Some official source titles use alternative nomenclature; where unavoidable, that wording is confined to reference titles. This is not a legal argument. It is a house style.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Why this question is back

In early September 2026 President Javier Milei hardened Argentina's policy in response to the Sea Lion oil project. His government announced plans for tougher sanctions, a wider national-security framework and proceedings against companies, shareholders and suppliers connected with hydrocarbon activity around the Islands. The official Argentine position remains that the Islands form part of Argentina and that resource development without Argentine authorisation is unlawful. [11]-[13]

The shift also followed President Donald Trump's statement that the United States was reviewing its traditionally neutral position on the dispute, reportedly in the context of frustration with British support for US-led operations in the Middle East. Milei treated this as a favourable change in the diplomatic weather. Diplomatic weather, like South Atlantic weather, should not be confused with land ownership. [14]-[15]

1.2 Research question

The question is not whether Argentina can produce historical grievances, nor whether Britain can produce old maps. Both can. The useful question is: what rule should govern the political future of a settled, self-governing community when historic title is disputed?

1.3 The College's interest

Remote sovereignty disputes become engineering problems with remarkable speed. An island community requires ports, airfields, power, fresh water, telecoms, meteorology, navigation and supply chains. Defending it requires all of those things to continue working while somebody else is making an energetic effort to stop them. This falls comfortably within the Crown Works mandate, especially after the word 'logistics' appears.

BURSARIAL OBSERVATION

A sovereignty claim that cannot be supplied, administered or defended is academically interesting but operationally incomplete. The Bursar would like this principle extended to departmental budgets.

2 HISTORY WITHOUT THE BUNTING

The history is complicated because the Islands were not a blank square awaiting one uniquely predestined flag. French, British and Spanish settlements all appear in the eighteenth-century story; Britain withdrew its settlement in 1774 while leaving a plaque asserting its claim; Spain continued administration from Buenos Aires until the early nineteenth century; the United Provinces later asserted authority; and Luis Vernet established a settlement before the British reasserted control in 1833. The parties disagree sharply about the legal significance of these episodes. [1]-[4]

The sensible academic response is therefore to distrust any chronology containing only one colour of flag. History can strengthen a claim, but selective history is merely a brochure.

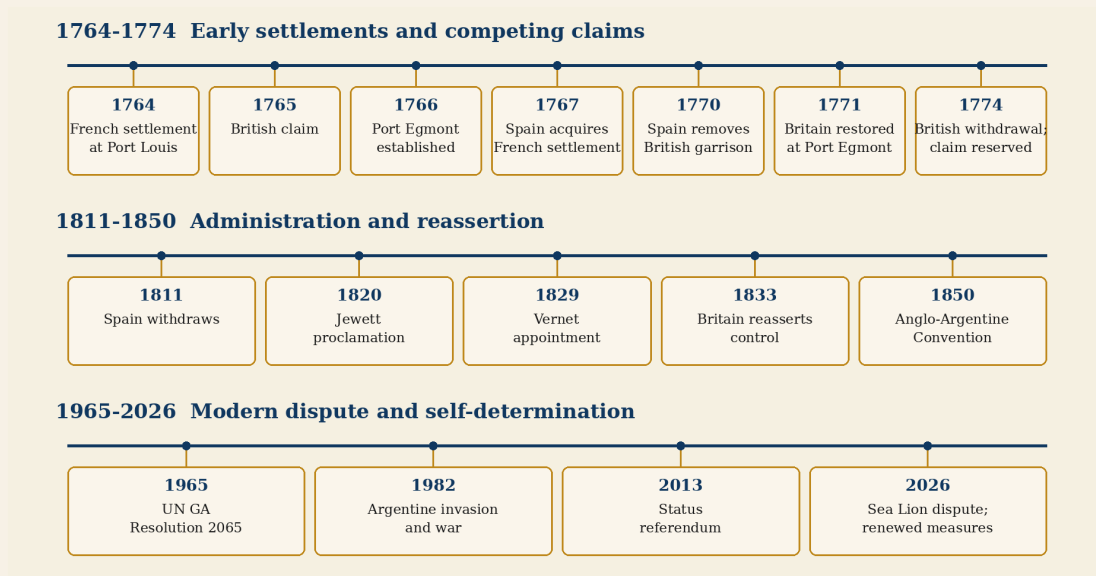


Figure 2.1 - Selected chronology. Dates are useful; arrows implying inevitability have been removed on advice from Applied Common Sense.

2.1 What happened in 1833?

Britain reasserted control in January 1833 and required the Argentine military authorities to leave. The existing civilian population was not simply deported en masse, although the episode displaced Argentine authority and is central to Argentina's grievance. The later British settlement and administration became continuous. The 1833 event matters; it does not, by itself, answer what should happen to the present population nearly two centuries later.

HISTORIAN'S SAFETY NOTICE

If a sentence about 1833 begins with 'It is very simple...', remove the author from the archive room until they calm down.

3 THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Resolution 2065

UN General Assembly Resolution 2065 (XX), adopted in 1965, recognises the existence of a sovereignty dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom and invites the two governments to negotiate a peaceful solution, bearing in mind the UN Charter, decolonisation principles and the interests of the population. It does not award sovereignty to either side. Argentina emphasises the reference to territorial integrity and the wording 'interests' rather than 'wishes'. The UK relies on the wider principle of self-determination in the UN Charter and human-rights covenants. [1]-[4]

3.2 Self-determination

The central British and Islander position is that the people of the Islands constitute a settled political community and must be able to choose their political status. The June 2026 UK statement to the Organization of American States reiterated that no change should occur without Islander consent. [6]

3.3 What law does not provide

There is no magic international-law equation into which one inserts '1833', '480 km' and '99.8%' and receives a legally binding output. The dispute has not been finally adjudicated by a court with compulsory jurisdiction over both parties. The paper therefore distinguishes between historic title claims and a proposed democratic decision rule for the present.

LEGAL ENGINEERING

International law is disappointingly resistant to torque settings. The College has checked.

4 GEOGRAPHY: THE NEAREST-MAINLAND FALLACY

Argentina is the nearest continental state to the Falkland Islands. Chile is also part of the immediate southern South American geography, particularly around Tierra del Fuego. This matters for shipping, air links, weather, fisheries and the obvious desirability of good regional relations. It does not establish a general rule that offshore territory belongs to the nearest mainland.

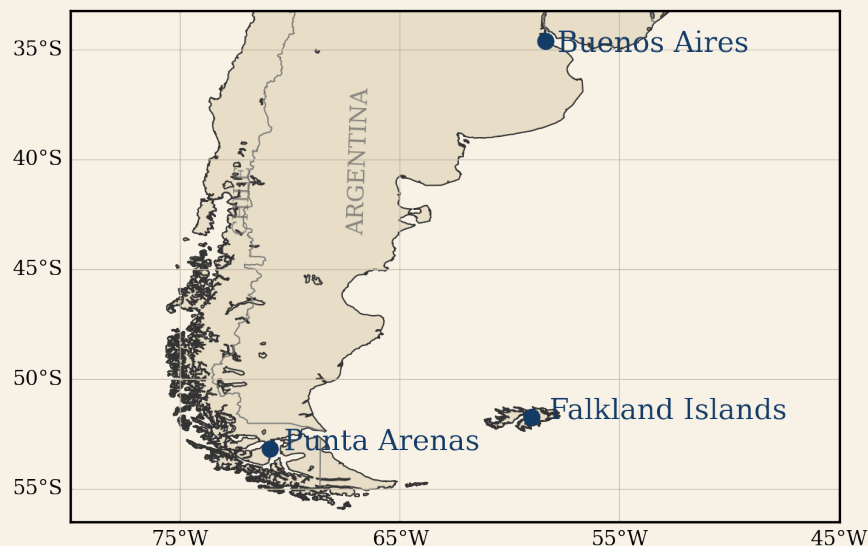


Figure 4.1 - Regional context. Nearest mainland: Argentina. Automatic transfer of sovereignty: not shown because it is not a cartographic feature.

4.1 The European reductio

If proximity were sufficient, Britain would have a disturbingly strong claim to northern France: Dover and Calais are separated by roughly 34 km. The same doctrine could produce creative submissions concerning Belgium, Ireland and Norway. No responsible British government should make those claims, and the College expressly asks the Foreign Office not to cite this paragraph out of context.

THE FORTESCUE RULE

A kilometre is a unit of length, not a deed of title. This conclusion survived peer review and a surprisingly hostile meeting of the Cartography Society.

4.2 Genetic Acclimatisation (rejected, regretfully)

Having been invited to treat physical geography as constitutional evidence, the College considered whether meteorological compatibility should also be admitted. The Falklands have a cool, windy maritime climate. Welsh climate is likewise maritime and is officially characterised by weather that is often cloudy, wet and windy, though generally milder. The resemblance is therefore imperfect but sufficient for satire: both places can turn an innocent walk into an equipment trial with very little notice. [24]-[25]

On this basis one might advance the entirely unserious proposition that the Islands are naturally suited to people culturally conditioned to regard horizontal rain as 'a bit fresh', to carry waterproof clothing in July, and to treat mud not as an obstacle but as a surface specification. A visitor deposited without briefing on an exposed Falkland hillside might reasonably suspect that Aberystwyth had acquired considerably more sheep and misplaced the A487.

The Department briefly examined whether generations of British exposure to hill farming, fell-walking, Dartmoor, Welsh rugby touchlines and caravan holidays in February might have produced a hereditary advantage in cold rain, wet socks and sandwiches eaten behind a stone wall. No scientific evidence for this proposition was found. The Department of Genetics has requested that we stop writing to them.

There is, in any case, an immediate problem for the joke: Argentina extends far into Patagonia, whose inhabitants require no instruction from Britain in the existence of cold, wind or bleak scenery. The Falklands are also drier and generally windier than much of Wales. Climatic resemblance can illuminate geography and infrastructure design; it cannot allocate sovereignty.

THE ETHELRED PRINCIPLE OF METEOROLOGICAL TITLE

If rain, wind, sheep and an unreasonable quantity of mud established sovereignty, Wales would possess a formidable overseas empire. Scotland has already lodged a competing claim.

The purpose of the exercise is the same as the European proximity reductio. Once irrelevant physical characteristics are allowed to determine political title, equally irrelevant characteristics can be invented almost without limit. Distance and rainfall are both excellent things to put on a map. Neither gets a vote.

5 THE PEOPLE WHO ACTUALLY LIVE THERE

The Falkland Islands are a self-governing Overseas Territory with an established local population, elected institutions and a distinct Islander identity. The community has been shaped by migration from many countries over nearly two centuries; some families trace Island ancestry back ten generations. [6]-[7]

5.1 The 2013 referendum

On 10-11 March 2013, Islanders were asked whether they wished the Falkland Islands to retain their political status as an Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom. Of 1,516 valid votes, 1,513 were yes and 3 no; turnout was 92% of the electorate. International observers described the referendum as free and fair. Argentina rejected the referendum's relevance to the sovereignty dispute. [5]-[7]

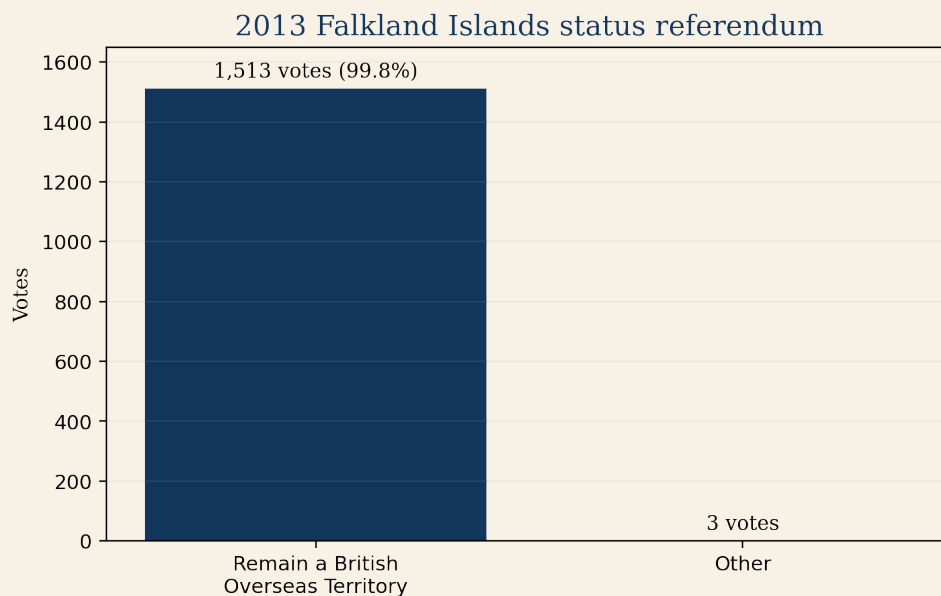


Figure 5.1 - The 2013 referendum result. Statistically subtle it was not.

A referendum does not erase historic arguments. It does something more immediately useful: it tells us what the current population wants. Any proposal to change sovereignty against that preference therefore has to explain why the people most directly affected should be denied the ordinary political agency claimed by populations elsewhere.

DEMOCRATIC DESIGN NOTE

A ballot is not flawless. It is nevertheless generally preferable to a naval chart annotated by someone in another capital.

6 1982: SOVEREIGNTY BECOMES A LOGISTICS PROBLEM

Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands on 2 April 1982. Britain assembled and dispatched a task force within days. The campaign lasted 74 days and cost more than 900 lives across British, Argentine and Islander casualties. The political and moral history matters enormously. For the Crown Works Committee, however, 1982 is also an extraordinary case study in long-range engineering and logistics. [16]-[19]

The lines of communication stretched more than 8,000 miles from the United Kingdom. Ascension Island, roughly halfway, became the essential forward base. Parliament later described Operation Corporate as producing the most intense logistic activity for decades, involving many thousands of tons of stores. Merchant ships were rapidly requisitioned and converted into troop carriers, supply ships and hospital support. [16]-[19]

THE GREAT BISCUIT GAP OF 1982

Official sources quantify ships, aircraft, fuel, stores and distance with admirable seriousness. The College has not located a consolidated return for tea bags or biscuits consumed during Operation Corporate. This is an astonishing archival omission. Until records are declassified, the Department assesses consumption as 'substantial and operationally relevant to morale'.

The point is not frivolous. Expeditionary operations are won or lost on sustainment: fuel, food, water, ammunition, spare parts, engineering support, medical capacity and transport. The task force had to create a supply chain across an ocean while fighting. That is precisely why the defence of the Islands belongs, in part, to an engineering college's traditional remit.

One may therefore regard the 1982 campaign as a very expensive demonstration of the proposition that constitutional questions occasionally arrive accompanied by tankers, runway requirements and a sudden institutional interest in whether the kettle works on 115 volts.

7 THE "IMPLANTED POPULATION" ARGUMENT

Argentina's position has long rejected the Islanders as a separate colonised people entitled to determine sovereignty, treating the population instead as the consequence of British settlement on territory Argentina says was usurped. That argument deserves to be stated accurately before being tested.

7.1 The consistency problem

The difficulty begins when settlement ancestry is turned into a rule that strips living communities of political standing. Argentina itself is a state profoundly shaped by colonisation and later immigration. Its 1914 census recorded 29.9% of the population as foreign-born - the highest proportion in the country's census history. Scholarly demographic work estimates roughly 5.5 million migrants, principally from Spain and Italy, arrived between 1860 and 1950. Argentina's own 2022 census also recorded 1.306 million people - 2.9% of the population in private dwellings - identifying as Indigenous or descendants of Indigenous peoples. [8]-[10]

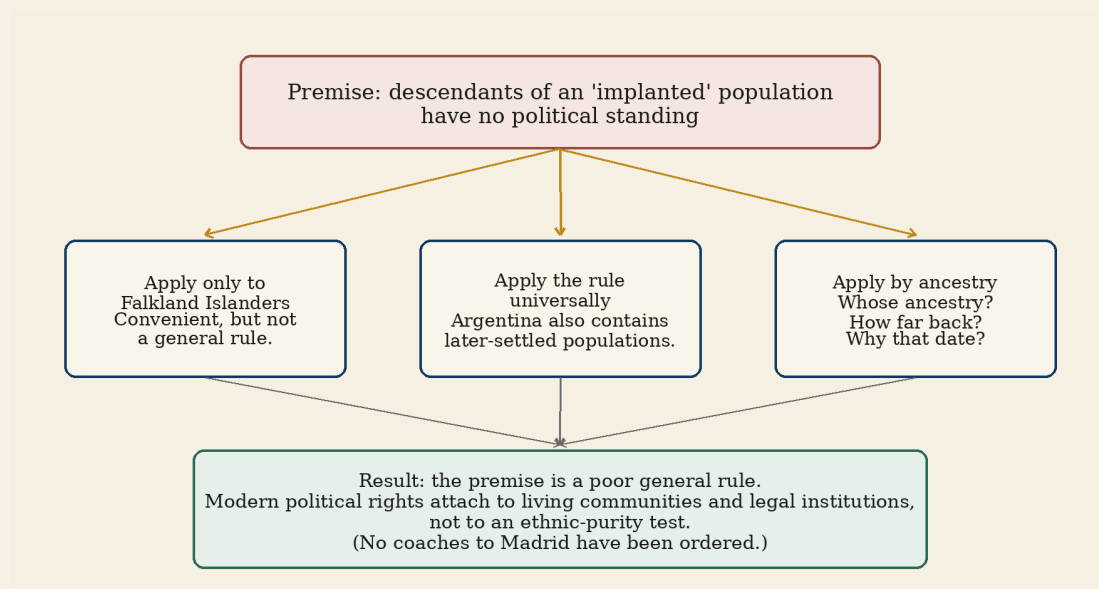


Figure 7.1 - The implanted-population reductio. Apply rules universally before ordering stationery.

If the principle were 'descendants of later settlers lack political rights', consistent application would require a multinational repatriation programme of staggering ugliness: some Argentines to Spain, some to Italy, others elsewhere, while Indigenous communities quite reasonably asked when they had authorised the exercise. The College rejects this outcome on moral, legal and administrative grounds. The Porters' Lodge could not cope with the luggage.

IMPORTANT

This reductio is not an argument that modern Argentines should 'go back' anywhere. It is the opposite: modern political rights should not depend on ancestral purity. A rule too absurd to apply to Buenos Aires is too weak to disenfranchise Stanley.

8 THE ARGENTINE CASE AT ITS STRONGEST

A serious paper should not defeat a straw man and then award itself a medal. Argentina's case is strongest when framed around four propositions.

- Succession: Argentina argues that it inherited Spanish rights to the Islands upon independence.
- 1833: Britain displaced Argentine authority and reasserted control by force, creating what Argentina regards as a continuing colonial situation.
- Territorial integrity: Argentina argues that decolonisation should restore territory it considers severed from the state rather than permit a settler population to dismember it.
- UN process: Resolution 2065 recognises a sovereignty dispute and calls for negotiations between the two states.

These are not frivolous points. They explain why the dispute survives and why much of Latin America has historically supported Argentina's call for negotiations. They also explain why simply shouting '99.8%' does not answer every legal question.

The weakness appears at the final step: even if one grants significant force to Argentina's historical case, it does not automatically follow that a present population may be transferred to Argentine sovereignty without consent. Historical grievance and modern democratic legitimacy are related questions, not identical ones.

STEELMAN RULE

If your opponent's argument sounds idiotic after you summarise it, first check whether the idiocy entered during the summary.

9 THE BRITISH AND ISLANDER CASE AT ITS STRONGEST

The strongest current case for the existing status is not romantic imperial continuity. It is the combination of long effective administration, established self-government, a distinct local community and repeated evidence of Islander preference. The UK position in June 2026 was explicit: no change of status without Islander consent. [6]

Britain also points to its earlier eighteenth-century presence and to the 1850 Convention on the Settlement of Existing Differences with Argentina; Argentina disputes the significance of that treaty for the Falklands claim. Whatever one makes of the historic title debate, almost two centuries of subsequent administration have created real institutions, property relations, families, infrastructure and political expectations that cannot be treated as a removable annotation on an old map.

The moral effect of 1982 is also unavoidable. Argentina attempted to settle the dispute by military invasion under a dictatorship. The invasion did not improve the democratic credibility of the Argentine claim; it did, however, make Islander distrust of rule from Buenos Aires considerably easier to understand.

APPLIED COMMON SENSE

If your long-term objective is to persuade a population to join your country, invading them is a surprisingly poor opening move. Forty-four years later, the customer-relations implications remain visible.

10 2026: SEA LION, SANCTIONS AND DOMESTIC POLITICS

10.1 What Argentina actually announced

On 3-4 September 2026, the Milei administration announced a tougher response to the Sea Lion oil development. Argentina's official communications described new legislation, national-security coordination and sanction proceedings against 45 persons and entities linked to hydrocarbon activity, including companies, shareholders and service providers. Decree 868/2026 also tightened eligibility conditions under Argentine investment and hydrocarbon regimes for parties connected to disputed offshore activity. [11]-[13]

TERMINOLOGY CORRECTION

These measures are better described as sanctions, administrative penalties, ineligibilities and restrictions - not a general tariff on British imports. The College regrets the loss of several excellent tariff jokes but refuses to mislabel a policy merely because tariffs are fashionable.

10.2 Is this just a bad-economy diversion?

There is a plausible domestic-political dimension. Reuters reported Milei's approval at 36.8% in an August poll and noted that the tougher Falklands stance drew support across political lines. But the simple line 'the economy is collapsing, therefore wave the flag' is not supported by the latest activity data: Argentina's economic activity was 2.7% higher year-on-year in June 2026. The country's economic story remains difficult and politically charged, but the College declines to invent a recession to improve a punchline. [20]-[21]

A more defensible observation is that sovereignty offers something rare in Argentine politics: an issue capable of producing broad agreement. Governments everywhere have noticed the utility of such subjects. This is not uniquely Argentine; it is merely human, and therefore available in Westminster as well.

11 WASHINGTON, TARIFFS AND THE ABSENCE OF A TEA CLAUSE

President Trump said in late August 2026 that the United States was reviewing its neutral position on the Falklands dispute. Reuters reported that the review arose in part from US frustration with Britain's limited support for American military operations in the Middle East. Milei subsequently referred to favourable 'winds of change'. [14]-[15]

This matters diplomatically. It does not alter title by itself. A third state's preference cannot convert a contested sovereignty claim into a deed, any more than an unfavourable restaurant review transfers ownership of the kitchen.

THE TEA & BISCUITS QUESTION

The College has found no evidence that President Trump's Falklands policy is motivated by hostility to tea, biscuits, kettles or the proper dunking of a Hobnob. It is nevertheless true that contemporary Washington has shown considerable enthusiasm for tariffs. The Bursar therefore recommends keeping the College biscuit reserve outside any plausible customs classification.

There is a sharper joke available, but accuracy spoils it: Argentina is not simply 'taking advantage of Trump's dislike for tea and biscuits'. It is taking advantage of a potentially more sympathetic US political moment. The difference is less funny and considerably more useful.

The underlying decision rule remains unchanged. If self-determination is valid when Washington approves of it, but invalid when Washington is annoyed with London, then it was never a principle in the first place; it was a weather vane.

12 WHY DEFENCE OF THE ISLANDS IS A CROWN WORKS PROBLEM

The modern defence of a remote territory is an engineering system long before it becomes a battle. The critical questions are prosaic: can aircraft operate, can ships enter, can sensors see, can fuel be stored, can power survive faults, can communications remain redundant, can people be housed, and can spare parts arrive before the component that needs them becomes a museum exhibit?

The British Army describes the post-1982 Falklands garrison as a joint naval, land and air presence and specifically notes the role of Royal Engineers among deployed forces. The UK's June 2026 OAS statement describes current forces as defensive and maintained at the minimum level appropriate for defence. [6][22]

This is precisely the sort of institutional question imagined by the College's fictional founding mandate: harbours, roads, fortifications, stores, navigation and the prevention of strategic inconvenience before breakfast.

CROWN WORKS DESIGN PRINCIPLE

The first rule of defending an island is that everything essential eventually arrives by ship, aircraft, cable or radio. The second rule is that the weather has read the project plan and objects to it.

13 A CONSISTENCY TEST FOR TERRITORIAL ARGUMENTS

The College proposes four tests for any sovereignty argument.

- Symmetry: Would you accept the same rule if it favoured the other side?
- Universality: Does the rule work elsewhere without producing absurd borders?
- Consent: What happens to the people who actually live under the proposed result?
- Peace: Can the claim be pursued without coercion, intimidation or force?

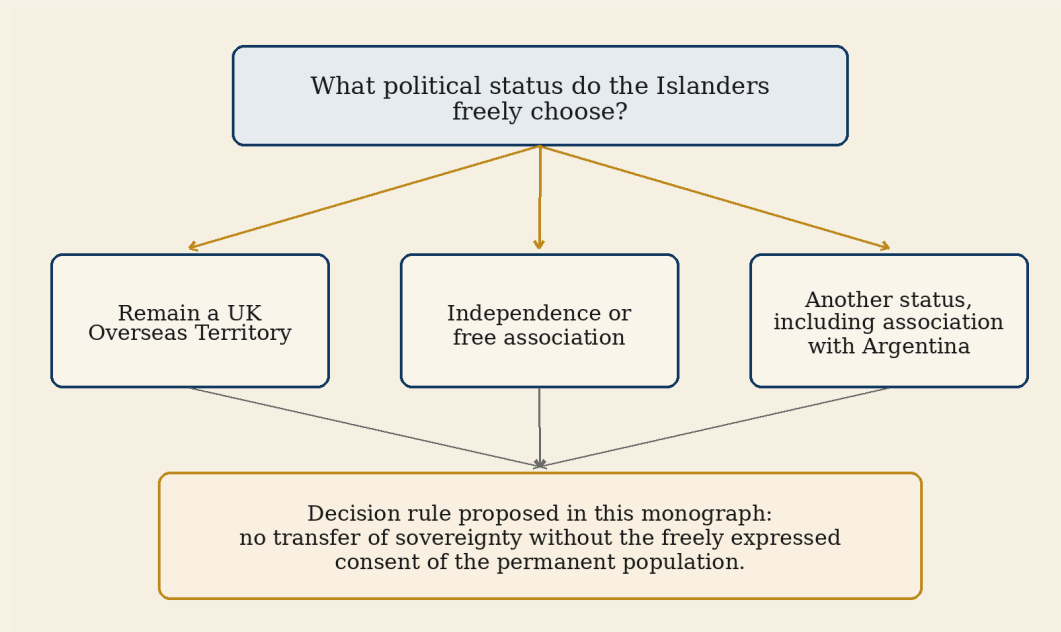


Figure 13.1 - People-first decision rule. Not patented, largely because democracy predates the College.

Under this test, proximity fails universality; ancestry purity fails universality and consent; force fails peace; and a historic title claim, while potentially significant, does not alone answer consent. Self-determination performs better, provided it is applied consistently rather than only when the voters choose one's preferred answer.

14 POLICY RECOMMENDATION

14.1 Britain

Britain should continue to administer and defend the Falkland Islands while the Islanders freely choose that relationship. It should remain explicit that this commitment is conditional on Islander consent, not on an eternal doctrine of British possession. That makes the principle stronger, not weaker.

14.2 Argentina

Argentina should continue to pursue its claim peacefully if it wishes, but the only durable path to a changed status runs through the Islanders, not around them. That means persuasion, cooperation and confidence-building over time rather than economic coercion or denial of local political agency.

14.3 Cooperation

Both sides have practical reasons to cooperate on fisheries, environmental protection, search and rescue, travel and South Atlantic safety. Sovereignty can remain disputed while adults still coordinate useful things. Universities manage this every day with shared printers.

FORTESCUE RECOMMENDATION

If Argentina wishes Islanders one day to choose a different relationship, it should make that relationship attractive enough to be chosen. The ballot box is a slower instrument than a decree, but its results tend to last longer.

15 CONCLUSIONS

The Falkland Islands dispute contains genuine history, genuine legal disagreement and genuine national feeling. It should therefore be treated more seriously than a meme and less reverently than a national myth.

Argentina has a coherent historic argument built around succession, territorial integrity and 1833. Britain and the Islanders have a powerful contemporary argument built around settled institutions, effective administration and self-determination. UN Resolution 2065 confirms that there is a dispute and calls for peaceful negotiations; it does not deliver a title certificate to either party.

Geographic proximity is not enough. If it were, Britain would need a much larger European claims department. Climatic resemblance is not enough either: Wales cannot acquire territory merely by being wet in a familiar way. Ancestral settlement is not enough to disenfranchise a modern community. If it were, the political map of the Americas would require an ethnic audit of grotesque proportions. Military force is not enough. 1982 settled the operational question for that year and deepened Islander hostility to Argentine rule; it did not transform invasion into a democratic argument.

The 2013 referendum is therefore central not because it rewrites eighteenth-century history, but because it answers the question most directly relevant to present governance: what do the people who live there want? They answered with unusual clarity.

FINAL FINDING

Britain should continue to hold and defend the Falkland Islands because the Islanders presently and overwhelmingly choose that constitutional relationship. If they freely choose another future, Britain should respect that too. The principle is Islander consent - not distance, ancestry, oil, diplomatic fashion or the opinion of whichever great power has most recently discovered the South Atlantic.

As for the College's original Crown mandate: the study finds that strategic geography remains inseparable from engineering. A remote island requires law to explain why it may choose, diplomacy to keep the peace, and engineers to ensure the lights, runway and kettle still work while everyone is arguing about it.

The Department therefore closes with the traditional King Ethelred's formulation: fortitudine, ingenio, tea and biscuits. Preferably in that order, although operational conditions may require flexibility.

REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A CLAIMS AUDIT

Claim	Assessment	Reason
"The Islands are Argentine because they are close to Argentina."	Weak alone	Proximity is not a general rule of sovereignty.
"Britons are genetically better adapted to Falkland weather."	Rejected with enthusiasm	No scientific basis. The climatic analogy is a reductio, not biology. Patagonia also exists.
"Resolution 2065 gave the Islands to Argentina."	Incorrect	It recognises a dispute and calls for negotiations.
"The referendum settled historic title."	Too strong	It demonstrates present wishes; Argentina disputes dispositive legal effect.
"Islanders are implanted, so their wishes do not count."	Normatively weak	Applied consistently, the rule destabilises political rights across settler societies.
"The 2026 Argentine measures are tariffs on Britain."	Imprecise	They are sanctions/restrictions and administrative proceedings, not a general customs tariff.
"Milei is doing this because Argentina's economy is collapsing."	Not supported as stated	Recent activity data show growth; domestic political incentives are more defensible.
"Trump dislikes tea and biscuits."	Unverified	No competent source located. The College remains vigilant.
"Britain should keep the Islands whatever Islanders want."	Rejected	The thesis is explicitly conditional on Islander consent.

APPENDIX B SELECTED DEPARTMENTAL NOTES

B.1 On biscuits during Operation Corporate

The College has deliberately not invented a numeric biscuit-consumption figure for 1982. The absence of a figure is the joke. Logistics sources quantify many thousands of tons of stores, fuel constraints, shipping and air movements; a biscuit total has not been identified in the sources consulted. This is how parody can remain accurate without becoming boring.

B.2 On Argentina's economy

The September 2026 sovereignty push coincides with low presidential approval and offers a politically unifying subject. It should not be lazily described as a response to an economy in free fall: June economic activity was reported 2.7% higher than a year earlier. A careful joke is better than an easy falsehood.

B.3 On the United States

The relevant factual development is Trump's statement that the US position was under review, in a wider context of tension with London. The tea-and-biscuits material is intentionally fictional commentary. The College has no evidence of an American anti-custard-cream doctrine, overt or covert.

B.4 On genetic acclimatisation

The 'genetic acclimatisation' passage is deliberately bad science used to demonstrate bad constitutional reasoning. British and Falkland Islanders do not possess a sovereignty gene for mud. Argentina includes cold and windy Patagonia, and the Falklands are not simply Wales moved south. The joke works only because the paper states those facts immediately after making it.

B.5 On what would change the conclusion

If Islanders freely chose independence, association with Argentina, or another lawful status, the thesis's own decision rule would require the UK to respect that choice. This is not a loophole. It is the point.

ARCHIVE STAMP

Reviewed by the Committee on Maps, Borders & Emergency Refreshments. No objections were received before the kettle boiled.