



## House of Commons of the United Kingdom, 1982

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### Committee Description

The House of Commons of the United Kingdom is a publicly elected body consisting of 650 members of Parliament (MPs) that convene in the Palace of Westminster in order to draft legislation, scrutinize the work of the government, and debate current issues of state importance. The House of Commons is one chamber of a two-House system, the other being the House of Lords. The decisions made in one chamber often need to be approved by the other. The political party with the largest number of MPs in the Commons forms the ruling government.

### State-of-the-World Brief, 1982

The world finds itself in the middle of several major conflicts. In the Middle East, the Iran-Iraq War is tilting in favor of Iran. Powerful outside actors, including the United States, the Soviet Union, and the Arab League, are mulling over extending support to prop up a struggling Iraq. In the mountains of Central Asia, the Soviet Union finds itself locked in the Soviet-Afghan War after its invasion in late 1979. As casualties mount, the USSR must determine whether to redouble their efforts, or begin the process of pulling out, admitting defeat in the process. Meanwhile, a cross-Atlantic crisis is brewing as the Argentinian junta sets its sights on the British-occupied Falkland Islands.

At the same time, major changes to the world are occurring beyond the scope of specific conflicts. The 20th century has played host to many changes within the international community – keep in mind that the United Nations was chartered in 1945, only 37 years before this simulation is set to begin! During those 37 years, the size, scope, and number of Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) has continuously expanded.

*This section of the background guide is designed to orient you as to the general state of affairs in the world – what every political mind, no matter the country they represent, is eyeing. Though you likely will not be discussing all of these issues as you debate your specific topics of focus, this background will guide the context and nature of your relationships and communications.*

*Additionally, developments on these issues will be occurring as you write your resolutions – you never know when an international crisis may emerge that requires your immediate attention. Consequently, it is critical that you maintain an awareness of what is contained in this section so that you possess the necessary background to react to and interact with the world around you.*

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## Historical Background

### The Cold War

It is difficult to contextualize the state of world affairs in 1982, nor accurately make the decisions of a national Cabinet member at the time, without first understanding the Cold War.

The Cold War refers to a historical era defined by a decades-long rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union – the world’s two preeminent economic and military superpowers at the time – who each sought global dominance. The conflict was rooted in an ideological split between the two states. While the United States sought to protect and expand democracy and capitalism, the Soviet Union subscribed to a communist economic model coupled with centralized, authoritarian leadership. The USSR saw the United States as Western imperialists whose capitalist system was oppressive and fraught with contradictions. Meanwhile, the United States believed the Soviet Union posed an existential and expansionist threat to its liberal system. In the minds of both, the two could not co-exist. The success or empowerment of one was tantamount to the destruction of the other.

The Cold War represents what many international security scholars refer to as a *bipolar* world order. *Bipolarity* is a system of international order in which two competing powers control global economic, military, and political relations, resulting in other states choosing to ally with one of them.<sup>1</sup> As the United States and Soviet Union made their opposition to each other clear, each sought to expand their sphere of influence to other countries. This divide still structures much of international relations in 1982.

### The Evolution of the International Political Community

The very first Inter-Governmental Organization, or IGO, was the Congress of Vienna from 1814 to 1815 to re-establish the territorial borders of Europe after the defeat of French dictator Napoleon Bonaparte.<sup>2</sup> Since then, different governments have been working together in various organizational capacities to form the institutions of the international political community that guide the world in 1982.

The most well-known IGO is the United Nations, and all the smaller bodies and committees contained within its reach. The Charter of the United Nations was first ratified on October 24, 1945, in the wake of a devastating Second World War. Now, in 1982, the international political system the United Nations created has expanded to sprawling heights.

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<sup>1</sup> [The politics of bipolarity and IPE in contemporary times](#)

<sup>2</sup> [From the Congress of Vienna to Present-Day International Organizations | United Nations](#)

The United Nations contains six primary organs<sup>3</sup>:

1. *The General Assembly*, the UN's main deliberative body, composed of all its Member States, each with one vote;
2. *The Security Council* is directly charged with maintaining international peace and security. It is the only UN organ capable of passing binding resolutions, composed of 15 states, five of whom possess veto power;
3. *The Economic and Social Council* serves as the policy hub for economic and social issues within the UN system;
4. *The Trusteeship Council* provides international supervision for the UN's Trust Territories and primes these Territories for independence;
5. *The International Court of Justice* settles legal disputes between States, give advisory opinions to UN bodies, and serves as the UN's principal judiciary organization;
6. *The Secretariat* carries out the UN's day-to-day administrative work.

Alongside its six organs and six standing committees of the General Assembly, the UN now encompasses fifteen specialized agencies legislating on issues from meteorology to telecommunications. Subsidiary bodies such as the International Atomic Energy Agency and the World Trade Organization have been created to work along the UN's main committees. Post-colonial countries have contributed to a growth in the UN's membership, making the General Assembly a broad forum for smaller countries to have their voices heard. The United Nations has passed an increasing number of treaties on subjects related to disarmament, human rights, and maritime law. All of this growth has increased the scope and influence of the UN's role in the international political community.

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<sup>3</sup> [UN Structure | United Nations](#).

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## Major International Touchpoints

### Iran-Iraq War

One of the most prominent turning points in the history of the Middle East took place in 1979 in the form of the Iranian Revolution. During the Iranian Revolution, the Pahlavi dynasty, led by Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, was overthrown. The Shah's government was replaced by the rule of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who was previously in exile for 14 years. The Iranian people approved a new constitution, instituting the Islamic Republic of Iran as a theocratic republic.

The Iran-Iraq War, in fact, began as a reaction to the Iranian Revolution. Tensions between the two countries had grown throughout the 1970s as they competed for control of the Shatt al-Arab, the waterway formed by the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, the southern end of which forms the border between the two nations.<sup>4</sup> The Iran-Iraq War officially commenced on September 22, 1980, when the Iraqi military launched a two-prong invasion against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The fighting continued, ramping up on both sides. By March of 1981, the Iranian government stated that it would not negotiate with Iraq until its President, Saddam Hussein was overthrown. Meanwhile, the tides of the war began to shift. Iran drove back a large Iraqi offensive on the oil-rich city of Abadan and launched an attack on Iraqi forces in Khuzestan. On January 16, 1982, the Washington Post reported that Iran is now winning the war.

### Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan

The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan on December 24, 1979 – Christmas Eve. The reasons for the invasion are multi-pronged. First, Afghanistan held a location of strategic importance to the Soviet Union. Second, political chaos in Afghanistan created an incentive for the Soviet Union to take control so it could ensure the government was supportive of its goals.

The invasion began with the murder of Prime Minister Hafizullah Amin and the installation of Babrak Karmal as the Soviet's puppet head of government. Soviets sent in ground forces from the north in an attempt to conquer Afghanistan.<sup>5</sup>

The Soviet Union faced more resistance than expected in their attempt to take control of Afghanistan. Outside of their strongholds, Soviet troops faced fierce resistance from the local peoples. Resistance fighters, called *mujahidin*, saw the Soviets controlling Afghanistan as a defilement of Islam as well as of their traditional culture. Soviet troops, on the other hand, did not know the territory, constantly faced surprise attacks, and were not welcomed by local populations.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.history.com/topics/middle-east/iran-iraq-war>

<sup>5</sup> [Soviet Union Invades Afghanistan - HISTORY](#)

The Soviet Union's invasion was opposed by the United States, both publicly and through arms sales to the mujahidin. In the years following the Soviet Union's invasion, Afghanistan quickly became a Cold War battlefield. The United States responded harshly to the invasion, freezing arms talks, cutting wheat sales, and even leading a boycott of the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow.

### **Other Actors to Keep in Mind**

As you navigate the issues listed above, other national Cabinets also seek to advance their country's agenda and positioning in the world order:

- Cabinet of the United States
  - Led by President Ronald Reagan
- Cabinet of the United Kingdom
  - Led by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher
- Cabinet of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
  - Led by President Leonid Brezhnev
- Cabinet of the Islamic State of Iran
  - Led by Ayatollah Khomeini
- Cabinet of the Republic of Iraq
  - Led by President Saddam Hussein

Additionally, the following intergovernmental organizations and national parliaments will be active in real-time decision-making alongside you:

- United Nations Security Council
- League of Arab States
- British House of Commons

### **Final Takeaways**

- The world is constantly in flux. We are on a tipping point of the Cold War ending or gaining renewed strength.
- Though the United States and Soviet Union are still considered economic and military superpowers, other countries are looking to assert their agency on an ever-changing global order.

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## **Topic A: Addressing the domestic economic crisis**

### **Executive Summary.**

The United Kingdom has been in a state of economic turmoil for decades. The world is moving into a new era of political negotiation and financial policy as the post-war order continues to disintegrate. The British government must prioritize its competitiveness on the global scene in addition to the well-being of its citizens in order to stay on track as a world leader.

### **Overview & Background.**

The political and economic climate of the last decade has left the United Kingdom in a vulnerable state. The Bretton Woods system, the continuing development of the European Communities system, and the international turmoil resulting from the Iranian Revolution have all defined and limited the ability of the Labour Party under former Prime Minister James Callaghan to adequately respond to the situation. These factors were all engaging with one of the slowest-growing economies in British history, which formerly enjoyed the fastest rate of economic growth during the Industrial Revolution. With PM Margaret Thatcher now at the helm, the British House of Commons must consider how to move onwards from the Alternative Economic Strategy and its failure to reign in unions as well as address inflation.

As an outgrowth of the economic coordination developed during the Marshall Plan, the Bretton Woods system sought to promote global trade by establishing a fixed rate of exchange between world currencies and the US dollar. The US dollar enjoyed a high valuation after WW2 but was itself linked to gold. Over time, the Bretton Woods system proved to be incompatible with the individual goals of domestic economies that made maintaining equal value between currencies difficult<sup>6</sup>. Its effective collapse in the late 1960s left world currencies adrift on a fiat currency system as opposed to being tied to something of value.

Then, in October of 1973, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, the largest supplier of oil to the world, chose to embargo the United Kingdom, the United States and other partner nations that supported Israel with military aid during the Yom Kippur War<sup>7</sup>. This month-long conflict between Israel and an Egyptian-Syrian coalition was intended to secure the Sinai Peninsula and Golan Heights under Egyptian and Syrian sovereignty respectively. However, Israel mobilized and stopped the Arab coalition advances, supported by a Western airlift of arms; a ceasefire was then negotiated by the United Nations. This ceasefire did not preclude an oil embargo, which quadrupled prices across the West<sup>8</sup>. While the embargo was lifted in March 1974, oil prices remained high throughout the 1970s, fueled by OPEC members'

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<sup>6</sup> [The Great Inflation | Federal Reserve History](#)

<sup>7</sup> [OPEC enacts oil embargo - HISTORY](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Yom Kippur War - HISTORY](#)

decisions to cut oil production. Western nations are collectively developing approaches to alternative energy, but OPEC oil still remains as the primary source of energy for the West.

This oil crisis was compounded by the effects of inflation on British industry, which prompted mass strikes by unions, with a particular emphasis on the coal sector. Unions were protesting against the imposition of a 5% limit on wage increases, instituted by PM James Callaghan to regulate inflation<sup>9</sup>. This period has been popularly nicknamed the “Winter of Discontent”, due to its nature as one of the coldest winters in recent memory combined with the lack of heat and employment.

Overall, the British energy supply has been marked by chaos and instability for nearly a decade. This has had resounding effects on the rest of the economy and the quality of life of its citizens. Inflation is hovering somewhere between 15 to 20 per cent, and unemployment is over three million, an eighth of the entire population<sup>10</sup>.

British citizens today are experiencing an increased pressure of financial consequences due to the recent Iranian Revolution and its shock to the energy market in an already unstable financial system. Unemployment has been on the rise for the last two decades; an inflation rate in the double digits over the last two years following the Winter of Discontent has left Britons in a precarious situation.

Inflation reduces the real value of household worth and savings, holding citizens hostage in personal financial crises. It also increases the costs of everyday household goods and essential necessities, such as groceries, utilities, housing, and education. On the other hand, trading in inflation for high unemployment leaves British citizens without any means to afford said household goods and essential necessities.

### **Past International Action & Precedent.**

The post-war consensus on macroeconomic policy focused on reducing inflation, which undermined full employment. In other words, labor markets in Britain have typically been tight, featuring a high level of government involvement in favor of keeping prices low. The nationalization of industry has been a popular subject of debate in the House of Commons. There are two main lines of argument. First, the government is already involved enough in a regulatory fashion that industries are essentially nationalized due to tax and labor laws. Second, the government should formally take over the management of industry and manage the allocation and investment of capital and profit. Opinions have largely been mixed on whether or not unions should be powerful, with the Conservative and Labour parties divided on their union policy within their ideological areas. These lines of argument produced the Alternative Economic

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<sup>9</sup> [The Winter of Discontent | COVE](#)

<sup>10</sup> [British recessions: a short history](#)

Strategy to the post-war consensus under the Labour Party administration of PM James Callaghan, but was not adopted by the Cabinet<sup>11</sup>.

European economic integration was also not limited to the Bretton Woods system. The European Coal and Steel Community established after World War Two grew to include atomic energy and an economic community, referred to as the European Communities, and now commonly just as the European Community (EC). The United Kingdom avoided membership in the EC, promoting the establishment of a European Free Trade Area instead, which the government viewed as more suitable to its economic interests. As economic instability grew with the collapse of the British Commonwealth, the free-trade area alone proved to be the less desirable option. Thus, in 1973, the United Kingdom also joined the European Community, after having its application vetoed by French president Charles DeGaulle twice in 1961 and 1967. When De Gaulle left office in 1969, his successor Georges Pompidou encouraged the United Kingdom to reapply to the EC for a third time, and this application finally succeeded<sup>12</sup>. The benefits or drawbacks of EC membership are not yet clear, but will likely influence British macroeconomic policy looking forward.

### **Possible Solutions.**

No country has been left untouched by the current inflation crisis, high rates of unemployment, and instability of the energy market. Britain must consider its domestic and international priorities alike when deciding on a future course of action.

There is still latent tension about the nature of Britain's market economy. Domestic economies were highly institutionalized during the war effort and many of those institutions remain in place today in the form of regulations. Whether or not these regulations continue to serve the economic needs of England is debatable.

After World War Two, the British government largely moved away from controlling the money supply as a form of monetary policy. It is possible that now is the time to revisit the money supply as a valuable source of influence on the economy and financial health.

The structure of imports and exports in the United Kingdom leaves much to be desired. The energy crisis demonstrated a British vulnerability to external issues that compound and escalate domestic concerns. Our industries' relationship to domestic demand should be considered thoroughly when evaluating the state of inflation and employment.

Further, high rates of inflation have prompted high borrowing rates by British banks. Borrowing in many cases can provide stability while economies recover in times of crisis, but create debt issues and implications for future growth.

### **Bloc Positions.**

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<sup>11</sup> [IMF crisis forced Labour to consider scrapping Polaris | Politics | The Guardian](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Why did Britain join the EU? A new insight from economic history | CEPR](#)



- Margaret Thatcher, PM and Leader of the Conservative Party
- Michael Foot, Leader of the Opposition (the Labour Party)
- The members of the EC: Germany, France, Italy, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark, Ireland, United Kingdom, Greece<sup>13</sup>

### Questions To Consider.

- Should the British macroeconomic policy prioritize low inflation, low unemployment, or find a way to achieve both?
- Are strong unions essential to the health of the British economy?
- Is international trade something the United Kingdom should value and invest in?
- What policies does your constituency or ministry benefit from?
- What exports or industries should the United Kingdom prioritize most?

### Further Reading.

- The European Monetary System, *National Institute of Economic Review*  
[https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/23874735.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A83a7e258cdf70704dd0111d70a50ecaa&ab\\_segments=&origin=&acceptTC=1](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/23874735.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A83a7e258cdf70704dd0111d70a50ecaa&ab_segments=&origin=&acceptTC=1)
- Accounting for Inflation in Britain, *the British Journal of Sociology*  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/589479>
- Neoliberalism in Britain: From Thatcherism to Cameronism  
<https://www.triple-c.at/index.php/tripleC/article/view/750/795>
- The Neoliberal Age? Britain since the 1970s  
[https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10139347/1/The\\_Neoliberal\\_Age.pdf](https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10139347/1/The_Neoliberal_Age.pdf)

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<sup>13</sup> [1980-89](#)

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## **Topic B: Securing the homeland against external threats**

### **Executive Summary.**

Over the course of the 20th century, Britain and Argentina have engaged in disputes over who has territorial sovereignty over the Falkland Islands. While no major conflict has yet erupted, Argentina's current domestic landscape may contribute to a full occupation of the Falklands in the near future. With considerations of its own interests and its domestic economic issues, the United Kingdom must decide how to prepare and respond to potential Argentine aggression.

### **Overview & Background.**

Territorial integrity, sovereignty, and self-determination have been flashpoint issues since the end of World War 2. Argentina's continued provocative stance on the Falklands may threaten British national security as well as the freedom of the seas and the ability of countries, especially civilian merchants, to ship their goods without risk and additional security expenditures.

Currently in Argentina, the Argentine Anticommunist Alliance (AAA), made up of militias and official Argentine security forces, is tracking and removing Argentines believed to support left-wing politics, particularly Peronism, socialism or the Montoneros movement. Political dissidents are being targeted by these policies. These events proceed from the 1976 coup of the Argentine government by the Military, which opposed Juan Perón and created severe political instability in the country. The AAA originally arose during the tenure of Isabel Perón, despite her attempts to bridge the gap between the Argentine right and left wing, and would depose her. They initiated the National Reorganization Process with the stated goal of creating political cohesion in Argentina.

Popular support for the Argentine government is low, and some commentators theorize that Argentina may opt to occupy the Falkland Islands, a British territory, in order to galvanize Argentine nationalism and improve the functioning of the domestic political landscape. The Falklands have been a Crown colony since 1841, but was possibly first settled by the Spanish on the East Falklands Island. Both the French and the English would also establish colonies on the Islands, much to Spanish chagrin, which created a minor diplomatic crisis in the 18th century. On January 22, 1771, a declaration was signed that supported British claims to the islands. Native-born Falklanders are mostly of British descent, as the islands were uninhabited when they were first colonized. Argentina declared its independence from Spain in 1816, and the United Kingdom recognised its status as a sovereign state without acknowledging the Falkland Islands.

### **Past International Action & Precedent.**

In 1965, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution that called on the United Kingdom and Argentina to resolve the sovereignty question peacefully according to the Charter of the United Nations and the interests of the native Falklanders. Talks took place between

Argentina and British representatives over the next two decades but led to no conclusive results outside of some economic infrastructure development between Argentina and the Falklands.

Both Argentina and Britain have a history of military signaling around the Falklands in the 20th century. The Communications Agreement of 1971, a bilateral agreement that allowed Argentina to provide communications to the Falklands, led to the construction of Argentine military landing strips. Argentina also attempted to cut off the fuel supply to the Falkland in 1976 and refused to continue to fly the British flag while in Falklands waters.

The most contentious Argentine military operation was the attempt to set up a military base on South Thule, one of the Falklands Islands, which prompted the British government under Prime Minister James Callaghan to deploy a naval task force under Operation Journeyman.

Minister of State at the Foreign Office Nicholas Ridley has suggested a transfer of sovereignty to the Falklands via outright transfer or a lease-back system, which would freeze the dispute and allow the Falklanders to take over the administration of talks. Whether or not this is politically feasible remains to be seen.

The 1981 Defense White Paper of the Conservative Government, titled “The UK Defense Programme: The Way Forward”), advocates to reduce defense expenditures and decommission a majority of Royal Navy ships.

### **Possible Solutions**

The material advantages to possession of the Falklands are unclear. 1980 saw the beginning of many oil companies investing into offshore oil exploration off the Falklands. Britain may want to consider investing and supporting such exploration by British companies or multi-national corporations with a significant stake in the British economy.

Britain must seriously consider the possibility of Argentine occupation, as Argentina’s official position is to lay claims to sovereign control of the islands. Britain may want to consider readying its troops and defense landscape to respond to Argentine occupations, or explore diplomatic resolutions in the interim to avoid direct conflict. In order to provide the legal basis for the Falklands being a British territory, it may be wise to explore citizenship options for Falklanders. This would legitimize British maintenance and governance over the overseas territory.

The United States’ position on Argentina has been inconsistent despite being a British ally. The Carter Administration maintained connections with Argentine human rights advocates and cut military aid to Argentina in half. In 1978, the Humphrey-Kennedy Amendment prohibited all military aid to Argentina and voted against or abstained from international financial institutions’ lending policies to Argentina. However, in the last year, the Reagan Administration has met several times with leaders of the Argentine junta, including General Roberto Viola and General

Leopoldo Galtieri. Diplomatic work and conversations with the United States may be necessary to encourage Western solidarity on the Argentine issue.

### **Bloc Positions.**

- Britain and associated territories
  - British domestic parties with interests in the Falklands
- Continental Europe, including France, Spain, and other countries that may not be aligned with Britain on this particular issue
- The United States
- Argentina and other Latinoamerican countries with an anti-communist stance
- The Warsaw Pact, including the Soviet Union and its satellite nations

### **Questions To Consider.**

- Why does Britain have a right to the islands?
- Do the Falklands play a significant role in British power politics?
- What role do the Falklands play in international shipping?
- How will British allies respond in the event of an Argentine occupation?
- Are the Falklands worth the allocation of government resources in times of economic instability in Britain?
- Could intervention inspire domestic unrest?

### **Further Reading.**

- 1981 Defense White Paper:  
<https://c59574e9047e61130f13-3f71d0fe2b653c4f00f32175760e96e7.ssl.cf1.rackcdn.com/991284B4011C44C9AEB423DA04A7D54B.pdf>
- A Brief History of the Falklands War  
<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/brief-history-falklands-war-180976349/>
- The Collapse of British Foreign Policy, *Journal of International Affairs at the Royal Institute of International Affairs*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3569188>

Ahistorical Note: Delegates, please remember that this simulation takes place in 1982 and documents about Operation Condor have not been declassified. You may speculate about US involvement based on historical rumors and decisions made by the Carter Administration as well as Argentina's visits to the Reagan Administration, **but the existence of Operation Condor is not known at this time.**