
EUROPE'S OVERSEAS COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES AS GEOPOLITICAL ASSETS

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European states control several Overseas Countries and Territories around the world that carry strategic, economic, and environmental weight. As great powers challenge the rules-based order, defending them is a geopolitical imperative for Europe.

Together, five European states control thirty Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs), which span the globe from the Arctic to the Antarctic via the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific Oceans and the Mediterranean Sea. They vary widely in size, population, resources, and global relevance. In a time of political, economic, and military turmoil, this article takes stock of these OCTs to document whos who and assess their respective importance on the world stage.

Europes thirty OCTs are linked to their parent countries either as remnants of defunct empires [] the cases of France, the Netherlands, and the UK [] by virtue of pioneering polar expeditions toward the North and South Poles [] the cases of Denmark, France, Norway, and the UK. Some entities are distant witnesses of past times, but several retain a distinct relevance in todays world, such as the British Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia, the British Indian Ocean Territory, Gibraltar, Greenland, New Caledonia, and the two French territories of French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna in the South Pacific.

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