# Keir Starmer faces backlash after China praises Chagos Islands deal with Mauritius



Sir Keir Starmer's recent decision to sign an agreement that transfers sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius has ignited a political firestorm in the UK. The backlash intensified when it was revealed that Chinese officials publicly congratulated Mauritius on this significant move, leading critics to accuse Starmer of spreading misinformation regarding international support for the deal.

Following the signing, Starmer had asserted that countries such as Russia, China, and Iran opposed the agreement, casting their dissent as contrary to the interests of the United Kingdom. In stark contrast, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak defended the sovereignty transfer, positioning it as a crucial step for bolstering national security and garnering support from traditional allies, including the United States. The political stakes rose when China issued a statement of support towards Mauritius, with Huang Shifang, the Chinese ambassador to Mauritius, expressing "massive congratulations" and indicating China's backing of Mauritius in its quest to "safeguard national sovereignty."

The tone of outrage was palpable among the opposition, specifically from the Conservative Party and Reform UK. Kemi Badenoch, leader of the Tories, responded sharply to Starmer’s characterisation of dissenters as sympathetic to hostile powers. She demanded a retraction of his comments, stating on social media that welcoming support from China undermines Starmer’s previous assertions about the deal fostering alliances with the UK’s traditional partners.

James Cartlidge, the shadow defence secretary, escalated the call for an apology, labelling Starmer's comments as "deeply offensive and ill-judged." He emphasised that the opposition had been supportive of the government's military actions in Ukraine and against Iranian-backed entities, highlighting that equating their stance with that of adversarial states was unacceptable.

Critics have raised serious concerns regarding the financial implications of the agreement. Official documentation reveals that the deal is set to cost the UK significantly more than the £3.4 billion initially presented by Starmer. The UK government will pay Mauritius £165 million annually for the first three years, a figure that drops to £120 million annually thereafter, adjusted for inflation. Additionally, there is a commitment to a £1.1 billion fund designed to promote Mauritius’ economic development and assist Chagossians, who were displaced during the establishment of the Diego Garcia military base in the 1970s. Some experts suggest the total cost may balloon to nearly £30 billion when considering inflationary factors.

Starmer, in his defence of the agreement, stated that it had the backing of numerous allies, including NATO and the "Five Eyes" nations, contrasting them sharply with those in opposition like Russia and China. This rhetoric, however, has come under intense scrutiny, especially as China's unequivocal support for Mauritius complicates Starmer's narrative of international solidarity against hostile powers.

As the debate rages on, the political implications of Starmer’s decisions may resonate beyond the immediate situation, potentially reshaping perceptions of leadership within the Labour Party and the broader landscape of UK foreign policy in the Indian Ocean region.

The unfolding discourse highlights not only the intricacies of diplomatic relations but also the potent interplay of national interests, international alliances, and electoral dynamics at play in the UK's geopolitical strategies.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14762207/China-hails-Keir-Starmers-surrender-Chagos-Islands-leave-PM-facing-furious-demands-apologise-peddling-lies-deal.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
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* Paragraph 5 – , ,
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14762207/China-hails-Keir-Starmers-surrender-Chagos-Islands-leave-PM-facing-furious-demands-apologise-peddling-lies-deal.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), ,
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14762207/China-hails-Keir-Starmers-surrender-Chagos-Islands-leave-PM-facing-furious-demands-apologise-peddling-lies-deal.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), ,

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14762207/China-hails-Keir-Starmers-surrender-Chagos-Islands-leave-PM-facing-furious-demands-apologise-peddling-lies-deal.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data