# UK-Mauritius Chagos deal sparks security fears and colonial injustice debate



Britain's recent agreement to transfer sovereignty over the Chagos Islands to Mauritius has ignited intense controversy, particularly due to a clause in the deal that could jeopardise national security. As part of the £30 billion treaty, which ostensibly secures British access to the strategically vital Diego Garcia military base for another 99 years, the UK must inform Mauritius of any military operations initiated from the islands. Critics, including several former military leaders, have condemned this concession as "grotesque" and "dangerous," arguing it risks leaking sensitive information to potential adversaries.

This unprecedented move coincides with Mauritius strengthening its ties with China, presenting a complex strategic challenge for the UK. Prime Minister Keir Starmer has insisted that this deal is vital for preserving national and regional security; however, many fear it could inadvertently assist Britain’s adversaries. Revealing operational details to Mauritius could allow hostile nations insight into British military strategies, a concern raised by former Defence Secretaries like Sir Grant Shapps and Sir Gavin Williamson. Sir Grant aptly noted that the UK seems to be "bankrolling our own strategic retreat," while Sir Gavin warned that such transparency effectively permits China a view into Britain's military objectives.

The history of the Chagos Islands is marred by the forced displacement of Chagossians, who were evicted to make way for the US base during the 1960s and 70s. Despite promises of citizenship and reparations from the British government, Chagossians are still denied the right to return to their homeland under the guise of security concerns. Activists, including those displaced, have vocally condemned the UK-Mauritius agreement, pointing to the ongoing injustice faced by the Chagossian community. The deal’s absence of provisions for resettlement exacerbates their plight, while human rights groups label the situation a continuation of colonial oppression, as thousands remain separated from their ancestral land.

While the treaty may provide superficial financial benefits to Mauritius, including an annual payment of £101 million, it raises serious questions about accountability and sovereignty. Critics argue that the UK is effectively surrendering control over its strategic territories while committing to long-term financial obligations that fail to address historical injustices. Kemi Badenoch, the leader of the Conservative Party, has rightly articulated concerns over how this deal undermines British sovereignty, accusing the government of misleading taxpayers about the agreement's true financial implications.

As scrutiny intensifies, government officials claim that not all operational details must be disclosed prior to military actions, seeking to assuage fears over national security. Nonetheless, the vagueness of the treaty's language invites potential legal challenges and debates over interpretation. As pressure mounts on Starmer's administration from opposition forces and the public, the ramifications of this agreement pose significant threats to Britain’s security and sovereignty.

Looking ahead, the deal awaits parliamentary ratification, marking a critical moment in Britain’s foreign policy as it navigates post-Brexit realities while attempting to balance its international relations, especially with allies and strategic partners. The forthcoming debates promise to expose the complexities woven into this historic agreement, as the nation reassesses its position in an increasingly perilous geopolitical landscape.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14744665/Chagos-outrage-Extraordinary-pledge-help-enemies-buried-smallprint-30billion-surrender-deal.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/ffe9c7ca-52de-457e-ab50-8bc6df5296b0> - The Financial Times' 'Political Fix' podcast discusses Labour leader Keir Starmer's post-Brexit EU deal and its political implications. The deal re-establishes trade and diplomatic ties, including a defense partnership and restored electricity market cooperation. A veterinary agreement easing food trade and a contentious 12-year fisheries access compromise are key elements. While Starmer markets the deal as economical and pragmatic, critics like Kemi Badenoch label it a surrender due to dynamic alignment with EU rules. Public and political response has been muted, reflecting Brexit fatigue, though concerns about sovereignty and immigration persist. In a parallel development, Starmer finalized the Chagos Islands sovereignty transfer to Mauritius, securing the UK-US military base access for 99 years in return for £101 million annually. Though criticized by Badenoch, the agreement garnered international support, aligning Britain with allies and countering strategic threats. Domestically, Starmer faces challenges, including prison policy reform and economic pressures. While his global diplomacy, backed by advisors like Jonathan Powell, strengthens his international standing, thin domestic strategy and weak communication risk political vulnerability. Analysts speculate on future party positions regarding EU relations, customs unions, and further alignment, with electoral dynamics and public sentiment influencing long-term directions.
3. <https://apnews.com/article/97e1acb6d1accbb0fb65d08357595e08> - Displaced Chagossians, including Bernadette Dugasse, are expressing despair and anger following the U.K.'s announcement of a sovereignty transfer agreement for the Chagos Islands to Mauritius. Dugasse, forced to leave Diego Garcia as a toddler, represents the over 1,500 Chagos islanders who were evicted between the 1950s and 1970s to make way for a U.S. military base. Despite Britain's acknowledgment of the wrongful removal and granting of citizenship, return has been continuously denied, citing security and financial concerns. The recent U.K.-Mauritius deal, which includes a 99-year lease-back of the Diego Garcia base to Britain, excludes any guarantees for Chagossian resettlement. Dugasse and fellow islander Bertrice Pompe attempted legal action to block the agreement, criticizing both governments for ignoring Chagossians in negotiations. Human rights groups decry the ongoing displacement as a colonial injustice. Many Chagossians, now dispersed across the U.K., Seychelles, and Mauritius, fear they may never return to their homeland. Dugasse's visits to Diego Garcia were brief and heavily restricted, deepening her sorrow. She emphasizes the unique cultural identity of Chagossians and advocates for their right to return, fearing their heritage may vanish as elderly natives pass away.
4. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-set-sign-deal-ceding-sovereignty-chagos-islands-mauritius-2025-05-22/> - On May 22, 2025, the UK signed a landmark agreement transferring sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius, while retaining control over the critical U.S.-UK air base on Diego Garcia through a 99-year lease. The multibillion-pound deal ends decades of legal and diplomatic disputes and is intended to bolster national and regional security. The agreement faced a last-minute legal challenge by a British Chagossian, Bertrice Pompe, who criticized the exclusion of Chagossians, but a High Court judge lifted the injunction, citing national interest concerns. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer defended the deal as vital to counter terrorism and foreign influence, particularly from China. Critics, including the opposition Conservative Party, condemned the deal as expensive and a strategic misstep. Under the agreement, the UK will pay Mauritius £3 billion over the lease term, with an option for a 50-year extension. Mauritius' Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam hailed the deal as a historic step toward full decolonization. The U.S., represented by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, welcomed the accord, which ensures continued joint military operations from Diego Garcia, a base that has supported missions in Yemen, Gaza, Iraq, and Afghanistan.
5. <https://apnews.com/article/81d046b333b0af81489ed75543f9534b> - On May 22, 2025, the UK and Mauritius finalized an agreement to transfer sovereignty over the disputed Chagos Islands to Mauritius, excluding Diego Garcia, which will remain under British control due to its vital US military base. The archipelago, home to over 60 islands in the Indian Ocean, has been under British control since 1814. In the 1960s and 70s, the UK forcibly evicted about 2,000 Chagossians to allow the US to build the base, prompting international criticism and legal disputes. The deal faced delays due to political changes in Mauritius, financial disagreements over leasing Diego Garcia, and a review by the US under President Trump. Ultimately, Britain agreed to pay £101 million ($136 million) annually to lease the base for 99 years. While hailed by the Biden administration as securing strategic interests, it drew criticism from UK conservatives and US officials for potential security risks. The deal leaves questions for the displaced Chagossians, who were excluded from negotiations and uncertain about their right to return. Some claim the arrangement perpetuates historical injustices. A proposed resettlement fund for islanders outside Diego Garcia remains vague in implementation. The agreement awaits approval by the UK Parliament.
6. <https://www.ft.com/content/5808b0ac-0610-41ad-b794-77575d359037> - The UK is poised to finalize a pivotal and contentious agreement to transfer sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius, potentially as early as Thursday. The deal includes a multibillion-pound payment, enabling the UK and US to retain joint access to the strategically vital Diego Garcia military base under a 99-year lease. The agreement has sparked political backlash, especially from the opposition Conservative party, with Shadow Foreign Secretary Priti Patel condemning it as a loss of sovereign territory and a financial burden on taxpayers. Critics accuse Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer of prioritizing international relations over national interests. However, Labour officials maintain that the negotiations originated under the previous Conservative government and are necessary for compliance with international law. Though US concerns over the deal initially existed, President Donald Trump has expressed support, assuring continued military cooperation. The agreement marks another major policy step following the UK’s post-Brexit diplomatic reset with the European Union. Labour has noted parliamentary ratification is still required before the deal is finalized.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jan/31/starmer-urgest-mauritius-to-make-deal-that-protects-chagos-islands-from-malign-influence> - Keir Starmer has urged Mauritius to ensure the deal for the Chagos Islands keeps them free from 'malign influence', amid concern in Mauritius and the US about the terms of the deal. The prime minister spoke to his counterpart, Navin Ramgoolam, for the first time on Friday afternoon to discuss the agreement to hand over control of the islands, which was signed last year but has attracted criticism from people close to the new US president, Donald Trump. Starmer told Ramgoolam he wanted 'strong protections' for the UK-US military base on the island chain. The deal would see the UK cede its final African colony while keeping control of the military base on the island of Diego Garcia for at least 99 years. British officials say it was signed with the support of the US government but allies of Trump have since criticised it, warning that Mauritius’ alliance with China posed a risk to US national security.