# UK treaty on Chagos Islands sparks sovereignty fears over military disclosures



The recent agreement concerning the Chagos Islands has sparked a fierce debate in the UK, primarily due to a controversial clause buried within the treaty's fine print. Under this arrangement, the British government will be obligated to inform Mauritius of any military operations originating from the strategically vital base on Diego Garcia. This stipulation has drawn heavy criticism from former defence secretaries and military leaders, who describe it as an alarming infringement on national sovereignty and a reckless weakening of the UK's defence posture.

The £30 billion deal represents a significant capitulation, transferring sovereignty over the Chagos Islands to Mauritius—a territory held by Britain since 1814. The murky history of these islands includes the forcible eviction of nearly 2,000 Chagossians in the 1960s and 1970s to accommodate a US military base, resulting in decades of legal and political struggles. The International Court of Justice deemed the UK's occupation unlawful in 2019, compelling the British government to reassess its position.

Now, under the new treaty, Britain will pay Mauritius an annual fee of £101 million for leasing Diego Garcia while being compelled to consult Mauritius on military activities. Critics such as Sir Grant Shapps and Sir Gavin Williamson warn that this requirement could inadvertently assist adversarial nations like China and Iran by revealing vital military intentions. Williamson stated that this approach not only undermines Britain's strategic autonomy but provides hostile powers with unnecessary insights into UK military operations.

In a climate where international relations are precarious, especially regarding China's expanding influence, such an agreement raises serious concerns. Many perceive the deal as a sign of weakness, fearing that sensitive information disclosed to Mauritius could easily be compromised, jeopardising national security interests both regionally and globally.

Defence Minister Luke Pollard defended the treaty as "good value," claiming that the US would contribute significantly more financially to Diego Garcia's operations. However, this assertion is met with skepticism from various political corners, where leaders argue the treaty represents a strategic retreat for the UK—a disgraceful withdrawal from positions of strength that neglects long-term security needs.

Additionally, the concerns of the Chagossian community linger, as their aspirations for a voice in the negotiations remain largely ignored. Displaced islanders express trepidation about the lack of clarity surrounding their potential resettlement under this new regime, with promised funds for relocation remaining nebulous and poorly enforced. Legal actions initiated by Chagossian activists further highlight the urgent need for a just resolution to their enduring grievances.

As this treaty heads toward ratification, requiring approval from both houses of Parliament, intense scrutiny is anticipated. The UK government must not only deal with the contemporary strategic vulnerabilities posed by the arrangement but also confront the historical injustices it represents. The repercussions of this treaty stretch beyond military strategy, delving into the essential issues of sovereignty, security, and the rights of the displaced Chagossian population. The path forward demands astute navigation of international relations and a resolute commitment to addressing past wrongs—an approach that starkly contrasts with the current government’s trajectory.

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.reuters.com/world/uk/key-facts-about-chagos-islands-deal-be-signed-by-uk-mauritius-2025-05-22/> - The UK is set to sign a multi-billion dollar agreement with Mauritius regarding the sovereignty of the Chagos Islands, following the overturning of a last-minute legal injunction. The Chagos Archipelago, comprising over 600 islands in the Indian Ocean, has been a source of contention since Britain forcibly displaced nearly 2,000 Chagossians in the 1960s and 70s to establish a U.S.-UK military base on Diego Garcia. The new deal, initially agreed in October, involves Britain transferring sovereignty to Mauritius in exchange for a $4 billion payment, while retaining control of Diego Garcia through a 99-year lease. The base holds strategic military importance for both the UK and the U.S., hosting operations from the War in Afghanistan to recent deployments in Yemen and Gaza. The UN’s International Court of Justice declared Britain’s 1965 detachment of the islands from Mauritius unlawful, increasing international pressure. However, the agreement has drawn criticism from displaced Chagossians, UK opposition leaders, and the new Mauritian Prime Minister for lack of consultation and national interest concerns. The deal proceeds with U.S. support, despite warnings from Secretary of State Marco Rubio about regional security threats, especially from China’s influence. ([reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/key-facts-about-chagos-islands-deal-be-signed-by-uk-mauritius-2025-05-22/?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.elpais.com/internacional/2025-05-22/el-reino-unido-pone-fin-a-una-disputa-de-medio-siglo-al-entregar-a-mauricio-el-archipielago-de-chagos.html> - The United Kingdom has signed a historic agreement to return sovereignty of the Chagos Archipelago to Mauritius, ending a dispute spanning over half a century. In exchange, the UK and the United States will retain control of the strategic military base on Diego Garcia for 99 years through a lease valued at over 4 billion euros. This base has been crucial militarily, especially during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and remains important for international security. The decision, while supported by allies like Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, has generated internal criticism in the UK due to the high cost and social concerns. Additionally, there was legal resistance from some Chagossians, such as Bertrice Pompe, who oppose losing their British connection. Historically, the Chagossians were expelled by the UK in 1966 to allow the establishment of the U.S. base. The UN General Assembly and the International Court of Justice had already urged in 2019 the return of the archipelago to Mauritius, declaring its retention illegal. Despite divisions within the Chagossian community, the transfer of sovereignty has been finalized. ([elpais.com](https://elpais.com/internacional/2025-05-22/el-reino-unido-pone-fin-a-una-disputa-de-medio-siglo-al-entregar-a-mauricio-el-archipielago-de-chagos.html?utm_source=openai))
4. <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. ([apnews.com](https://apnews.com/article/81d046b333b0af81489ed75543f9534b?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.reuters.com/world/mauritius-pm-queries-duration-lease-deal-chagos-military-base-2025-01-18/> - Mauritius Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam has raised concerns about the duration and terms of a lease on a U.S.-British military base on Diego Garcia, part of the Chagos Islands. The UK agreed in October to cede the Chagos Islands to Mauritius while retaining control of the base under a 99-year lease, pending ratification. Ramgoolam, who won a recent election, criticized this agreement negotiated by the previous government, calling it a "sell out" and suggesting the lease should account for inflation and exchange rates. He emphasized the importance of recognizing Mauritius' sovereignty over the islands, which may impact the UK's ability to unilaterally renew the lease. Ramgoolam also highlighted U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken's urgency to finalize the agreement before Donald Trump's inauguration and addressed concerns raised by Marco Rubio, Trump's Secretary of State pick, regarding potential security threats. Additionally, some Chagossians have opposed the deal as they were not included in the negotiations and plan to protest. ([reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com/world/mauritius-pm-queries-duration-lease-deal-chagos-military-base-2025-01-18/?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://apnews.com/article/c8a4911f76e1ce2be4d4fdbcaa23786a> - Two women from the Chagos Islands seek to take the UK government to court over a proposed agreement to transfer sovereignty of the archipelago to Mauritius. Their lawyers argue that it was illegal to exclude the Chagossians from deciding the future of the archipelago, home to a naval base and strategic bombers of the UK and United States. The UK government announced in October its intention to transfer the islands to Mauritius, maintaining control of Diego Garcia, the largest island and site of the base. However, negotiations are on hold pending an agreement with the government of President Donald Trump. The deal includes the creation of a resettlement fund for displaced islanders, though details are uncertain. The International Court of Justice had previously ruled that the UK acted illegally in detaching Mauritius in 1965 before its independence. ([apnews.com](https://apnews.com/article/c8a4911f76e1ce2be4d4fdbcaa23786a?utm_source=openai))