# UK’s ceding of Chagos Islands to Mauritius sparks fears over security and sovereignty



In a move that could significantly undermine Britain's geopolitical standing, the UK has alarmingly agreed to cede sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius. This far-reaching decision, orchestrated quietly by the Foreign Office amidst parliamentary turmoil and campaign uncertainties, has sparked vigorous criticism, particularly regarding its long-term implications for British influence in a precarious global landscape.

David Lammy, the UK’s Foreign Secretary, has painted this agreement as a diplomatic success, claiming it is essential for safeguarding military operations and national security. However, his claims fail to mask the deeply troubling nature of relinquishing sovereignty—especially concerning international relations and security. This arrangement, which includes a transformative 99-year lease enabling continued access to the strategically important military base on Diego Garcia, smacks of short-sightedness and an alarming retreat from responsibility.

Historical lessons suggest that similar lease agreements lead to lasting, negative consequences. The 1898 lease of the New Territories in Hong Kong stands as a cautionary tale; it began as a temporary measure but culminated in a complete loss of control to China. Observers now fear that Britain may be heading down a precarious path in the Indian Ocean, where China's aggressive expansion through its Belt and Road Initiative raises serious concerns about national security.

The implications of this negotiation extend beyond mere territorial politics to reveal a worrying trend within the Labour Party under Keir Starmer's leadership. Critics contend that the government is dangerously pursuing a path of disengagement from global responsibilities, framed under the guise of “decolonisation.” By prioritising public image over the vital necessity of maintaining British territories, the current administration risks compromising long-standing strategic interests. The Falklands and Gibraltar, territories that have explicitly expressed a desire to remain British, serve as stark reminders of the gravity of such decisions.

Additionally, the plight of the Chagossian diaspora introduces an emotional and ethical layer to this debate. Many were forcibly removed from their homeland, and their calls for a return under UK protection sharply contrast with the government’s willingness to abandon control to Mauritius. This complex legacy of Britain’s imperial history cannot simply be dismissed as colonial guilt; rather, it reflects a grave neglect of those who were wronged.

Accusations have been levelled at Lammy for misleading Parliament regarding the deal's ramifications. As he defends the agreement, claiming it to be a pragmatic measure to mitigate litigation risks and address mounting pressures, critics remain skeptical. They point to the looming, potentially devastating long-term effects on both national security and the UK's international credibility.

In the end, the decision to transfer sovereignty of the Chagos Islands raises urgent questions that transcend immediate political calculations. The ramifications for Britain’s stature in an evolving geopolitical environment are alarming, and historical precedence warns that such concessions can lead to consequences lasting generations. The future of the islands is not merely a matter of territorial governance; it epitomises a broader struggle between legacy, responsibility, and the harsh realities of modern diplomacy in a multipolar world.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/2061574/david-lammy-surrender-britain> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-mauritius-joint-statement-on-the-chagos-archipelago-20-december-2024> - On 20 December 2024, the UK and Mauritius issued a joint statement confirming their commitment to finalising a historic treaty regarding the Chagos Archipelago. Both nations agreed to ensure the long-term, secure, and effective operation of the existing base on Diego Garcia while affirming Mauritius's sovereignty over the archipelago. The statement highlighted the productive ongoing conversations and exchanges between the two governments aimed at resolving the sovereignty issue and maintaining the strategic military presence on Diego Garcia.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/oct/07/david-lammy-defends-chagos-islands-deal-saves-uk-military-base> - In an article from 7 October 2024, David Lammy, the UK's Foreign Secretary, defended the agreement to return the Chagos Islands to Mauritius, stating that it was a 'victory for diplomacy' and crucial for securing the UK-US military base on Diego Garcia. Lammy emphasised that the deal addressed concerns about the base's future and was in the best interest of national security. He also clarified that this agreement was unique and did not set a precedent for other British Overseas Territories.
4. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/crlnygw1zy1o> - A BBC News article from 28 November 2024 reported on David Lammy's response to criticism from the new Mauritian prime minister and the incoming Trump administration regarding the Chagos Islands deal. Lammy downplayed the criticism, describing the agreement as a 'good deal' that addressed US concerns about the future of the military base on Diego Garcia. He also noted that the deal was still subject to the finalisation of a treaty and that the UK was committed to completing this process as quickly as possible.
5. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/david-lammy-chagos-peter-lamb-labour-trump-b2684829.html> - An article from The Independent discusses the political ramifications of the Chagos Islands sovereignty deal, highlighting criticism from various quarters, including former Conservative leader Sir Iain Duncan Smith and Reform UK leader Nigel Farage. The piece also covers the Labour Party's stance on the agreement and the broader implications for UK foreign policy, particularly in relation to the United States and China.
6. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/chagos-deal-david-lammy-misleading-parliament-b2686901.html> - This article from The Independent addresses concerns that David Lammy may have misled Parliament over the Chagos Islands deal. It details the criticisms and the government's response, including the assertion that the agreement secures the long-term future of the Diego Garcia airbase and reflects the interests of the Chagossian community.
7. <https://www.ft.com/content/929a6597-28ab-4b44-bee3-b906c34e9e57> - A Financial Times article published on 30 May 2025 reports on UK Attorney-General Richard Hermer's strong criticism of Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch's suggestion that the UK should prepare to leave the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Hermer argued that abandoning international treaties like the ECHR could embolden adversaries such as Vladimir Putin and undermine the West. He also defended the UK's approach to the Chagos Islands sovereignty transfer as a necessary step to avoid legal challenges and described it as 'progressive realism'.