

## Legal and Strategic Implications of the UK–Mauritius Agreement on the Chagos Archipelago

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### I Introduction

On 22 May 2025, the governments of the UK and Mauritius signed a landmark agreement concerning the sovereignty and future governance of the Chagos Archipelago (“**UK-Mauritius Agreement**” or “**Agreement**”).<sup>1</sup> The UK has administered the Chagos Archipelago as part of the British Indian Ocean Territory (“**BIOT**”) since 1965. This includes Diego Garcia, the largest island in the archipelago, which hosts a military base located in a strategically important area of the Indian Ocean that is jointly operated by the UK and the U.S. (see the map on the next page).

In the UK-Mauritius Agreement, the UK and Mauritius agree that Mauritius has sovereignty over the entire Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia. The UK will lease Diego Garcia for 99 years, with an option to extend the lease term, in return for what the UK government estimates to be an average annual payment of £101 million (USD \$137 million) in 2025/26 prices, with a projected net present value of approximately £3.4 billion (USD \$4.6 billion) in the aggregate (see details in Section III.2 below).

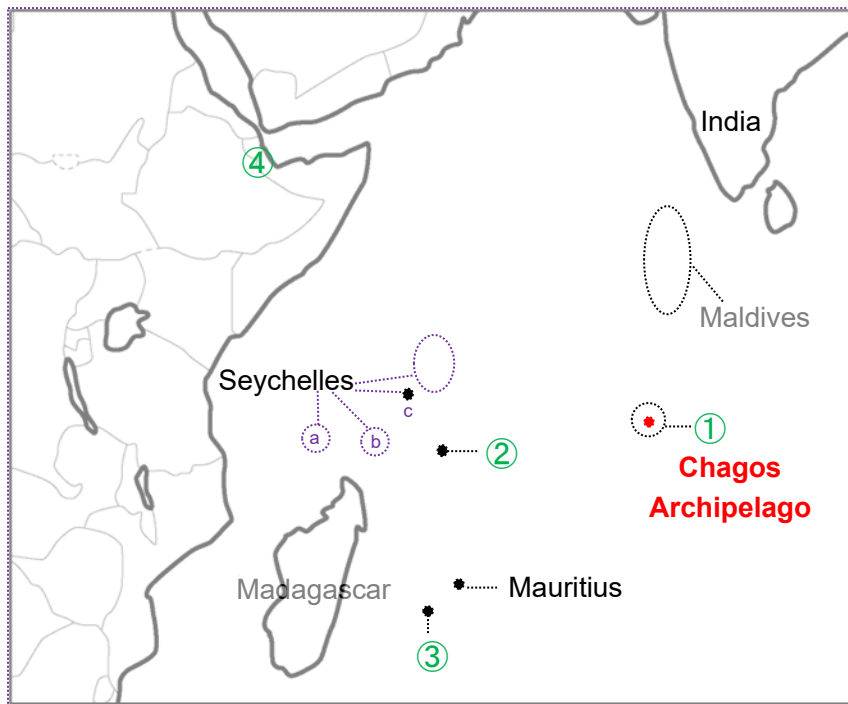
Although the signing of the UK-Mauritius Agreement was widely expected in the wake of the political agreement announced by the prime ministers of the UK and Mauritius on 3 October 2024,<sup>2</sup> it has attracted significant international attention, not only in terms of public international law, but also for its strategic relevance in the Indo-Pacific. For example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan issued a Press Secretary Statement welcoming the signing of the Agreement and highlighting its strategic implications for the Indo-Pacific, stating that “Japan hopes that the signing of this agreement will contribute not only to the promotion of the UK-Mauritius relations, but also to the promotion of peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific.”<sup>3</sup>

This newsletter outlines the historical and legal background to the Agreement, summarises its key provisions, and examines its implications for regional security and power dynamics in the Indo-Pacific. It also discusses how international legal developments and institutional pressure influenced the UK’s decision-making, and the potential significance of the UK-Mauritius Agreement to future sovereignty disputes and decolonisation efforts.

<sup>1</sup> [Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the Republic of Mauritius concerning the Chagos Archipelago including Diego Garcia](#)

<sup>2</sup> [UK and Mauritius joint statement on the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia: 3 October 2024 - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, [Signing of the Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the Republic of Mauritius concerning the Chagos Archipelago including Diego Garcia \(Statement by Press Secretary KITAMURA Toshihiro\)](#) (23 May 2025)



#### Islands returned to the Seychelles upon its independence

- a. Aldabra Group
- b. Farquhar Group
- c. Desroches Island

#### Selected key bases and facilities in the region

- ① Diego Garcia, Chagos (UK, US)
- ② Agalega, Mauritius (India)
- ③ Réunion (France)
- ④ Djibouti (China, France, Italy, Japan, US)

[Map: Chagos Archipelago, the Islands returned to the Seychelles upon its independence, selected key bases and facilities in the region<sup>4</sup>]

## II From Dispute to Agreement: Historical and Legal Developments

### 1. Establishment of the BIOT and forced displacement of Chagossians

On 8 November 1965, the UK established the BIOT by detaching a number of islands from the colonies of Mauritius and the Seychelles. At the time, the UK committed to ceding the islands detached from Mauritius to Mauritius once they were no longer required for defence purposes. Since 1966, the UK has made the BIOT available for a joint UK-U.S. military base on Diego Garcia under a series of agreements with the U.S. From 1968 to 1973, the UK government removed all Chagos residents from the islands in order to construct the base on Diego Garcia.<sup>5</sup> The islands that were detached from the Seychelles (the Aldabra Group of islands, Farquhar Group, and Desroches Island) were returned to the Seychelles at the time it obtained independence in 1976.<sup>6</sup>

### 2. International legal proceedings and institutional responses

Since achieving independence in 1968, Mauritius has contested the UK's sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, asserting that Mauritius has sovereignty over the entire archipelago. While

<sup>4</sup> This map was created by the authors and is intended to offer a general geographic overview for illustrative purposes. Given the vast number of islands as well as important military facilities in the Indian Ocean, the map does not attempt to provide a comprehensive depiction.

<sup>5</sup> According to the current BIOT Administration, it is estimated that between 1,400 and 1,700 people were removed from the Chagos Archipelago, most of whom went to Mauritius. See p.11 of [British Indian Ocean Territory: UK to negotiate sovereignty 2022/23](#) (22 November 2022)

<sup>6</sup> [The British Indian Ocean Territory Order 1976](#)

the issue initially was addressed through bilateral discussions and diplomatic correspondence, in recent years Mauritius has brought the matter before international courts and tribunals, as well as international organisations including the United Nations. The UK's efforts to dissuade Mauritius from pursuing its legal campaign challenging the UK's administration of the Chagos Archipelago were unsuccessful. The table below summarises the key developments.

Date	Organisation	Event
18 March 2015	Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA)	The arbitral tribunal, established under Annex VII of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and administered by the PCA, issued its final award in the Mauritius–UK dispute over the Marine Protected Area around the Chagos Archipelago, finding, among other things, that <u>the UK's undertaking to return the Chagos Archipelago to Mauritius when no longer needed for defence purposes is legally binding.</u> <sup>7</sup> <b>(Binding)</b>
22 June 2017	UN General Assembly (UNGA)	UNGA Resolution 71/292 <sup>8</sup> was adopted with 94 votes in favour, 15 against, and 65 abstentions. It requested that the International Court of Justice render an advisory opinion on the following questions: (a) "Was the process of decolonization of Mauritius lawfully completed when Mauritius was granted independence in 1968, following the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius and having regard to international law, including obligations reflected in General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960, 2066 (XX) of 16 December 1965, 2232 (XXI) of 20 December 1966 and 2357 (XXII) of 19 December 1967?" and (b) "What are the consequences under international law, including obligations reflected in the above-mentioned resolutions, arising from the continued administration by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland of the Chagos Archipelago, including with respect to the inability of Mauritius to implement a programme for the resettlement on the Chagos Archipelago of its nationals, in particular those of Chagossian origin?" <b>(Non-binding)</b>
25 February 2019	International Court of Justice (ICJ)	The ICJ issued an advisory opinion stating that (a) Mauritius's decolonisation was not lawfully completed in 1968 due to the separation of the Chagos Archipelago; (b) <u>the UK is under an obligation to end its administration of the Archipelago as rapidly as possible;</u> and (c) <u>all UN Member States are obliged to cooperate with the UN to complete the decolonisation process.</u> <sup>9</sup> <b>("2019 ICJ Advisory Opinion", Non-binding)</b>
24 May 2019	UNGA	UNGA Resolution 73/295 <sup>10</sup> was adopted with 116 votes in favour, 6 against, and 56 abstentions. It welcomed the 2019 ICJ Advisory Opinion, <u>demanding that the UK end its colonial administration of the Chagos Archipelago within six months and called on all UN specialised agencies to recognise that the Chagos Archipelago forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius.</u> <b>(Non-binding)</b>
28 January 2021	International Tribunal for the	The Special Chamber of the ITLOS issued its judgment on preliminary objections in the maritime boundary dispute between Mauritius and the

<sup>7</sup> Para. 547 of [In the Matter of the Chagos Marine Protected Area Arbitration \(Mauritius v. United Kingdom\)](#), Award of 18 March 2015, PCA Case No. 2011-03

<sup>8</sup> [A/RES/73/295](#)

<sup>9</sup> Para. 183 of [Legal Consequences of The Separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965 \(ICJ Advisory Opinion, 25 February 2019, General List No. 169\)](#)

<sup>10</sup> [A/RES/73/295](#)

	Law of the Sea (ITLOS)	Maldives in the Indian Ocean. In that judgment, the Chamber proceeded on the basis that Mauritius was the relevant coastal State for purposes of delimiting the maritime boundary around the Chagos Archipelago. <sup>11</sup> While the UK was not a party to the proceedings, this approach <u>effectively treated Mauritius as sovereign over the Archipelago</u> , in a manner consistent with the 2019 ICJ Advisory Opinion and UNGA Resolution 73/295. (“ <b>2021 ITLOS Judgment</b> ”, <b>Binding</b> )
26 August 2021	Universal Postal Union (UPU)	The Congress of the UPU recognised Mauritius as the state with the authority to make decisions regarding international postal operations on the Chagos Archipelago. <sup>12</sup> (“ <b>2021 UPU Resolution</b> ”, <b>Binding</b> )

### 3. The UK’s rationale for executing the UK-Mauritius Agreement

Although the 2019 ICJ Advisory Opinion and UNGA Resolution 73/295 are not legally binding, they have had “meaningful real-world impact on the sustainability of UK sovereignty and the operation of the Base<sup>13</sup>” and paved the way for further legal and diplomatic measures challenging the UK’s position, as outlined below.

#### ● ITLOS

- The UK government considers the 2021 ITLOS Judgment to pose an additional and imminent threat to its legal and strategic interests. It says “[w]hile the UK was not a party to the proceedings, [the 2021 ITLOS judgment] was a significant reflection as to how ITLOS viewed the ICJ Advisory Opinion and the sovereignty dispute between the UK and Mauritius. It confirmed the risk that a future (binding) case could be brought successfully against the UK in this forum.<sup>14</sup>”
- Indeed, Prime Minister Starmer, in his remarks at a press conference on the day of signing the UK-Mauritius Agreement, said that the government “had to act now” as “courts have already made decisions that undermine our position” on UK sovereignty over the BIOT.<sup>15</sup> He further stated that the UK’s “long-standing legal view is that [the UK] would not have a realistic prospect of success” if Mauritius took the issue to court again. He warned that a court could issue “provisional measure orders” against the UK “in a matter of weeks” and argued that even if the UK ignored any future judgments, other states and organisations would act on them, “and that would undermine the operation of the base.”

#### ● UPU

- “Although the immediate effect of [the 2021 UPU Resolution] was limited to the refusal by the UPU to allow for the posting internationally of mail using the BIOT stamps, it demonstrated that a UN body could constrain UK activity with respect to the BIOT on the strength of the ICJ Advisory Opinion and

<sup>11</sup> Para. 250 of [Dispute concerning delimitation of the maritime boundary between Mauritius and Maldives in the Indian Ocean \(Mauritius/Maldives\)](#), (ITLOS Judgment of 28 January 2021, Case No. 28)

<sup>12</sup> [UPU Resolution C 15/2021](#)

<sup>13</sup> p.2 of [Explanatory memorandum: UK/Mauritius: Agreement concerning the Chagos Archipelago including Diego Garcia](#) (a Command Paper submitted by the British Foreign Secretary to the UK Parliament)

<sup>14</sup> pp.2-3 of [Explanatory memorandum: UK/Mauritius: Agreement concerning the Chagos Archipelago including Diego Garcia](#)

<sup>15</sup> [PM's remarks at press conference on Diego Garcia: 22 May 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

UNGA resolution.<sup>16</sup>

- Other international fora<sup>17</sup>

- “Challenges to UK sovereignty over the BIOT have also caused procedural issues for the UK at the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation.”
- “Sovereignty was also routinely challenged in the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission, which carried risk of legal challenge leading to an ICJ judgment.”

#### 4. Negotiations and signing of the UK-Mauritius Agreement

Under the accumulation of international legal findings and mounting diplomatic pressure on the UK, as outlined above, the then-Conservative government began negotiations with Mauritius on the exercise of sovereignty in 2022. Eleven rounds of negotiations were held between November 2022 and June 2024, followed by two additional rounds under the Labour government in August and September 2024, after it took office in July. The U.S. was consulted throughout the process and expressed its written support for the UK-Mauritius Agreement.<sup>18</sup> The Agreement was signed in London and Port Louis on 22 May 2025 by British Prime Minister Starmer and Mauritian Prime Minister Ramgoolam.<sup>19</sup> On the same day, the UK and Mauritius announced the establishment of the Strategic Partnership Framework between the two countries.<sup>20</sup>

### III Key Provisions of the UK-Mauritius Agreement

The Agreement consists of 19 articles and 6 Annexes, followed by 3 sets of the exchanged letters. As noted in the preamble, the Agreement is regarded as reflecting “the need to complete the process of decolonisation of Mauritius” and as constituting the full and final settlement of all claims by Mauritius in relation to the Chagos Archipelago (Article 11(3)). While the Agreement contains provisions on a range of issues, such as environmental protection, the following outlines the provisions which are most relevant to the legal, political, and strategic dimensions discussed above.<sup>21</sup>

#### 1. Sovereignty and authorisation

##### (1) Sovereignty and authorisation with respect to Diego Garcia

The UK and Mauritius agree that Mauritius is sovereign over the entire Chagos Archipelago, including Diego

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<sup>16</sup> p.3 of [Explanatory memorandum: UK/Mauritius: Agreement concerning the Chagos Archipelago including Diego Garcia](#)

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> [U.S. Support for UK and Mauritius Agreement on Chagos Archipelago - United States Department of State](#) (22 May 2025)

<sup>19</sup> Before its signing, the Agreement was blocked briefly by a temporary injunction issued by the UK High Court at 2:25 a.m. on 22 May 2025, in response to a legal challenge brought by members of the Chagossian diaspora. The injunction was lifted later that same day. See [UK can sign deal handing Chagos Islands to Mauritius, High Court rules | Politics News | Sky News](#) (22 May 2025).

<sup>20</sup> [Joint Communique: UK-Mauritius Strategic Partnership Framework: 22 May 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>21</sup> An explanation of other provisions can be seen in [Explanatory memorandum: UK/Mauritius: Agreement concerning the Chagos Archipelago including Diego Garcia](#)

Garcia (Article 1). Diego Garcia is defined as the island of Diego Garcia and a 12 nautical mile zone surrounding the island, including the airspace above and seabed and subsoil below (Article 19). The UK is authorised to exercise the rights and authorities of Mauritius with respect to Diego Garcia, comprising all that is necessary for the long-term, secure, and effective operation of the military base (Article 2(1)(2)). To ensure the continued operation of the base on Diego Garcia, the Agreement expressly provides that the UK may authorise the U.S. to operate the base jointly with the UK (Article 2(5)).

At the same time, Mauritius retains title over the land of and the territorial sea surrounding Diego Garcia, including the seabed and subsoil, as well as all rights and authorities not authorised in relation to use of the base (Article 2(3)). Some rights and authorities, such as licensing and operation of postal services that are unrelated to the operation of the base, sovereignty over natural resources (including fisheries), conservation and protection of the environment (including the marine environment), and regulation of commercial activities, require the UK's consent (Article 2(4), paragraph 7 of Annex 3).

## (2) Control and access beyond Diego Garcia

The UK has secured broad control over and access to the “Chagos Archipelago beyond Diego Garcia<sup>22</sup>” pursuant to Article 3 and Annex 1 of the Agreement, including the following:

- The UK has unrestricted access, basing, and overflight for UK and U.S. aircraft and vessels to enter into the sea and airspace of Diego Garcia (paragraph 1(a) of Annex 1);
- The UK has a *de facto* veto on authorisations permitting the presence of non-United Kingdom, non-United States and/or non-Mauritian security forces, either civilian or military, in the Chagos Archipelago beyond Diego Garcia (paragraph 3(d) of Annex 1); and
- In addition to the authorisation given to the UK on Diego Garcia, including the surrounding territorial sea (12 nautical mile zone), any construction or emplacement of any maritime installation, sensor, structure, or artificial island in the area between 12 and 24 nautical miles surrounding the island requires the UK's consent (paragraph 3(f) of Annex 1).

## 2. Finance

According to Article 11(1) and the Finance Exchange of Letters, the total expected cost of the financial package, based on a net present value methodology, is £3.4 billion<sup>23,24</sup> (USD \$4.6 billion). The average annual cost to the UK over the initial 99-year term of the Agreement is £101 million (USD \$137 million) in 2025/26 prices. This figure includes: (1) an annual payment, (2) a one-off contribution of £40 million (USD 54 million) to capitalise a trust fund for the benefit of Chagossians, and (3) £45 million per year for 25 years to support the economic

<sup>22</sup> “**Chagos Archipelago**” means the islands, including Diego Garcia, and maritime zones of the Chagos Archipelago, including the internal waters, territorial sea, archipelagic waters, and exclusive economic zone, as well as the airspace above and seabed and subsoil below (Article 19). “**Chagos Archipelago beyond Diego Garcia**” means any area within the Chagos Archipelago that is beyond Diego Garcia (paragraph 11.b of the Annex 1 of the Agreement).

<sup>23</sup> p.9 of [Explanatory memorandum: UK/Mauritius: Agreement concerning the Chagos Archipelago including Diego Garcia](#)

<sup>24</sup> Certain analyses have raised doubts about the calculation of the total amount of payment. For example, according to an analysis by Sky News, the total amount would be approximately £10 billion (USD \$13.5 billion) over 99 years if the inflation rate remains at zero. The analysis further suggests that the cost could rise to as much as £30 billion (USD \$40.6 billion) under an average inflation rate of 2%. See Sky News, [UK signs deal to hand over control of Chagos islands | Politics News | Sky News](#) (23 May 2025).



development and welfare of Mauritius and its citizens.

### 3. Resettlement of Chagossians

The preamble to the Agreement states that the UK and Mauritius are “[r]ecognising the wrongs of the past” and “[c]onscious that past treatment of Chagossians has left a deeply regrettable legacy, and [they are] committed to supporting the welfare of all Chagossians”. Based on this understanding, Mauritius is free to implement a resettlement programme on the islands of the Chagos Archipelago other than Diego Garcia (Article 6).

### 4. Duration

The Agreement will remain in force for 99 years (Article 13(1)), with the possibility of a 40-year extension if both parties agree (Article 13(2)). Further extensions may be agreed upon thereafter (Article 13(3)).

### 5. Entry into force

The Agreement shall enter into force on the first day of the first month following the date of receipt of the last notification by the parties of completion of their respective internal requirements and procedures (Article 18). The UK government expects that the process in Mauritius is likely to take no more than six months (November 2025).<sup>25</sup>

## IV Strategic Implications

### 1. Security interests under the UK-Mauritius Agreement

Shortly after the signing of the Agreement on 22 May, British Prime Minister Starmer stated that the Agreement was concluded to uphold the national interests of the UK, highlighting both the UK’s defence interests and the ongoing legal uncertainty surrounding the BIOT.<sup>26</sup> Specifically, he expressed concerns about the legal situation in the absence of the Agreement, stating: “[w]e would not be able to prevent China or any other nation setting up their own bases on the outer islands or carrying out joint exercises near our base,” based on the recognition that the location of Diego Garcia “creates [a] real military advantage across the Indo-Pacific.”<sup>27</sup>

The *Strategic Defence Review* published by the Ministry of Defence of the UK on 2 June 2025 emphasises that protecting the joint UK-U.S. base on Diego Garcia through the Agreement is one of the critical elements in the creation of a single “Integrated Global Defence Network” (see the map below).<sup>28</sup> According to the UK Government, Diego Garcia has been used for operations such as those against Islamic State/Daesh in the

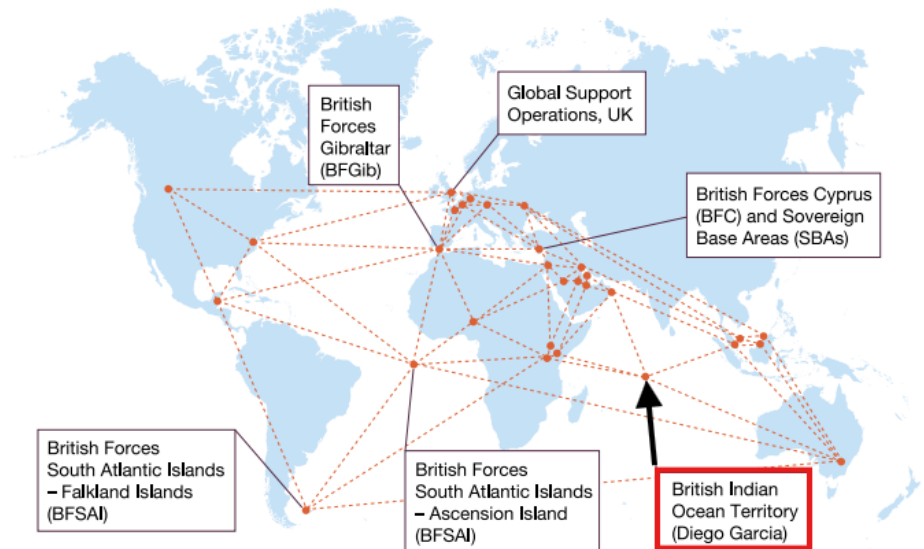
<sup>25</sup> Section 4 of [Explanatory Memorandum on the Agreement](#)

<sup>26</sup> [PM's remarks at press conference on Diego Garcia: 22 May 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> pp.78-79 of [Strategic Defence Review 2025 – Making Britain Safer: secure at home, strong abroad](#) (2 June 2025)

Middle East, and previously in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>29</sup> It also provides support for maritime security operations and serves as a “unique shared platform” for maintaining UK and U.S. military presence across the broader region.<sup>30</sup>



[Map: UK Ministry of Defence's overseas footprint<sup>31</sup>]

## 2. The security of the base and potential influence of China

### (1) UK's concerns regarding China

Concerns regarding the security of the joint UK–U.S. military base on Diego Garcia, the potential for increased Chinese access to surrounding waters for surveillance activities, and the possibility of growing Chinese influence over Mauritius were raised both by Members of the House of Commons and external commentators in October 2024.<sup>32</sup> For example, the UK government has expressed concerns that Chinese influence in Mauritius may increase following the entry into force of the China–Mauritius Free Trade Agreement (FTA) on 1 January 2021, the first FTA between China and an African country.<sup>33</sup>

### (2) Chinese reaction to the UK-Mauritius Agreement

Prime Minister Starmer stated in Parliament that the deal “has been welcomed by the U.S., NATO, Australia, New Zealand and India. They are our allies. It has been opposed by our adversaries, Russia, China and Iran.”

<sup>29</sup> PM's remarks at press conference on Diego Garcia: 22 May 2025 - GOV.UK; p.11 of [House of Commons Library research briefing "2025 treaty on the British Indian Ocean Territory/Chagos Archipelago"](#) (30 May 2025)

<sup>30</sup> p.11 of [House of Commons Library research briefing "2025 treaty on the British Indian Ocean Territory/Chagos Archipelago"](#) (30 May 2025)

<sup>31</sup> Cited from p.80 of [Strategic Defence Review 2025 – Making Britain Safer: secure at home, strong abroad](#) (Red box and arrow added to indicate the location of the BIOT.)

<sup>32</sup> pp.18-19 of [House of Commons Library research briefing "British Indian Ocean Territory:2024 UK and Mauritius agreement"](#) (31 October 2024)

<sup>33</sup> p.23 of [House of Commons Library research briefing "2025 treaty on the British Indian Ocean Territory/Chagos Archipelago"](#) (30 May 2025)



However, the Chinese ambassador to Mauritius, Ms. Shifang, welcomed the Agreement, stating that it is a “massive achievement” for Mauritius.<sup>34</sup> She also noted that Mauritius would soon participate in China’s “Belt and Road” initiative. Until now, Mauritius has been one of only two African countries not participating in the initiative, alongside Eswatini. This development is consistent with the joint statement issued on 15 May 2025 by Prime Minister Ramgoolam of Mauritius and the Chinese Ambassador at their meeting, in which they expressed their commitment to further strengthening bilateral relations.<sup>35</sup>

### 3. Relevant movement of key players with strategic interests in the Indian Ocean region

#### (1) India

India, a major power in the region, has deepened its relationship with Mauritius. During the state visit of Indian Prime Minister Modi to Mauritius from 11 to 12 March 2025, India and Mauritius announced “India-Mauritius Joint Vision for an Enhanced Strategic Partnership” (“**Joint Vision**”).<sup>36</sup> They agreed, among other things, to strengthen economic and trade cooperation, as well as defence and maritime security cooperation.<sup>37</sup> As mentioned in the Joint Vision, it is notable that the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement between India and Mauritius entered into force on 1 April 2021, marking India’s first trade agreement with an African country. This occurred just three months after the entry into force of the China–Mauritius FTA mentioned above. This sequence of events suggests a competitive dynamic between China and India over influence in Mauritius.

#### (2) France

France also has contested territories in the Indian Ocean region and other regions. For example, Comoros claims Mayotte, Madagascar contests Glorieuses, Juan de Nova and Bassas da India, and Mauritius asserts sovereignty over Tromelin Island (see map below).<sup>38</sup> The timing of President Macron’s visit to the Indian Ocean region was significant, as the UK-Mauritius Agreement was expected to be signed by early May 2025. He visited Mayotte on 21 April, Réunion on 22 April, and Madagascar from 23 to 24 April. A planned visit to Mauritius on 25 April was cancelled due to his attendance at the memorial service for Pope Francis. His trip to Madagascar, a former French colony, marked the first visit by a French president in two decades. President Macron also took part in the fifth summit of the Indian Ocean Commission, which comprises the Union of the Comoros, France (representing Réunion), Madagascar, Mauritius, and the Seychelles. Although the summit officially focused on food security in the region, it also was expected to address unresolved territorial disputes dating back to the colonial period, at least indirectly.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Times, [China hails Chagos Islands deal as ‘massive achievement’](#) (29 May 2025)

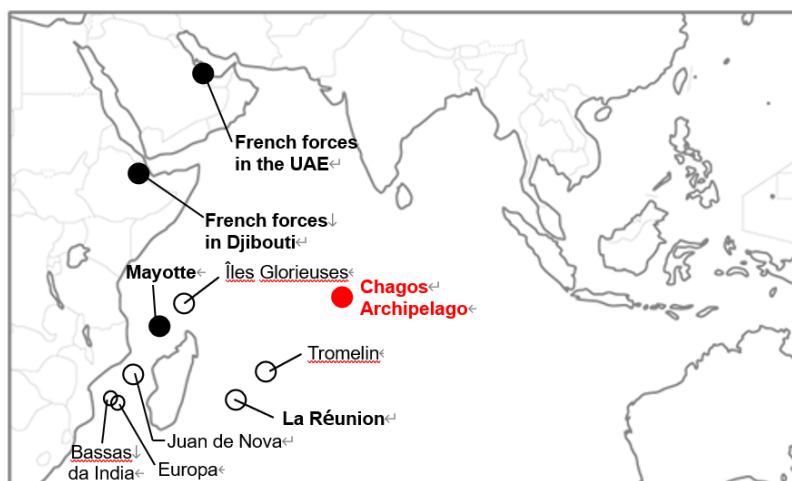
<sup>35</sup> Government of Mauritius, [Mauritius and China to further strengthen bilateral relations](#) (15 May 2025)

<sup>36</sup> Indian Ministry of External Affairs, [India-Mauritius Joint Vision for an Enhanced Strategic Partnership](#) (12 March 2025)

<sup>37</sup> Paragraphs 19-20, 22-25 of Indian Ministry of External Affairs, [India-Mauritius Joint Vision for an Enhanced Strategic Partnership](#) (12 March 2025)

<sup>38</sup> [What the Chagos Islands Deal Means for France’s Indian Ocean Territories and Indo-Pacific Strategy – The Diplomat](#) (6 November 2024)

<sup>39</sup> Le Monde, [Macron’s Indian Ocean diplomacy faces colonial contentions](#) (23 April 2025)



[Map: France's presence around the Indian Ocean region, including contested islands<sup>40</sup>]

### (3) Russia

It was reported that on 16 May 2025, just one day after the meeting between China and Mauritius mentioned above, Russia and Mauritius agreed to enhance cooperation in fishing and marine research.<sup>41</sup> There is a view that the series of legal and diplomatic actions taken by Mauritius regarding the Chagos Archipelago, as explained in Section II.2 above, resulted from diplomatic efforts by states hostile to the UK, including Russia.<sup>42</sup>

### (4) African Union

The African Union, which has consistently supported Mauritius in its long-standing dispute over the Chagos Archipelago, including during the 2019 ICJ Advisory Opinion proceedings and at the UNGA, warmly welcomed the signing of the UK-Mauritius Agreement and establishment of the Strategic Partnership Framework between the UK and Mauritius.<sup>43</sup>

## V Conclusion


Ongoing attention to implementation of the UK-Mauritius Agreement and its wider consequences will be essential to understanding how legal norms and strategic interests converge in the resolution of modern territorial disputes. The Agreement demonstrates how sustained legal action and coordinated international pressure can influence outcomes in disputes over sovereignty and decolonisation. Strategically, it represents a calculated decision by the UK to mitigate legal exposure and preserve operational control over Diego Garcia amid rising geopolitical competition in the Indo-Pacific.

<sup>40</sup> Based on Map by Paco Milhiet. See [What the Chagos Islands Deal Means for France's Indian Ocean Territories and Indo-Pacific Strategy – The Diplomat](#) (6 November 2024)

<sup>41</sup> The Telegraph, [Chagos fears rise as Mauritius pledges closer links to Russia](#) (18 May 2025)

<sup>42</sup> RUSI, [The UK's Surrender of Chagos is a Symptom of Strategic Ineptitude | Royal United Services Institute](#) (11 October 2024)

<sup>43</sup> African Union, [Press statement by Chairperson of the African Union Commission](#) (23 May 2025)



More broadly, the Agreement could serve as a precedent for other contested territories, such as Gibraltar, the Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia in Cyprus, which host a British Royal Air Force base, and the French-administered islands in the Indian Ocean, particularly where international legal forums and multilateral institutions increasingly influence state conduct. It also reflects the evolving dynamics between law, diplomacy, and strategy in shaping the post-colonial international order.

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