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THE WORLD IN PAGES

THE CHAGOS ISLANDS: ISLANDS OF EXILE



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FROM THE FOUNDERS

We are proud to present the latest publication of The World in Pages Magazine. This edition was edited by Anaika Parthasarathi and Mikayla Young, who guided the issue through its research, writing and editing to bring you 'The Chagos Islands: Islands of Exile.'

In the middle of the Indian Ocean lies a small archipelago with a very large story. In 1965, Britain separated the Chagos Islands from Mauritius before the country's independence. In the years that followed, the Chagossians were removed from their homes to make way for a joint UK and US military base on Diego Garcia. Decades later, the dispute over who the islands belong to is still not settled, and the people at its centre remain far from home.

At the heart of this issue is a simple question. Who decides the future of a homeland when its people were never asked? Chagossians have long fought for the right to return, while courts, states and strategic interests have shaped the outcome. We examine the colonial history behind the dispute, the legal and diplomatic battles over sovereignty, and the human cost for the people who lost their homes.

We thank everyone who contributed to this issue. As you turn these pages, we hope you come away with a clearer understanding of a story too often overlooked, and that it fuels the curiosity that lives deep within you.



Videep Agarwal

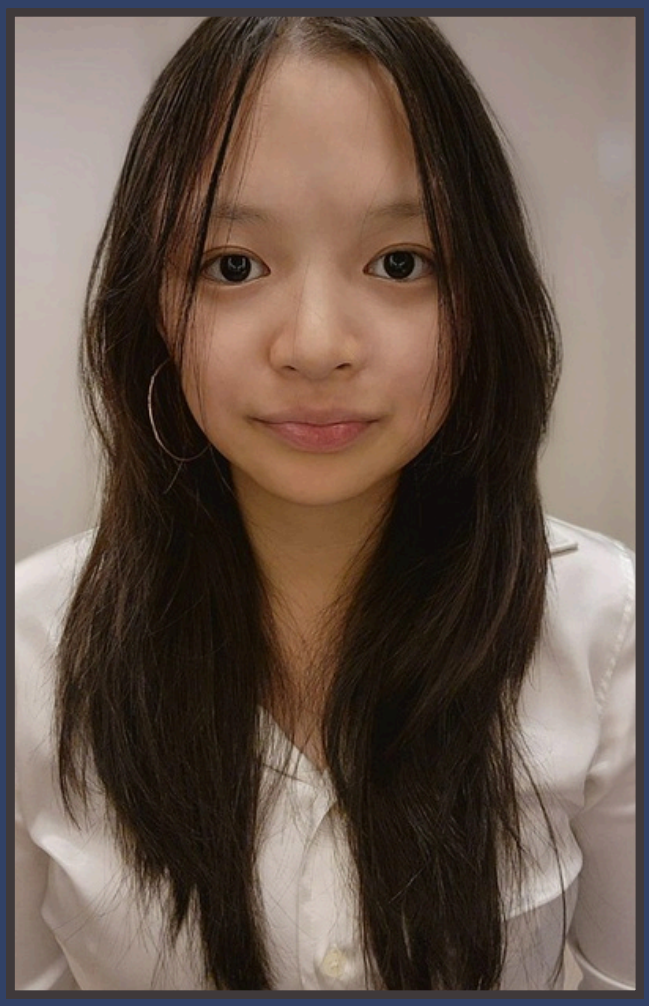


Dheer Bhandary

THE EDITORS



Anaika Parthasarati



Mikayla Young

INTRODUCTION



Source: The Eastern Strategist



Source: The Economist



Source: Wikipedia

"The sun never sets on the British Empire" has been notoriously quoted for centuries, a nod to the extensive geographical reach of Britain, its colonies, and its overseas territories. The sovereignty of such territories has been long disputed, and that of the Chagos Islands is no exception. In 1965, three years prior to the independence of Mauritius, the UK formalised the excision of the Chagos Archipelago. The Chagos Archipelago, in conjunction with the Aldabra Islands and the Farquhar and Desroches islands, all formerly part of the Seychelles colony, formed the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT). The Chagos Islands of the BIOT comprise seven atolls amounting to more than 60 islands. Today, it is home to just over 4000, a mix of British and American immigrants along with a minority of the native "Chaggosian" population.

INTRODUCTION



Source: The News Statement

British sovereignty over these Islands dates back to 1814, after Mauritius became a British colony in 1810 and France, in turn, ceded the Archipelago to the UK. Historically, the Chagos Archipelago was attached to the British colony of Mauritius for administrative convenience. It was only in 1965 that the Archipelago was reconstituted as the BIOT, a moment in history that slightly preceded Mauritius' independence (March 1968).

Since the nation gained independence from the British Empire, Mauritius' trade partnership with China has grown substantially, and in turn, Chinese influence has become much more prominent in Mauritian society and politics. The growth of this relationship is particularly prominently seen in the 47 Chinese development finance projects in the Islands. Investigation and speculation on varying levels have, since around the turn of the 21st century, highlighted instances of the PRC pressuring Mauritius to make a move and attempt to (re)gain control of the Chagos Islands.

During the British occupation of these islands, cooperation between the UK and US transformed this territory into a now-prominent strategic location. Specifically, the largest island of the Archipelago: Diego Garcia. Diego Garcia is host to the most strategically vital US air and logistics base in the Indian Ocean, which also contributes to the defence of the UK (and its allies) in the region.

INTRODUCTION

Operations on Diego Garcia have forcibly displaced the native Chaggosian people, diluting the unique culture they had built over the past 200-or-so years, and splitting families up to seek asylum elsewhere. This has prompted a number of human rights discussions from experts, and a spark of regional support coming from a few governments of nations located on the Southeastern coast of Africa.

With all this in mind, in October 2024, the United Kingdom agreed to hand over the Chagos Islands to Mauritius, and official proceedings began quite shortly after. Though this seemingly brings an end to a bicentenary territorial dispute, there are a range of factors – including all of those aforementioned – that are proving to be implications in the handover process.



Source: Britannica



Source: BBC

HISTORY OF THE CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO

HISTORY OF CHAGOS

Following the independence of Seychelles in 1976, the islands of Aldabra, Farquhar, and Desroches were restituted to Seychelles. In the context of the Cold War, the rationale advanced by the UK and US governments was founded upon the need to facilitate Anglo-American defense cooperation to counterbalance the Soviet military presence in the region. Hence, the creation of the BIOT was a prelude to the establishment of a US military base on Diego Garcia, the largest of the Chagos Archipelago islands. Effectuated by the 1966 UK–US Exchange of Notes on the Availability of the British Indian Ocean Territory for Defence Purposes, the UK endowed the US with access to Diego Garcia for an initial period of 50 years, ratifying the exclusive operational control of the aforementioned military base by the US government. Thereupon, 1967-1973 saw the mass outflux of Chagossians in the wake of the militarization of Diego Garcia.



Source: Britannica

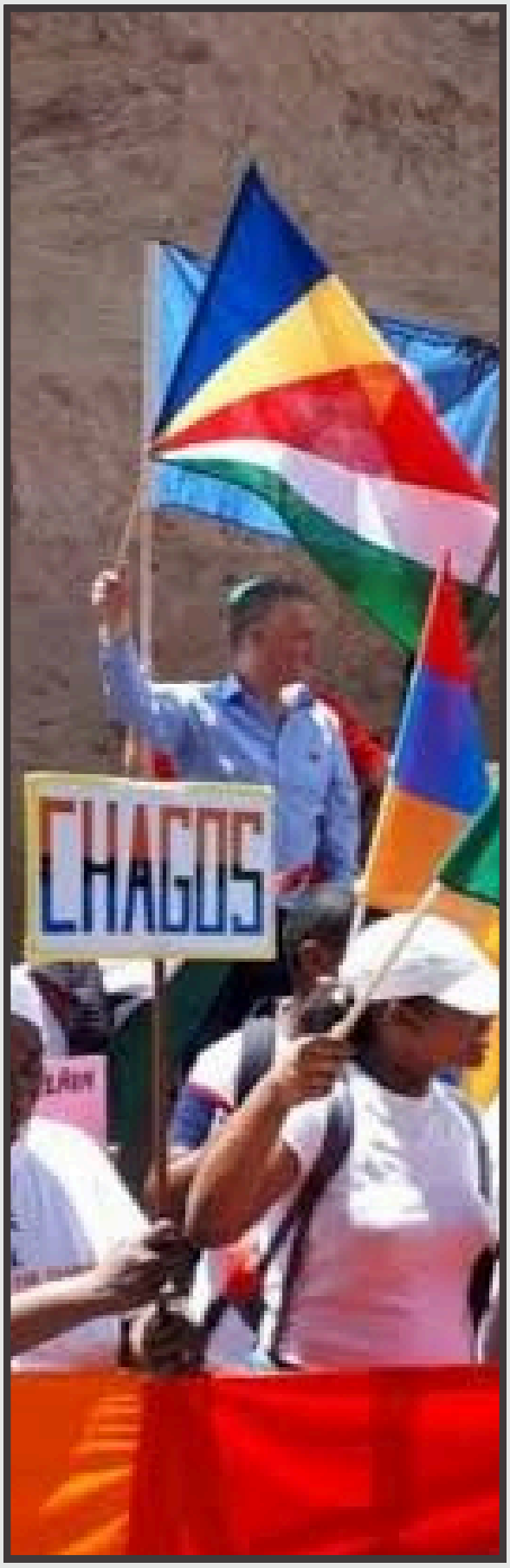
HISTORY OF CHAGOS



Source: Maldivians for Chagos

Soon after the excision, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 2066 (XX), which invited the UK "to take no action which would dismember the Territory of Mauritius and violate its territorial integrity." On the grounds that the detachment of the Chagos Islands preceded Mauritian independence, Mauritius contends the 1965 detachment of the Chagos Archipelago was performed under colonial subordination, provoking sovereignty disputes between the UK and Mauritius. Mauritius maintains that the separation contravened decolonisation principles, with reference to the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV) on the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. This was followed by the endorsement of Resolution 71/292 by the United Nations General Assembly in 2017, through which the United Nations formally requested an Advisory Opinion from the International Court of Justice regarding the legal ramifications of the severance of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius. On 25 February 2019, the Court delivered its Advisory Opinion, finding that "the process of decolonization of Mauritius was not lawfully completed when Mauritius became independent in 1968, following the separation of the Chagos Archipelago".

HISTORY OF CHAGOS



Source: RFI

Citing the nature of the right to self-determination, the Court observed that the UK's governance over the Chagos Archipelago represents a persistent violation of international law. Despite the General Assembly's formal recognition that "the Chagos Archipelago forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius", and the 2020 UN Geospatial world map reflecting this designation, the UK has remained steadfast in its assertion of sovereignty over the islands.



Source: Reuters

HISTORY OF CHAGOS

Prior to this case, the UK declared a marine protection and preservation zone around the Chagos Archipelago with the Secretary-General of the United Nations pursuant to Article 75(2) of UNCLOS, eliciting objections from the Mauritian argument, which led to the initiation of arbitration proceedings under Annex VII of UNCLOS on 20 December 2010. Mauritius contended that the United Kingdom lacked status as a coastal state and, consequently, did not possess legitimate sovereign rights to designate the Chagos Archipelago's maritime boundaries or to declare marine protected areas. The UK contended that the real dispute, referencing the question of sovereignty, is not subject to the interpretation and application of UNCLOS. In other words, Mauritius was affirmed as the rightful coastal state, vested with sovereign rights, jurisdiction, and attendant responsibilities in the surrounding territorial sea and exclusive economic zone, consistent with UNCLOS and the 1965 Fish Stocks Agreement.



Source: SCMP

HISTORY OF CHAGOS

In the context of maritime boundary delimitation, the Chagos Archipelago's proximity to the northern reaches of the Maldives brings both nations into direct legal dialogue. Following international recognition of Mauritius as the lawful sovereign over Chagos, Mauritius initiated proceedings to determine the precise maritime boundary shared with the Maldives, given the overlapping exclusive economic zones and continental shelves in the region. On 28 April 2023, the Special Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, in applying the principle of ex injuria jus non oritur, concluded that the UKheld no enduring legal interests that could bar the delimitation of maritime zones around the Chagos Archipelago, recognizing Mauritius as possessing the lawful coastal rights in relation to the disputed maritime boundary. In accordance with Article 34 of the International Law Commission Draft Articles on Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts, full reparation for damage resulting from an international wrongful act "shall take the form of restitution, compensation and satisfaction, either singly or in combination".

Restitution requires the responsible state to "wipe out all the consequences of the illegal act and re-establish the situation which would, in all probability, have existed if that act had not been committed". Compensation, as elucidated by the ILC draft articles, states that the responsible state "shall cover any financially assessable damage including loss of profits insofar as it is established". Compensation is ancillary to restitution, where restitution is impractical or unduly burdensome, or so to say it would impose an excessive burden on the responsible state compared to the benefit that the injured state could reasonably expect to obtain through compensation. In the case where neither restitution nor compensation is feasible, satisfaction is applied, and "may consist in an acknowledgement of the breach, an expression of regret, a formal apology or another appropriate modality". On 22 May 2025, the UK signed an agreement ceding sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius.

HISTORY OF CHAGOS

While sovereignty was formally handed over to Mauritius, the arrangement ensures the continued operation of the UK–US military base in the archipelago for an initial 99-year term, accompanied by annual remittances of £101 million, which may be extended by a further 40 years. The acknowledgement of historical grievances in the preamble constitutes satisfaction, a form of reparation in itself. Of more importance, the Agreement states that "Mauritius is free to implement a programme of resettlement on the islands of the Chagos Archipelago other than Diego Garcia". The Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee on the British Overseas Territories, on 14 March 2024, called upon the UK to establish a "pilot resettlement programme to provide a right for the Chagossian people to return to their ancestral home", directing the responsibility to Mauritius for a resettlement plan. To ensure the full implementation of the Agreement and ensure its provisions are diligently observed, a Joint Commission is entrusted with oversight, with recourse to arbitration available should disputes arise between the parties.



Source: UK Parliament Commitees

COLONIALISM

&

CHINESE

INFLUENCE

COLONIALISM & CHINESE INFLUENCE

The UK's decision to relinquish sovereignty over the Chagos Islands, viewed at the outset, has prompted critics to express reservations on the diminution of the UK's security posture in a region of increasing geopolitical significance. However, the rationale put forth by the British government arises at the confluence of legal mandates, the preservation of its reputation and securing the military base on Diego Garcia to forestall the extension of Chinese influence within the Indian Ocean.



Source: The Guardian



Source: The Guardian

On the legal front, the decision comes as a response to the prevailing international opinion that the UK had no legal right to separate the islands from Mauritius before the former British colony became independent. Notable judgements include the 2019 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, United Nations General Assembly Resolution, and the 2021 ruling of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea Special Chamber, all of which consistently reaffirmed Mauritius's rightful claim to the Chagos Archipelago and demanded completion of the decolonization process.

COLONIALISM & CHINESE INFLUENCE

Without the handover of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius, as thought by the UK government, would not only imperil Britain's credibility in rules-based international order but could also precipitate adverse legal rulings that would render operations of the military base untenable; a prospect thought to present an even greater risk to the UK's security interests. This argument cites the UK's reliance on a UN authority in Geneva for access to a specific electromagnetic spectrum on which Diego Garcia's satellite communications operate. Furthermore, there are concerns that contractors might decline to service or supply the base, apprehensive about potential risks should Mauritius decide to take legal action. The base's aviation operations could face disruption if international overflight rights were to be contested.



Source: Reuters



Source: The Guardian

COLONIALISM & CHINESE INFLUENCE



This decision, however, has been met with criticism from Conservative and Reform MPs, diplomatic figures, and a few officials within Whitehall. Detractors suggest that the legal threat is overdrawn, and accuse ministers of excessive deference to international legal advice and capitulation to politically motivated votes at the UN. As Shadow Defence Secretary James Cartlidge stated, the government was "following the legal advice to act definitively to our detriment, entirely on the basis of hypothetical risk that has not yet materialised and which we could challenge." The second facet of the justification put forth by the UK government concerns the imperative to pre-empt China from securing a foothold in the Indian Ocean region. Government officials contend that in the absence of an agreement, there would be no legal commitment preventing Mauritius from permitting the establishment of foreign military installations or other presence in the islands.

COLONIALISM & CHINESE INFLUENCE



Source: The Times; The Spectator



Source: Daily Mail



However, under the terms of the deal, the UK can effectively veto non-consensual military activity by third states within the archipelago. The government maintains that, without such safeguards, the UK would have no alternative but to threaten military force should China venture in the establishment of a military facility on one of the islands. Moreover, British representatives highlight that owing to the rent payments negotiated in the deal, Mauritius is left with scant incentive to pursue alternative investments, including those from China.

COLONIALISM & CHINESE INFLUENCE

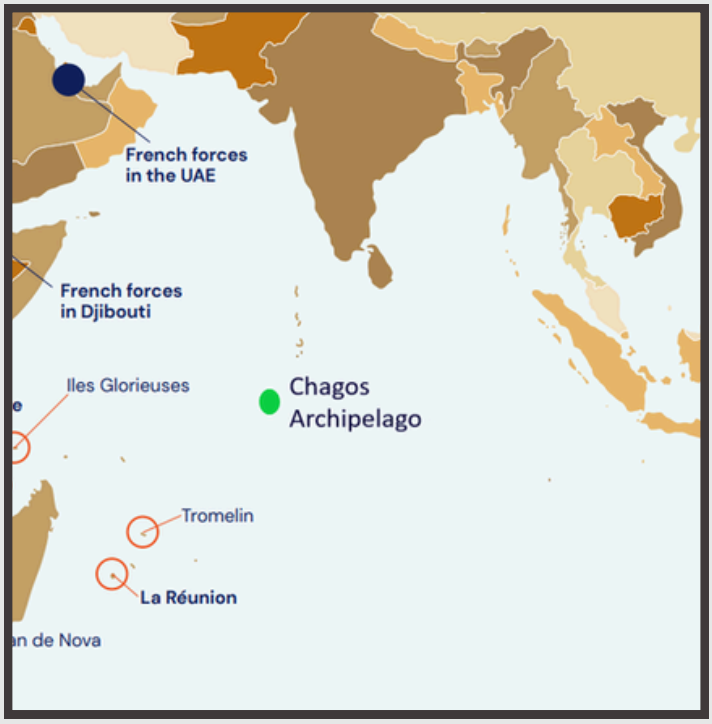


Source: Bloomberg

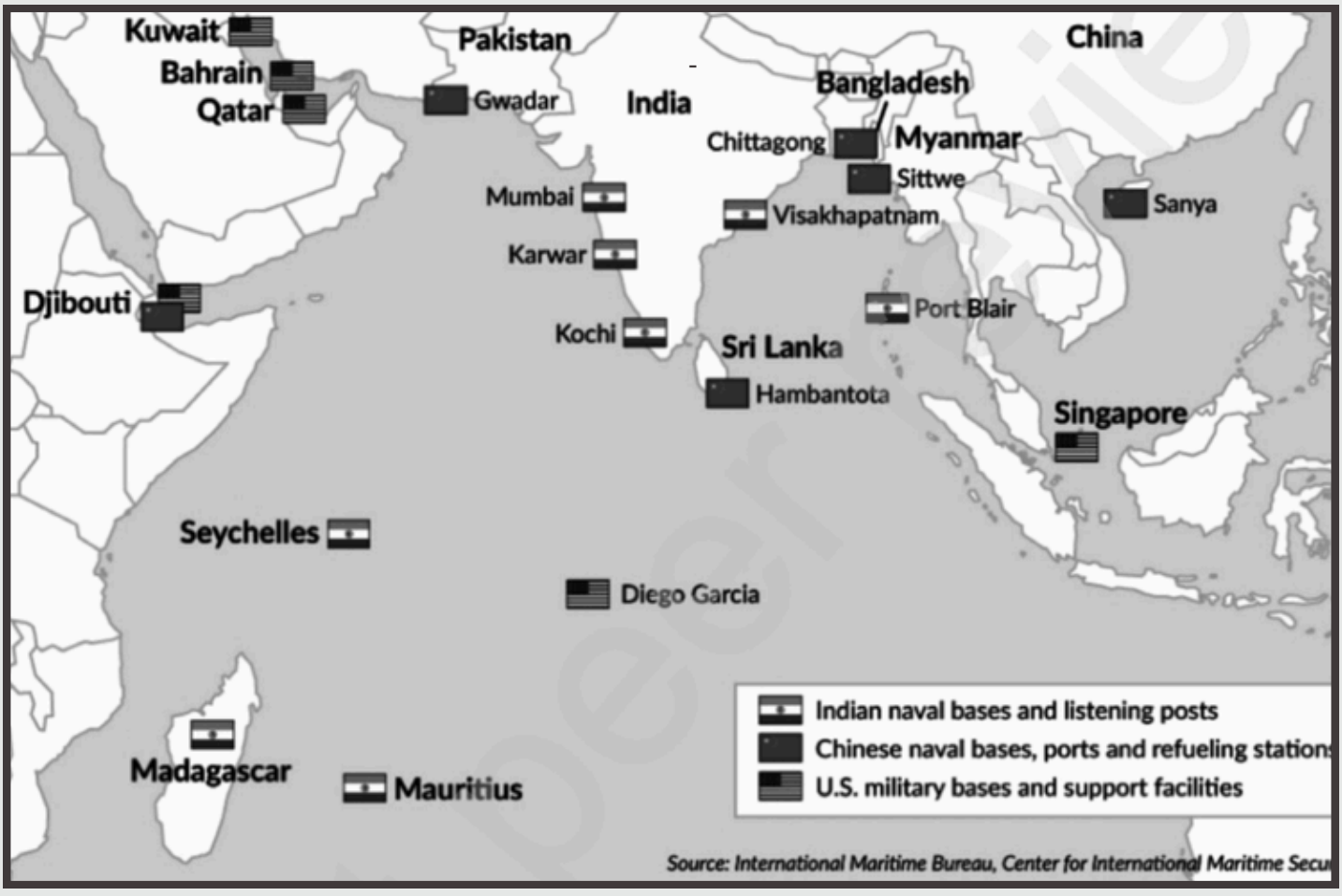
Nonetheless, government critics counter that notwithstanding these safeguards, the Mauritian government may well still develop closer ties with China. Given its stakes, the United States' perspective warrants particular attention. While critics of the deal have sought to cast doubt on the agreement by contending that it jeopardises US interests in respect to China's growing presence in global affairs, the US' strategic interests are imperiled by the status quo. America's primary, and indeed overriding, concern is the preservation of unfettered operational access to Diego Garcia. For the US government, the question of formal sovereignty has been secondary to the guarantee of long-term, stable, and effective operation of the joint US-UK military facility. Other members of the Five Eyes intelligence alliance, involving Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States, have likewise endorsed the agreement, recognizing the strategic significance of Diego Garcia.

COLONIALISM & CHINESE INFLUENCE

Amid these shifting fault lines, the climate of political power play in the Indian Ocean evolved in light of the emergence of China as an influential actor. China has long recognized the strategic importance of maritime routes in its international trade endeavours. The Silk Road Initiative is emblematic of the nation's efforts to to expand its commercial and diplomatic stature. The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road is a planned maritime route connecting China's eastern seaboard with Europe, Africa, South Asia, and the Pacific through a network of ports and infrastructure projects spanning the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean.



Source: The Diplomat



COLONIALISM & CHINESE INFLUENCE

It merits attention that China has developed military and maritime infrastructures in three strategic places, namely Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Djibouti. These naval bases allow China to expand its reach across the northern Indian Ocean, projecting influence while navigating around areas of limited access near India.



Source: Reuters



Source: China Daily HK

COLONIALISM & CHINESE INFLUENCE _



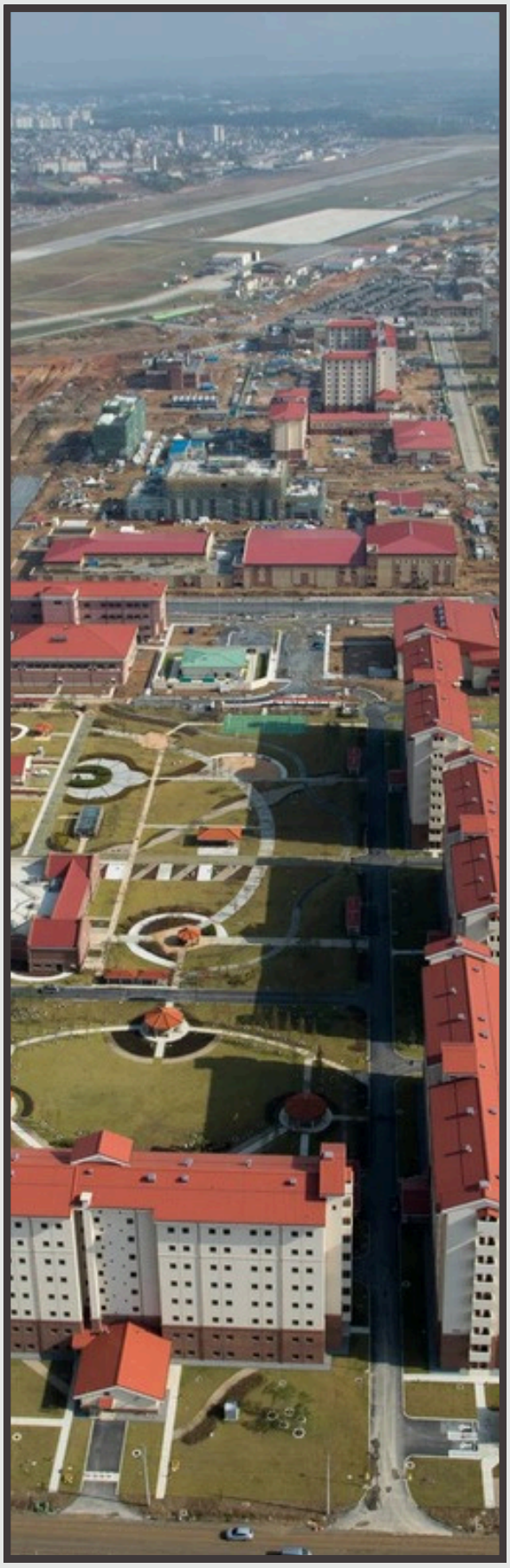
Source: Yicai

Directing focus to political relations, Mauritius has an established long-term diplomatic relationship with China as a result of bilateral trade cooperation. China stands as Mauritius's second-largest trading partner and its foremost source of imports. Chinese engagement in Mauritius extends well beyond trade, having contributed significant developmental assistance, including the Safe City project and the construction of highways, transport, and telecommunication systems.

A major smart city project named Tianli is underway in Mauritius, which is also seen as a hub for China to make inroads into the South African region where it aims to maintain its presence.The Indian Ocean remains a vital artery for Chinese trade, linking key markets from East Asia through the northern Indian Ocean, onward to Europe, the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean.

DIEGO GARCIA

DIEGO GARCIA



Source: The Guardian

From Nellis Air Force Base to Camp Humphreys, military bases tend to have a certain power and presence about them, as perceived by governments, militaries, and simple civil populations. Diego Garcia is no exception to this norm. The largest island of the Chagos Archipelago, Diego Garcia is the only officially inhabited island of the British Indian Ocean Territory. The base has been referred to as a strategic jewel on a multitude of occasions, which is no lie: as host to a very sizable – the largest in the Indian Ocean – US air and logistics base, Diego Garcia contributes greatly to ensuring and maintaining the defence of Great Britain and its allies in the region.



Source: Nellis Air Force

DIEGO GARCIA

But how did this major base land up on a supposedly random island in the Chagos Archipelago?

The island was first stumbled upon by the Portuguese in the 16th century, but remained uninhabited until, far into, the 18th; France colonised the island (as part of the greater archipelago) and maintained control over it until the nation ceded it to the United Kingdom in the 1814 Treaty of Paris. Flash-forward to the Cold War (c. ~1960), and the United States is eager to gain territory and/or military presence in the Indian Ocean, in the greater interest of combatting the spread of Socialist Soviet ideologies around the globe.

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DIEGO GARCIA

The US identified Diego Garcia as an opportunity to capitalise on, and as such immediately began talks with the UK to formalise collaboration on its ground. The negotiations were finalised midway through the 1970s, and since then, the UK and US have been able to sustain a productive partnership on the island of Diego Garcia. So today, Diego Garcia's military base is formally known (and referred to by the UK) as "Naval Support Facility Diego Garcia", while the US prefers to cite it under the name "Camp Thunder Cove": previously "Camp Justice", which was amended in the summer of 2006.

It remains a base from which the UK and US can conduct military planning and project necessary (or so deemed) solutions in the Middle East, Indo/Asia-Pacific, and eastern Africa. It is isolated enough so as to prevent attacks by land, but has evolved to be well-connected to the extent that it is a location from which the host nations can conduct valuable surveillance, reconnaissance, and overseas (often counter-terrorism related) operations.



Source: Special Eurasia

DIEGO GARCIA

Even now, with the finalised handover of the sovereignty of the Chagos Islands from the UK to Mauritius, the former is keeping control over Diego Garcia. This term was largely conditional in negotiations surrounding the handover; especially with growing influence from foreign powers, like China, emerging in the region, the UK stood firm in negotiations that, in the interest of security, they should maintain their governance over Diego Garcia specifically. And, it comes to no surprise that the United States was very much backing this decision so as to continually uphold the regional strength they had built by inhabiting Diego Garcia for military purposes. Though reporting on the States' involvement in the ceding and handover discussions of the Chagos Islands was kept to a minimum on large-scale media platforms, it was perceived to have been quite aggressive, a supposed notion to the nation's growing worries surrounding its security around the world, in the raging geopolitical landscape we live amongst today.



Source: See.mv

THE CHAGOSIANS

THE CHAGOSSIANS

Amidst all the geopolitical conflict, tension, and military developments, the Chaggosian people – once remarkable fishermen and harvesters that upheld abundant cultural norms – have become displaced. Their culture and enriching lives have been washed away, not by the harsh waves of the Indian Ocean, but by the calculated ones of strategic alliances: endorsed not by nature, but by nations. The concept of self-determination is said to date back to the turn of the 19th century, with the US's gain of independence and French revolution. Simultaneously, the ideal of national sovereignty was emerging.





Source: The Guardian

THE CHAGOSSIANS



Source: ICJ

In the modern world and political landscape, the former is almost perceived as a universal right, having been reaffirmed by the International Court of Justice in 2019 – incorporated into the greater case surrounding the legal consequences of the situation in the Chagos Archipelago, with self-determination being categorised as a binding term of international law.. But with the consideration of this “right”, the Chaggosians were deprived of their own. Even now, well past the treacherous peaks of magnitude in the territorial dispute, the Chaggosians remain a case study for uncompleted, ill-considered efforts of decolonisation, and the detrimental effects it can have.

THE CHAGOSSIANS

Approximately 6 decades ago, the UK and US began scheming. For their takeover and eventual use of Diego Garcia, which unfortunately forced an entire Indigenous population out of their endemic archipelago. The British began preventing islanders from returning to the Chagos Islands by 1967, compelling Chagossians to leave through creating a scarcity in supplies, services, and employment opportunities. In 1971, 2,000 Chaggosians – out of a total population that, in fact, amounted to a mere 2,000 – had already been forcibly removed from their homes on all the inhabited islands: Peros Banhos, Salomon, and of course, Diego Garcia.



Source: Minority Righs Group

THE CHAGOSSIANS

Notwithstanding humanitarian concerns, the expulsion of the Chagossians has been eclipsed by the security implications of the base.





In 1981, when was commissioned, the island was completely uninhabited so as to allow for sufficient space. A significant majority, though genuine statistical figures have not been reported, of these refugees are now (finally) settled into the societies of Mauritius, the Seychelles, and/or the United Kingdom, in order of what is believed to comprise the highest composition of the diaspora, to the lowest.

THE CHAGOSSIANS

The aforementioned undeniably violates norms of human rights, which sparked discourse around the world by a range of (non-)governmental bodies from both the Global North, and Global South. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights explicitly affirms that “no one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile”, and that such displaced persons should have the ability to exercise their right to return, in the document’s 9th and 13th articles, respectively. And, given the timeframe of the mass displacement, it was largely considered a “late-stage colonial exploitation”.



Source: CNBC Africa

THE CHAGOSSIANS

Moreover, the dissolution of Chagossian culture was evident amidst the scattering of the diaspora. From their native Creole dialect, to deep fishing culture, national pride in coconut farming, and music (specifically “Sega tambour Chagos”, the beautiful, UNESCO-recognised art), the Chagossian way of life was disrupted by the high tide of military action.



Source: Telegraph

THE CHAGOSSIANS

Since their initial expulsion, generations of ethnic Chagossians have been born, unable to experience their culture in a conventional, non-stigmatised, non-fragmented manner.



Source: The Independent

Source: Al Jazeera

Source: Human Rights Watch

THE CHAGOSSIANS

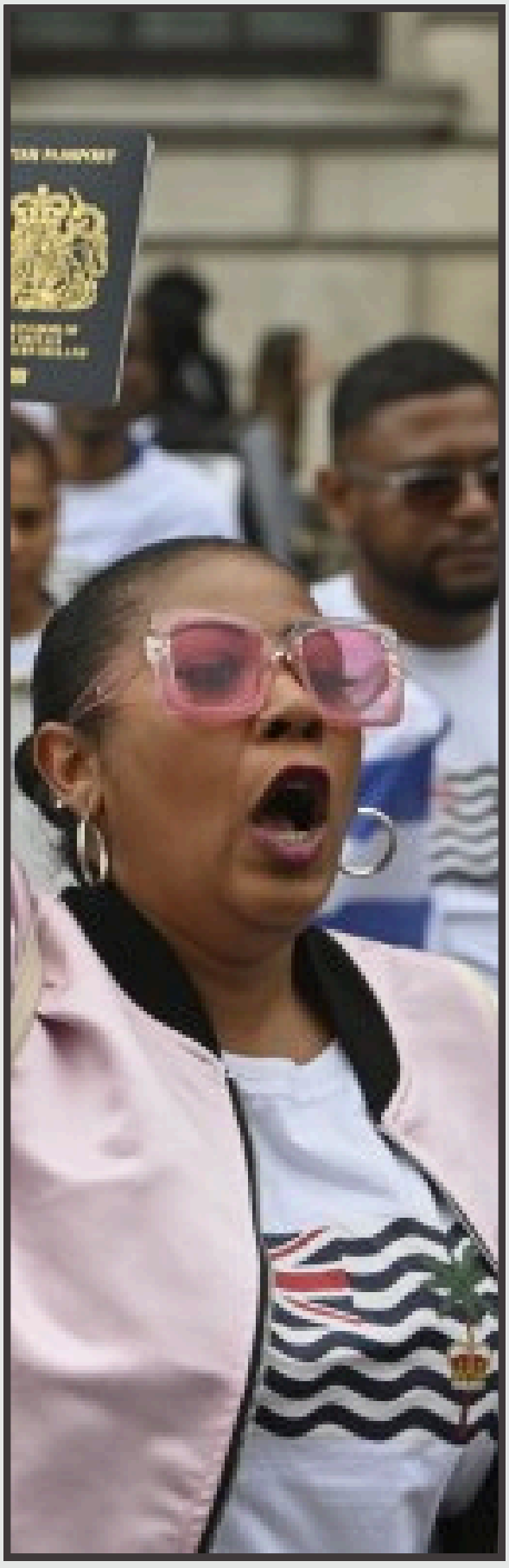


Source: BBC

Like those of many other ex-colonies, the Chagossian diaspora has eventually consolidated itself into given communities around the world (notably West Sussex, UK). Such communities have been seen coming together in solidarity, utilising politics, protests, art, and advocacy to champion their identity amidst an everlasting struggle for postcolonial resilience in identity.

WHAT LIES AHEAD

WHAT LIES AHEAD



Source: AP

The 2025 agreement between the UK and Mauritius has closed one chapter of the Chagos story, but it has opened another. For the Chagossians, the question is no longer who owns the islands. It is whether they will ever be allowed to live on them again. On paper, the answer is encouraging. The agreement states that Mauritius is free to run a resettlement programme on every island in the archipelago except Diego Garcia. Yet the base on Diego Garcia is set to operate for at least 99 years, so the largest and most developed island will stay closed to the people it once belonged to. Resettling remote atolls with little infrastructure, healthcare, schooling or work will also be a huge task.



Source: Al Jazeera

WHAT LIES AHEAD

It is unclear who will pay for it or how quickly it can happen. There is a second challenge. Decades of exile have scattered the Chagossians across Mauritius, the Seychelles and the United Kingdom, and views differ within the diaspora about what a return should look like and who should lead it. Many have also said they were left out of the talks that decided their homeland's future. A right to return means little if the people it is meant for have no say in how it works.



Source: Wikipedia

WHAT LIES AHEAD

Finally, there is the question of culture. Generations have now been born away from the islands. The Creole dialect, the fishing traditions and Sega tambour Chagos live on in diaspora communities in places like West Sussex, but they will need real support, not just memory, to survive.

The International Court of Justice found that the decolonisation of Mauritius was never lawfully completed. The agreement finishes that process on paper. Whether it is finished for the Chagossians depends on what happens next, and on whether a right to return becomes an actual return.



Source: Wikipedia



Source: RFI

THE BOTTOM LINE.

For Mauritius, the acquisition of sovereignty represents a watershed moment in its postcolonial trajectory and the formal completion of the nation's decolonization. The agreement of 22 May 2025 has been broadly regarded as a "win-win-win-win" in the sense that it reconciles the interests of the four major stakeholders involved. It furnishes Mauritius with the vindication of its decades-long legal claims; it enables the UK to bring itself into alignment with international law; it preserves the operational viability of the US military installation at Diego Garcia; and the Chagossian people are, for the first time in half a century, granted formal prospects for return to parts of the archipelago.

Nevertheless, the limitations inherent in reconciling the strategic interests of Mauritius with that of the UK and the US are indubitable. Chagossians have been vocal in their exclusion from negotiations determining their own future. While Mauritius's sovereignty over the archipelago is beyond doubt, it remains, to an extent, circumscribed by the military lease arrangement. Chagossians, granted the prospect of limited resettlement on peripheral atolls, can be thought of as subjects of a geopolitical compromise in that they are barred from Diego Garcia. At the same time, provisions detailed within the agreement call for collaborative conservation of marine ecosystems, reflecting a growing recognition of ecosystem conservation in maritime affairs.

Looking forward, the durability of the agreement hinges on synchronised political will among the UK, US, and Mauritius, particularly as evolving regional dynamics, given the increasing involvement of India and China, ushers in added geopolitical nuances to security interests in the Indian Ocean. And thus, beyond the context of the Chagos Islands sovereignty dispute, the settlement's broader significance lies in its vindication of international legal principles regarding self-determination, state responsibility, and decolonisation.

GLOSSARY

Chagossians: The indigenous people of the Chagos Archipelago, who were forcibly removed from the islands between 1967 and 1973. Their descendants now live mainly in Mauritius, the Seychelles and the United Kingdom.

Archipelago: A group or chain of islands.

British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT): A British overseas territory created in 1965 from the Chagos Archipelago and three islands that belonged to the Seychelles.

Diego Garcia: The largest island in the Chagos Archipelago, home to a joint UK and US military base.

Autonomy: The right of a region or group to govern itself on certain matters.

Self-determination: The right of a people to decide their own political status and future.

Decolonisation: The process by which a colony gains independence from the power that ruled it.

Excision: The cutting out or removal of something. Here, it means the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965.

Advisory opinion: A legal opinion given by a court on a question referred to it. It does not settle a dispute between parties but guides how the law is understood.

UNCLOS: The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the international treaty that sets out states' rights and duties over the oceans.

Exclusive economic zone: A sea area extending up to 200 nautical miles from a state's coast, in which that state has special rights over resources.

Reparation: Action taken to make amends for a wrong, such as restitution, compensation or an apology.

Right of return: The right of displaced people to go back to their homeland.

Diaspora: A population scattered from its original homeland and living in other places.

Definitions taken from Oxford Languages (unless otherwise specified)

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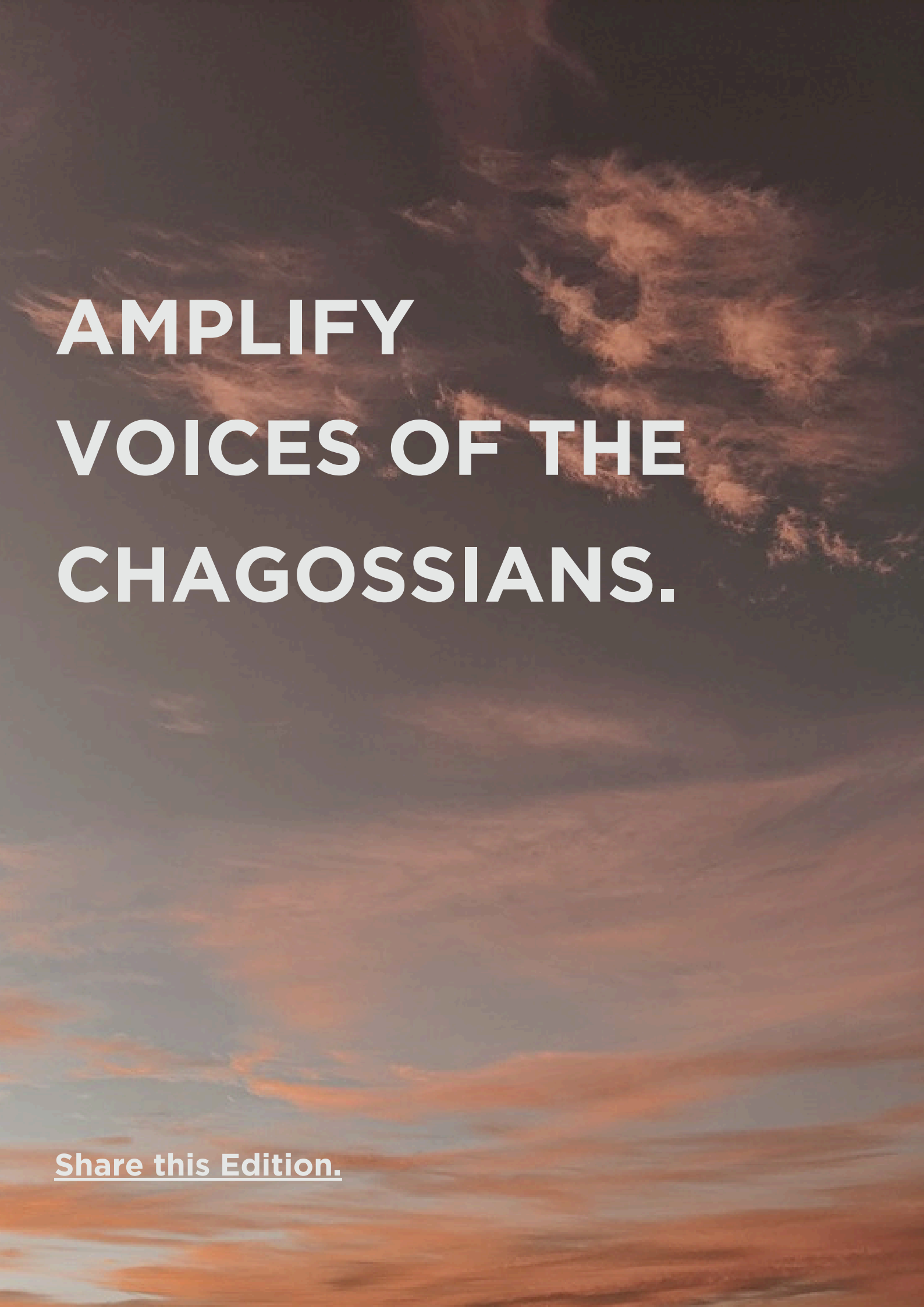
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