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UK Asked to Return Chagos Islands to Mauritius

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International Court of Justice (ICJ) has asked the United Kingdom to return the Chagos Archipelago back to Mauritius.

ICJ has said that continued British occupation of the Chagos archipelago is illegal.

Court's Advisory Opinion

ICJ in its advisory opinion has said that:

- The process of decolonization of Mauritius was not complete when the country was **given independence in 1968** as the Chagos Archipelago was separated.
- The UK should **give up its administrative control** over the Chagos Archipelago as rapidly as possible.

Background

- The case was referred to the ICJ, which hears legal submissions over international boundary disputes, after an overwhelming vote in 2017 in the UN general assembly.
- In its submission to the ICJ last year, Mauritius argued it was **coerced into giving up the Chagos Islands**.
 - That separation was in breach of **UN resolution 1514, passed in 1960**, which specifically banned the breakup of colonies before independence.
- The UK government argued that the court did not have jurisdiction to hear the case.

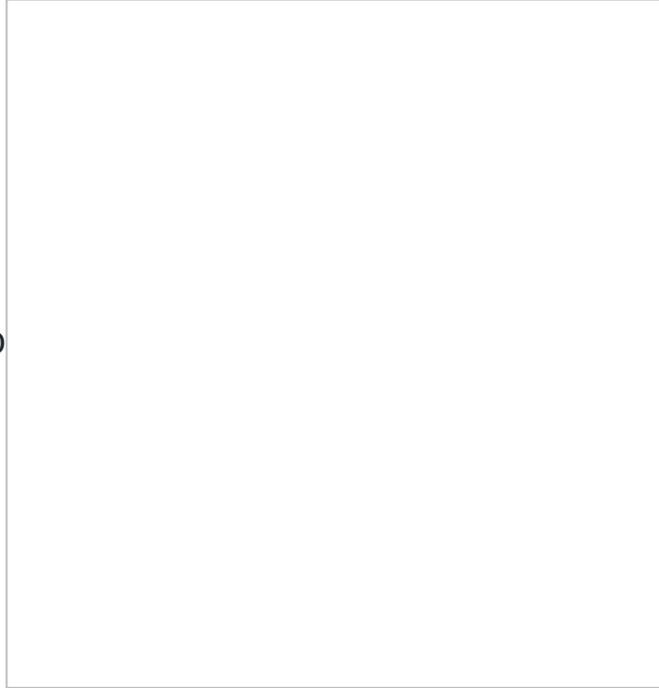
Likely Impact

- **The United Kingdom:** Although the decision by the ICJ is **only advisory**, the judgment is a blow to the UK's prestige on the world stage.
 - The UN general assembly vote in 2017, revealed the waning UK's international influence as many European Countries countries did not support the UK and traditional allies such as Canada abstaining.
- **Mauritius:** The government of Mauritius has welcomed the decision and said that is is

a “historic moment in efforts to bring colonialism to an end, and to promote human rights, self-determination and the international rule of law”.

- **On US Military Base:** The **opinion is unlikely to impact the U.S. military** base as Mauritius has said in the UN General Assembly that it is committed to the continued operation of the base in **Diego Garcia under a long-term framework.**

Chagos Archipelago



- The Chagos Archipelago, island group in the central Indian Ocean, located about 1,000 miles (1,600 km) south of the **southern tip of the Indian subcontinent.**
- In the 19th century, Chagos were **governed from Mauritius**, which was a **British Colony.**
- The UK retained possession of the Chagos archipelago, which includes the strategic US airbase of Diego Garcia, after Mauritius gained its independence in 1968, by **paying Mauritius more than £4m for the islands.**
- The U.K. government refers to it as **British Indian Ocean Territory or BIOT.**
- About 1,500 native islanders were deported from the Diego Garcia island in Chagos archipelago so that it could be leased to **the US for the airbase in 1971.**
- Mauritius claimed that it was forced to give up the islands in 1965 in exchange for independence, which it gained in 1968.

India's Stand

- India has **supported Mauritius stand** on the Chagos Archipelago.
- India in its submission to ICJ has said that the Chagos Archipelago has been and continues to be with Mauritius and demanded **sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago from Britain.**
- India stayed committed to its **Indian Ocean neighbor Mauritius, as well as its anti-**

colonial credentials.