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The Power Behind the Throne:
The US Government Must Face Its Responsibility for the Chagossian Exile

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Abstract
The US government's role in exiling the Chagossian people frequently has been underestimated, overlooked, and at times erased entirely by journalists, international organizations, human rights groups, scholars, and others. While both the UK and US governments bear responsibility for the crime, the US government was always the senior partner: US officials dreamed up the idea for a base on Diego Garcia; insisted on the expulsion of the Chagossians; proposed the UK create the British Indian Ocean Territory in violation of UN decolonization rules; paid for the deportations; ordered the final removals from Diego Garcia; assisted in killing Chagossians' pet dogs; and covered up the crime by lying to the world. This chapter outlines the US government's role in exiling the Chagossians and outsourcing the violence of displacement to the UK government. The chapter shows how the lack of attention to the US role has been by design: US officials paid the UK in part to deal with any criticism and liability. The US government now must acknowledge its responsibility and help repair the damage done. Repair should include assisting the UK in resettling Chagossians and providing at least half of proper compensation, estimated to total $7.76 billion to $18.97 billion.

In 2023 Human Rights Watch published a groundbreaking report, "That's When the Nightmare Started," finding the US and UK governments guilty of "crimes against humanity" in their treatment of the Chagossians (2023). The report was the first of its kind by a major international human rights organization after more than fifty years of Chagossian exile.[1]

Despite its importance in documenting human rights abuses committed against the Chagossians, the report troublingly mischaracterizes responsibility for the crimes by exaggerating the role of the UK government and significantly diminishing the US government's role. The report's first sentence reads,

> About 60 years ago, the United Kingdom government secretly planned, with the United States, to force an entire Indigenous people, the Chagossians, from their homes in the Chagos Archipelago. [Human Rights Watch 2023: 1.]

This description is, if not factually inaccurate, deeply misleading.

The "planning" referenced *started* with US government officials *not* with UK officials. US officials, not UK officials, conceived the idea for the base. US officials proposed the idea to the UK government—not the other way around. US, not UK, officials insisted on the expulsion of the Chagossians and paid the British government $14 million to carry it out.

Human Rights Watch's first sentence and its punctuation reverse the responsibility and minimize US culpability with a comma-demarcated, dependent clause. To be accurate, the sentence should read in the opposite direction:

> About 60 years ago, *the United States government* secretly planned, with the United Kingdom, to force….
>
> Or:

> About 60 years ago, the United States *and* United Kingdom governments secretly planned to force….

The problem is not confined to the first sentence. Throughout the pages of the report, Human Rights Watch repeatedly overlooks the leading role of the US government.

Unfortunately Human Rights Watch is not alone, nor the most egregious example, in a disturbing pattern: The US government's role in exiling the Chagossians has been underestimated, overlooked, and at times erased entirely by many journalists, human rights organizations, and scholars, among others. Consistently, many have ignored the leading role that US officials played in initiating, orchestrating, and funding a crime in which British officials were effectively junior partners recruited to provide land and perform the outsourced colonial violence of deportation.

To be clear: Both the US and UK governments bear responsibility for the crimes committed against the Chagossians (and the people of Mauritius). However, the US government was always the senior partner—the power behind the throne. I don't say this to lessen the responsibility of the UK government or its officials. I say this because the crimes have two authors, one of whom—the US government—has almost completely escaped responsibility.

My point is pragmatic and strategic as much as moral and historical: Ignoring the power and role of the US government in the past risks ignoring the power and responsibility of the US government to correct this injustice in the present. Overlooking the US role also risks allowing the US government to get away with a plan embedded in the original Diego Garcia deal: US officials paid not just for the expulsion and base access but also for the UK government to answer to any international criticism and legal liability. To this point, that's almost entirely what has happened.

Here I insist that the US government finally must acknowledge its responsibility for the exile and the profound suffering it has inflicted. Beyond acknowledgement, the US government must help repair as much of the damage suffered by Chagossians as possible.

Following Chagossians' longstanding demands, I outline how major pillars of repair should include at least the right of return; resettlement assistance; and proper financial and non-financial compensation. The chapter updates a 2012 reparations calculation guided by a 2005 UN resolution on reparations for victims of human rights abuses (Vine, Harvey, and Sokolowski 2012). I argue that the US should be responsible for paying at least half of all total compensation totaling between $7.76 billion and $18.97 billion.

Before outlining how the US government, with the UK government, should repair the damage inflicted, I attempt to remove any ambiguity about the US government's leading role in exiling the Chagossians. I will do so by detailing eight major ways the US government was the senior partner, in addition to two ways the US and UK governments conspired together to hide the expulsion and cover up their crimes. In the next section, I first provide prominent examples of people overlooking the US government's role and responsibility.

Overlooking the US Government's Role

There are many examples of observers underestimating, overlooking, or erasing the US government's role. The pattern frequently appears in titles that fail to mention the United States at all. These include "How Britain Forcefully Depopulated a Whole Archipelago; And Managed to Cover It Up" (Pilger 2019) and *The Chagos Betrayal: How Britain Robbed an Island and Made Its People Disappear* (Grosset 2021). Both of these otherwise important works, and others like them, discuss, to varying degrees, the US government's role in their main text. Still, titles (which are often selected by editors concerned with online clicks and sales) can shape readers' impressions and public perceptions, including through the minds of people who never read the main text.

An article in the major US news magazine *The Atlantic* (Murphy 2022) is more problematic in largely overlooking the US role throughout its pages. While beautifully written, the article notably fails to mention the US payment of $14 million and US officials asking for the expulsion and the excision of Chagos from Mauritius. The article's misleading online subtitle reflects the omissions: "Half a Century Ago, the British Government Forcibly Removed 2,000 People from a Remote String of Islands in the Middle of the Indian Ocean." The *Atlantic's* primarily US-based

audience makes it particularly surprising the subtitle did not read correctly as "Half a Century Ago, the *US and* British Governments Forcibly Removed…".

The problem exists among some scholars, lawyers, and human rights advocates as well. Most troublingly, some, like Human Rights Watch, reverse the culpability, attributing all or nearly all responsibility to the UK government. Some claim incorrectly that "the UK itself made the decision to remove the population not only from Diego Garcia but also the outlying islands" (Raoof 2014: 2).[2] Some wrongly suggest the expulsion "was more London's doing than Washington's. In fact, it was engineered by a handful of FCO officials in London themselves" (Juss 2017: 248).[3]

Other observers scarcely mention the US role. The introduction to an edited legal volume contains a single parenthetical reference to the US government, describing "the involuntary displacement of the Chagos Islanders (pursuant to the construction of a US naval facility on Diego Garcia)" (Allen and Monaghan 2018: 1).

The frequent diminishment or erasure of the US role is somewhat understandable given the perceived significance of sovereignty in the international system. UK sovereignty over Chagos and Chagossians' status as UK citizens has meant that many rightly have criticized the British government and held it accountable for the expulsion and exile. That the vast majority of Chagos litigation has taken place in British courts or involved the UK government has further tilted attention toward the UK government.[4] Overlooking the leading US role also likely derives from the fact that UK citizens have produced much of the work about the exile. Proximity and access to government documents and officials often can shape the focus of research and analysis.[5]

Still, the neglect of the central role the US government played in initiating, orchestrating, and paying for the expulsion is troubling. Such depictions are like describing a paid hitman murdering someone without explaining who ordered and paid for the hit. Or, perhaps more accurately, it's like describing a paid thief stealing someone's property without explaining who ordered and paid for the theft.

US Responsibility: The Historical Record

To remove any doubt about the primary responsibility of the US government in expelling the Chagossians, I will briefly outline the US role (for more details, see Vine 2011).[6]

1. US—not UK—officials conceived the idea for the base found today on Diego Garcia: Beginning around 1958, Stuart Barber and other US Navy officials identified and developed the idea for building a base on Diego Garcia as part of their "Strategic Island Concept." (The small British military outpost found on Diego Garcia during World War II closed at war's end and was not the foundation for today's base.) Barber's key role is well documented (e.g., Vine 2011, 2023; Bandjunis 2001; Ryan 1984). In an unpublished letter, Barber explained, "The concept of setting aside Diego Garcia and surrounding islands as an unpopulated strategic territory for joint US-UK use was initially mine" (Barber 1971).

2. US officials subsequently proposed the idea to the UK government—not the other way around: US Navy and other government leaders embraced Barber's "Strategic Island Concept" and its identification of Diego Garcia as a leading candidate for base development. In 1960, US Navy officials approached their British counterparts about creating one or more military bases on Diego Garcia and other islands in the Indian Ocean (Vine 2011: 68–69).

3. US—not UK—officials first proposed the creation of the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) and violating UN rules on decolonization: US officials proposed the creation of the new colony to secure permanent colonial control of the Chagos islands amid Mauritius's push for independence. The Strategic Island Concept was premised on gaining control of strategic islands under direct US sovereignty or the sovereignty of a close European ally such as the UK or Australia. Barber explained in an unpublished letter to the *Washington Post* how "in May 1960…I was the individual who proposed the detachment of these islands from Mauritius [and] the establishment of the British Indian Ocean Territory" (Barber 1991). The US Navy subsequently

"initiated negotiations…to persuade London to detach the Diego Garcia atoll" and other Chagos islands from Mauritius to create the BIOT (Bezboruah, 1977: 58). Multiple accounts confirm: "BIOT was thus the brainchild of the US Navy" (Bezboruah, 1977: 58; see also Bandjunis, 2001: 1-3; Ryan, 1984: 133; Vine 2004: 119; Vine 2011: 69).

4. US—not UK—officials insisted on the expulsion of the Chagossians from Diego Garcia and secured the possibility of expulsion from all the Chagos islands: During secret negotiations in 1964 (if not earlier) US officials indicated they wanted basing rights on Indian Ocean islands, including Diego Garcia, on the condition that they have "exclusive control (without local inhabitants)" (US Embassy London 1964). UK officials agreed.

The two government sealed the deal in the 1966 US–UK agreement. In a confidential, unpublished "agreed minute" attached to the published agreement, Britain committed to take "administrative measures" necessary to make all of Chagos and other BIOT islands available for US use. The administrative measures, the secret notes show, were any actions necessary for closing down the island plantations and "resettling the inhabitants" (Chalfont 1966).[7]

(Ultimately, evidence suggests that US officials only requested the expulsion of Chagossians from Diego Garcia. UK officials appear to have made the decision to remove Chagossians from the other Chagos islands of Peros Banhos and Salomon (Snoxell 2009). They did so, however, in a context in which US officials refused to guarantee their UK counterparts that they would refrain from building military facilities and asking for expulsions on Peros Banhos and Salomon for a period of twenty years or else compensate the UK government for any such decision (Stoddart 1969). While UK officials appear to have had additional motivations for exiling Chagossians from Peros Banhos and Salomon (Snoxell 2009), the looming prospect of US officials requesting additional deportations seems to have shaped their decision significantly.[8])

5. The US government secretly paid $14 million for the expulsion of the Chagossians and basing rights, hiding the payment from Congress, Parliament, and the world: As part of secret minutes attached to the 1966 US–UK agreement, US government officials arranged to pay the $14 million by wiping away $14 million in debt the UK government owed the US government for the development of the Polaris missile system (Vine 2011: 87–88; Bandjunis 2001: 46; US House 1975: 42–43). By erasing the UK debt, US officials avoided having to ask Congress for an authorization of funds, further concealing the plans. The payments were to reimburse the British for "all costs pertaining to the administrative detachment of the Indian Ocean islands in question and to the acquisition of the lands thereon." This was diplomatic legalese for the costs of deporting the Chagossians, buying out the plantation owners, and paying off Mauritius and the Seychelles.

When the two governments quietly published the 1966 Diego Garcia agreement in 1967, the agreement falsely said the UK would make the BIOT islands available to the United States "without charge" (United Kingdom 1966). The US government perpetuated the falsehood of non-payment in recent years when describing to the International Court of Justice "the absence of any 'lease' *or payment* by the United States" (United States of America 2018: 37, 4.7).

You don't need to be an accountant to know that removing a debt is one way one party can pay another. The US embassy in Mauritius admitted the truth in 1972, saying that the Pentagon "acknowledged its responsibility for the removal of the Ilois [Chagossians] by *payment* of $14 million to HMG [Her Majesty's Government]"(Brewer 1972: 2, 5; emphasis added).

6. US officials ordered the final deportation of Chagossians from Diego Garcia: In late 1970 and early 1971, as the US Navy was beginning construction on Diego Garcia, US officials asked UK officials to complete the deportation of the remaining Chagossians on the island. On December 7, 1970, a joint State Department–Pentagon message told the London embassy to inform British officials that it was time "for the UK to accomplish relocation of the present residents of Diego Garcia to some other location." The message continued, "All local personnel should be moved from the western half of the island before the arrival of the construction force in March 1971. We hope that complete relocation can be accomplished by the end of July 1971" (Rogers 1970).

When a Navy commander on the island warned of "possible bad publicity" from deporting a people who had lived there for generations, the highest ranking official in the US Navy, Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, held firm. In exactly three words, Zumwalt cut off internal discussion and delivered what amounted to the final deportation order: "Absolutely must go" (1971).

7. US officials also ordered and assisted in the killing of Chagossians' pet dogs, showing direct US involvement in the deportation—contrary to later US government assertions: While Chagossians were awaiting their deportation, US military officials ordered the killing of all dogs on Diego Garcia to avoid their interfering in military operations. The British agent on Diego Garcia, plantation manager Marcel Moulinie, coordinated the killing of what he estimated as around 800 dogs. US Navy personnel assisted in the killing first by attempting to shoot and then poison the dogs. When both methods failed as efficient killing mechanisms, US Navy personnel helped herd the pets into sealed sheds, where they were gassed with exhaust from US Navy vehicles, after which their carcasses were burned (Moulinie 1999; Vine 2011: 113–114).

When in 1975 Congress held the only day of hearings it has ever held to investigate the expulsion, President Gerald R. Ford's administration falsely claimed, "All went willingly…. No coercion was used and no British or U.S. servicemen were involved" (US House 1975: 42).

8. US officials inhibited resettlement planning and refused British and Mauritian government requests that Chagossians be allowed to work on the base (as at most other US bases abroad): US officials prevented the British government from discussing the resettlement of Chagossians with the Mauritian government until after the US Navy secured funding for the base in late 1970. The US embassy in London quickly understood that the British were facing serious difficulties in arranging the deportations as a result. In January 1971, State Department Legal Adviser John R. Stevenson warned US officials:

> Although the responsibility for carrying out measures to ensure the welfare of the inhabitants lies with the UK, the US is charged under the [1966] Agreement with *facilitating these arrangements*…. The US *constrained the UK* from discussing the matter with the GOM pending the outcome of our Congressional appropriations legislation. In light of this, we are under a particular responsibility not to pressure the UK into meeting a time schedule which may not provide sufficient time in which to satisfactorily arrange for the welfare of the inhabitants. Beyond this, their removal is to accommodate US needs, and the USG will, of course, be considered to *share the responsibility* with the UK by the inhabitants and other nations if satisfactory arrangements are not made. [Stevenson 1971; emphasis added.]

US officials ignored this and other warnings. After construction on the base began, US diplomats began pressuring their British counterparts to complete the deportations as quickly as possible. One official later acknowledged, "In order to meet our self-imposed timetable, their evacuation was undertaken with a haste which the British could claim has prevented careful examination of resettlement needs" (Newsom 1972: 1).

The US embassy in Mauritius noted, too, that the US government had "resisted" Mauritian and British government "efforts to permit Ilois [Chagossians] to remain as employees of the facility" (Brewer 1971).

9. US officials, with UK officials, intentionally hid the development of the base and the expulsion of the Chagossians from the UN, lying about Chagossians' indigenous status to avoid the responsibilities related to the right to self-determination: The US and UK delegations to the United Nations jointly suggested a slow implementation of base construction and the deportation "to minimize adverse reaction at the UN and throughout the world." Each step should have "some logical cover," they said. "The transfer of population," they warned, "is a very sensitive issue at the UN" (see Vine 2011: 80).

The US State Department suggested "that the term 'migrant laborers' be used" to describe the Chagossians, whom they knew to have lived in the islands for generations. "Withdrawal of 'inhabitants' obviously would be more difficult to justify to [Indian Ocean] littoral countries and [UN] Committee of Twenty-four" responsible for decolonization (Rusk 1968). US officials wanted a base without the risk of eviction or local protest by a self-governing population. They protected against that risk by ensuring there would be no "inhabitants" or any indigenous population that could assert its right to self-determination at the UN (Vine 2011: 89–92).

10. US officials, with UK officials, covered up their crimes and perpetuated Chagossians' exile by censoring media and lying to Congress, the media, and the world since the 1960s: As early as 1964, for example, the State Department pressured both the *Washington Post* and the *Economist* to hold stories for months that threatened to break news about the secret planning for Diego Garcia (Vine 2011: XXXX). The published article described the population of Diego Garcia as consisting "largely of transient laborers" (Estabrook 1964: A1, A6).

Misrepresenting the Chagossians as "transient contract workers" and migrant "copra workers" became official US–UK policy to avoid public criticism. In late 1970, the State Department sent instructions to its embassies to tell the press, "The population consists of a small number of contract laborers from the Seychelles and Mauritius engaged to work on the copra plantations" (Rogers 1970). For Congress, the Navy described Diego Garcia's population as "negligible…. For all practical purposes…uninhabited" (Leddick 1969).

The role of the US government in shaping UK policy and maintaining the Chagossians' exile since the expulsion from Diego Garcia remains unclear due to the lack of transparency in US–UK intergovernmental relations and the inability to consult relevant government documents that officials have refused to provide public access to by maintaining classified status. Human Rights Watch (2023) and others may be right in attributing the majority of responsibility for perpetuating the exile post-expulsion to the British government. Alternatively, US officials may have continued to play a leading role in determining UK policy. The US government's support, at very least, for UK policy is clear given public statements under presidents Obama, Trump, and Biden.

For those who may think I'm exaggerating the US role, I would ask simply: If the US government had never shown any interest in or taken any steps toward building a base in Chagos, would the Chagossians have been exiled? The historical record shows that the answer is almost certainly *No.* There is no evidence that the UK government had any plans for or consideration of separating Chagos from Mauritius and exiling the Chagossians. If the US government had not initiated, paid for, and orchestrated this colonial crime, Chagossians would likely be living to this day in Chagos, as part of Mauritius, just as people live on the small Mauritian islands of Agalega and Rodrigues.

The Colonial Mastermind

The US government's ability to escape most international criticism, protest, and legal proceedings has been no accident. It has been by design. This was part of US strategy embedded in the original 1966 Diego Garcia agreement: the US government paid $14 million not just for basing rights and the deportation of the Chagossians but also for the UK government to assume responsibility for any criticism received at the UN, in other international fora, and in the media. For only $14 million, US officials secured the legal and political alibi that Great Britain was the sovereign and thus responsible for the local population.

US officials saw the value of avoiding the responsibilities and challenges of direct sovereignty and outsourcing the colonial dirty work and bureaucratic logistics of exiling the Chagossians to the British government.[9] Outsourcing the colonial dirty work—which is to say, violence—of expulsion was in keeping with US colonial practice since the start of the 20th century. US officials, like imperial rulers throughout history, realized the value of indirect rule, avoiding direct sovereignty and outsourcing the violence of displacement, especially amid the decolonization movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

The recruitment of the UK government to displace the Chagossians was part of a pattern of "base displacement" in which US officials enlisted (mostly) colonial powers to displace local, often indigenous populations during the construction and expansion of overseas military installations (Vine 2011: 65–68; Vine 2020: 226–234). Examples include Trinidad and Newfoundland (UK); Greenland (Denmark); Okinawa (Japan); and Daechuri (South Korea). The US government also displaced people itself in US colonies including Puerto Rico, Guam, Hawai'i and Alaska before statehood, and the Marshall Islands when it was a US colony (Vine 2020: 228–233).

Among all the peoples displaced, only one (Newfoundland) was of European ancestry and considered white. The racism of US policy has been clear.

US Responsibility to Repair

Given its leading role, the US government is more than five decades overdue in redressing its responsibility for inflicting gross human rights abuses against the Chagossians. Given the passage of time and the proportion of the population that has died in exile there will be no way to repair most of the damage. Repairing as much of the damage as possible remains urgent.

Chagossians' right to comprehensive reparations is clearly established under international law (United Nations 2005). Such reparations include but are not limited to monetary compensation for "any economically assessable damage" suffered as a result of a human rights violation. Those entitled to reparations include both direct victims displaced from Chagos and indirect victims such as descendants born in exile (United Nations 2005: Principles 20, 8).

Reparations practice demands that Chagossians, as victims, must decide what reparations and repair look like (Johnston 2000). Following longstanding Chagossian demands, the US government should be responsible for at least: 1) immediately supporting Chagossians' right to return home to live and visit Diego Garcia and the other Chagos islands; 2) assisting with Chagossians' resettlement of their islands, as well as visitation, with the full cooperation of the base (whether it remains operational or not); and 3) collaborating with the UK government to provide proper financial and/or non-financial compensation to all Chagossians regardless of where they live. The US government—unless Chagossians disagree—should provide other forms of reparations including a public apology, a guarantee of non-repetition, and the publication of all documents related to the expulsion (Human Rights Watch 2023: 92–95).

Calculating monetary compensation is difficult, given that money cannot adequately measure or reflect harms suffered. Still, we can and must calculate compensation so Chagossians can receive fair financial reparation in keeping with international law (courts do this every day when people suffer lost property or other damages).

To estimate proper compensation that accords with the highest standards of international human rights law, colleagues and I developed a "Human Rights Standards Damages Model" (Vine, Harvey, and Sokolowski 2012). We call it this because the model assumes that proper compensation owed to Chagossians is the difference between the lives Chagossians have led since their expulsion and the lives they could have expected if the UK and US had lived up to their human rights obligations under international law.

The model estimates the value of land and possessions taken, and economic, psychological, and sociocultural damage suffered as a result of being forcibly displaced, including consequential damages since the expulsion (see, e.g., Vine 2011).

We subtract compensation of about $6,000 per recipient received previously by *some* Chagossians (Vine, Harvey, and Sokolowski 2012: 154). Updating our 2012 calculations to 2023, we conclude that proper compensation ranges between $7.76 billion and $18.97 billion (expressed in 2008 Purchasing Power Parity dollars, inflation adjusted to 2023).

Given the US government's leading role in the crime, the US should be responsible for paying at least half of total compensation, or between $3.88 billion and $9.49 billion.

Conclusion

Unfortunately the US government's position has remained largely unchanged since the time of the expulsion. The position the Ford administration articulated to Congress in 1975 appears to remain

US policy: "There is no outstanding US obligation to underwrite the cost of additional assistance for the persons affected" (US House 1975: 42–45). In a letter responding to Human Rights Watch's report, the US government ignored the demand to join reparations efforts (Human Rights Watch 2023: 125). A State Department spokesperson said only that the US government "acknowledges the challenges faced by Chagossian communities."

To date the US government's strategy to outsource the colonial violence of displacement and the international obligations of sovereignty to the UK sadly has worked. The US government has remained in the background, obscured and shielded from most criticism and legal action despite having been the senior partner in this crime, the power behind the throne.

This cannot continue. Justice demands that the US government face its responsibility for exiling the Chagossians and the profound damage the exile has caused.

Those who care about justice and the Chagossians must ensure that we no longer overlook or underplay the US role. This is no academic matter: US officials possessed the majority of power when they proposed, paid for, and requested the base and the expulsion. They possess the majority of power now to correct this injustice.

We now must ensure that US officials, with UK officials, do just that.

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[2] Raoof is not wrong about the UK's role in expelling Chagossians from the Chagos islands *other than* Diego Garcia. See point 4 in the chapter's next section.

[3] Juss seems to indicate that the "the decision to depopulate the islands [including Diego Garcia] was a British decision" (2017: 250). Juss cites Snoxell's conclusion that UK officials decided on the expulsion from the Chagos islands *other than* Diego Garcia but fails to note Snoxell saying "the US had indicated only that they required Diego to be depopulated" (Snoxell 2009: 133). Juss doesn't provide additional evidence showing that UK officials made the decision to forcibly remove Chagossians from Diego Garcia or that UK officials "engineered" the entirety of the expulsions. By contrast, Snoxell's (2009) characterization of "Anglo-American complicity" is accurate.

[4] At the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the sole defendant was the UK, not the US. The ICJ's 2019 decision finding UK sovereignty over the Chagos islands "unlawful" neglected the role of the US government in proposing and paying for the excision of Chagos from Mauritius and the creation of the British Indian Ocean Territory. The subsequent 2019 UN resolution likewise ordered Britain, alone, to "withdraw its colonial administration." The resolution did not mention the US government's role in supporting British colonial rule on an island where the US exercises considerable de facto sovereignty. While the base is technically a joint installation, the British role is negligible. Diego Garcia is the only place in the United Kingdom, other than Gibraltar, where cars drive on the right side of the road.

Both the ICJ and UN let the US government escape justice (although they were constrained by the understandably narrow focus of the Mauritian government's case). Both overlooked the crime's senior partner: the US government.

[5] I suspect that some UK citizens feel a responsibility, as UK citizens, to hold their government accountable. As a US citizen, I certainly have a similar feeling about holding the US government accountable. That said, my primary motivation for focusing on the US role throughout my scholarship has been scholars' and journalists' overwhelming focus on the UK role and the dearth of research about the US government.

[6] Most of the US government documents and others cited are available at www.chagosarchive.org.

[7] The 1966 US–UK Diego Garcia agreement and inter-governmental negotiations allowed for forced removals from other islands to make way for additional US military facilities. There is no evidence that US officials exercised this facet of the Diego Garcia agreement or ordered the removal of Chagossians from the other Chagos islands, however this possibility exists.

[8] In requesting the twenty-year guarantee, UK officials appear to have been seeking assurance that they could make financial investments in Peros Banhos and Salomon without the danger of losing those investments and incurring the additional costs of deporting the Chagossians and closing the island plantations (Snoxell 2009: 132–133). Other motivations may have included the desire to avoid scrutiny from the UN's decolonization committee and the belief that it was "altogether more convenient not to be saddled with the administrative burden of a new populated colony with its UN reporting requirements" (Snoxell 2009: 134).

[9] UK officials appear to have embraced US officials' plans for three main reasons: 1) a desire to maintain the "special relationship" with the UK's closest ally amid rapidly declining British power globally; 2) wanting to maintain a symbolic British military presence in Asia following the decision to close all UK military bases "east of Suez"; and 3) the $14 million offered by the US government amid a serious British economic crisis.