War and Forced Migration in the Indian Ocean: The US Military Base at Diego Garcia

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ABSTRACT

Between 1967 and 1973, the indigenous people of the Indian Ocean's Chagos Archipelago were forcibly displaced from their homelands so the US Government could construct a strategic military base on the island of Diego Garcia. The people of Diego Garcia and the rest of the Chagos Archipelago now live in poverty in the island nations of Mauritius and Seychelles, nearly 2,000 kilometres from their homes. Analysing formerly classified government documents, this paper demonstrates how between the end of World War II and the final removals in 1973, the US Government planned, ordered, financed, helped orchestrate, and participated in the expulsion of the exiled people, known as Chagossians or *Ilois*. While some have detailed the role the British Government played in the removals, this paper clarifies how the US Government bears primary responsibility for the expulsion. Ultimately the creation of the base at Diego Garcia and the expulsion of the Chagossians reveal much about how the United States has exercised its political, economic, and military will on the world since World War II. The paper explains the significance of Diego Garcia and the expulsion of the Chagossians to post-war US foreign relations, incorporating comparative analyses of other forced migrations caused by the construction of US military facilities, including those in the Marshall Islands; Thule, Greenland; Okinawa, Japan; and Vieques, Puerto Rico.

INTRODUCTION

Between 1967 and 1973, the indigenous people of the Indian Ocean's Chagos Archipelago were forcibly displaced from their homelands so the US Govern-

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ment could construct a strategic military base on the island of Diego Garcia. Now Diego Garcia is home to billions of dollars worth of B-1, B-2, and B-52 bombers; reconnaissance, cargo, and in-air refuelling planes; nuclear submarines and navy surface vessels; and an armada of pre-positioned ships with enough tanks, weaponry, ammunition, and fuel to equip an expeditionary force of tens of thousands of US troops for 30 days. The base became a key launch pad for US forces in the recent invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan and Diego Garcia may be the site of a secret detention centre holding accused terrorists.[1] Since their expulsion, the people of Diego Garcia and the rest of the Chagos Archipelago have lived in poverty on the islands of Mauritius and Seychelles, nearly 2,000 kilometres away.

Few people in the United States and around the world know about this expulsion. Since the mid-1970s the creation of the base and the expulsion of the Chagossians have generated some scholarly interest and relatively more journalistic attention (at least in Great Britain). The literature divides largely in two: political scientists have generally contributed strategic analyses of the creation, development, and role of the base at Diego Garcia, in the context of military competition over the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf; others have focused primarily on the expulsion of the Chagossians and the injuries they have suffered in exile. Both sides of the literature have their limitations and rarely have any works gone far to connect the two perspectives.

Most of the strategic literature on Diego Garcia is more than two decades old. Most of it arose in response to the increase of US and Soviet military forces in the Indian Ocean during the 1970s, and most scholarly interest dwindled by the late 1980s as the power of the Soviet Union declined. Over this period, scholars defined the Indian Ocean as a discrete field of strategic and international relations analysis. In doing so, they seem to have contributed to what is the major weakness of the strategic literature on Diego Garcia: a strong tendency to understand Diego Garcia within the limited regional context of the Indian Ocean. Scholars largely failed to look beyond the geographic scope of the Indian Ocean and to expand their perspective geopolitically and geoeconomically to understand Diego Garcia within the wider context of US foreign relations, its military policy, and especially its network of global military bases.

The literature on the expulsion of the Chagossians, while successful in documenting injuries suffered as a result of the removals, has in many ways been equally narrow. It too has largely failed to examine the experience of the Chagossians within a larger global perspective of US foreign policy (most obviously by connecting the Chagossians' expulsion to other forced migrations involving the US military). Nearly all the literature has also focused primarily on the role of the

British Government in organizing the removal process. The literature has not, other than in passing, examined the role the US Government played in ordering and orchestrating the expulsion.

This neglect has left some confusion about the role of the US Government in creating the base and ordering the expulsion. Frequent historical and factual inaccuracies have also appeared in the journalistic and scholarly literature (e.g. to whom the base and the territory belong?: Diego Garcia is technically a joint US/UK base, but with only a handful of British functionaries, it is de facto a US base, even if the island and the rest of the Chagos Archipelago form the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)).[2] These shortcomings have made a scholarly corrective about the basic history of the US role long overdo.

The two sides of the literature have generally failed to explain the larger significance of Diego Garcia, both as a military base and as an example of forced migration. Some would explain it as an aberration in the course of late twentieth century US and world history. On the contrary, the creation of the base at Diego Garcia and the expulsion of the Chagossians from their homelands reveal much about how the United States has exercised its political, economic, and military will on the rest of the world since World War II. The literature has failed in this way to explore how Diego Garcia and the expulsion are exemplative of wider patterns of US foreign relations and, especially, US military policy. In response to these weaknesses in the literature this paper seeks (1) to clarify the role of the US Government in the expulsion through a detailed documentation of the history of the base, drawing on newly available documentary evidence; (2) to answer the question: what is the significance of Diego Garcia and the expulsion of the Chagossians?; and (3) based on the example of Diego Garcia, to posit additional conclusions about the nature of US foreign relations since World War II.[3]

DIEGO GARCIA AND THE CHAGOSSIANS: REVIEWING THE LITERATURE

The development of the base at Diego Garcia and the expulsion of the Chagossians have been the subject of a small body of literature since the 1970s. Analysts have typically focused on either the strategic military dimensions of the base or on the Chagossians' removal experience. The strategic analyses have generally explained the creation and development of the base as the centre point of an accelerating US policy to dominate the Persian Gulf/Indian Ocean region and the flow of oil through the direct projection of its military power (Bezboruah, 1977; Larus, 1982, 1985; Jawatkar, 1983; Khan, 1983; Sick, 1983). Bezboruah and Jawatkar emphasize that Diego Garcia became especially important to this

strategy because once it was depopulated Diego Garcia was shielded from the political complications and potential opposition of a continental base encircled by growing (often anti-Western) nationalism in Africa and Asia (Bezboruah, 1977; Jawatkar, 1983). Writing early in the development of the base, in 1977, Bezboruah accurately predicted that Diego Garcia would be "a decisive facility enabling the United States to 'influence major shifts in the global balance of power'" (1977: 84). Less than a decade later, Larus found the base to have "become one of American's essential military installations in the world, the hub for its strategic operational plans to deal with any future crisis in the Middle East/Persian Gulf area" (1985: 435).

Some explain the development of the base in the context of Cold War competition with the Soviet Union (Sick, 1983; Larus, 1985). Others argue that rivalry with the Soviets was overblown at various points and exploited as a rationale to win Congressional appropriations for the base (Singh, 1977; Jawatkar, 1983; Sick, 1983). More than others, Singh sees the base as primarily motivated by a desire to increase the ability of the United States to intervene militarily with regional powers and to aid the deployment of submarine-based nuclear weapons in the Indian Ocean targeting the Soviet Union and China. The most recent analysis, by a retired naval officer who participated in the development of the base, finds no single strategic motivation. In what is the best history of the base (even if the scholarship in this self-published book is seriously flawed), Bandjunis (2001) argues that a series of regional events strengthened the perceived need for a base whose initial creation owes itself mostly to the initiative of the US Navy.

Of those focusing on the removal of the Chagossians, there is widespread agreement among scholars, journalists, and other observers that the Chagossians as a group have been deeply impoverished since their expulsion from Chagos (Ottaway, 1975; Siophe, 1975; Prosser, 1976; Botte, 1980; Sylva, 1981; Madeley, 1985; Walker, 1986; Dræbel, 1997; Anyangwe, 2001; Winchester, 2001). Some have documented the high rates of unemployment and poverty among Chagossians (Siophe, 1975; Sylva, 1981; Dræbel, 1997); some have documented their degraded housing conditions (Siophe, 1975; Prosser, 1976; Botte, 1980; Sylva, 1981; Dræbel, 1997); and others have documented their many health problems and educational difficulties (Siophe, 1975; Botte, 1980; Dræbel, 1997).

In documenting the history of the expulsion, most have focused on the actions of the British Government in removing the Chagossians. Madeley (1985) and Winchester (1985, 2001; see also Marimootoo, 1997) explain that the US Government required the removal as part of the two Governments' BIOT agreement but focus little more on the US role. Both emphasize the duplicity and (in a sarcastic understatement) "fibbing policy" (Winchester, 2001: 217) of the Brit-

ish Government in organizing the removals. Along with Anyangwe (2001), Madeley and Winchester stress the violation of the Chagossians' basic human rights. Madeley is the most explicit in arguing that racism underlies the treatment of the Chagossians, as is clear from his title, "Diego Garcia: a contrast to the Falklands" (1985).

All of these analyses are important to the understanding of the creation and development of Diego Garcia. However, each generally sees Diego Garcia only within the context of Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf geopolitics or the expulsion of the Chagossians as a relatively isolated incident. The literature overlooks the ways in which Diego Garcia exemplifies wider patterns of US foreign, and specifically military, policy. Jawatkar alone emphasizes how Diego Garcia is part of a global US military strategy and the expansion of its global power. He argues that one must see Diego Garcia not as an isolated case but as part of US "foreign policy objectives as a global power" and its chain of bases from the Pacific to South Africa (1983: 279).

THE CHAGOSSIANS: FROM LIFE IN CHAGOS TO IMPOVERISHMENT IN EXILE

First settlement

Humans first settled permanently in Chagos after France claimed the islands around 1783 (Scott, 1976: 75, 20; "Diego Garcia", n.d.; Walker, 1993: 562; Kuczynski, 1977). French mercantilists sailing from Mauritius (then known as Île-de-France) established coconut oil plantations on Diego Garcia, the Peros Banhos and Salomon island groups, and other islands in the archipelago (Chagos later became part of the British colony of Mauritius after France ceded most of its Indian Ocean territories to Great Britain in 1814). From the outset, the French transported enslaved people to Chagos to build and work the plantations (the enslaved people, or their ancestors, of course having been forcibly exiled from their homes mostly in East Africa and Madagascar). These enslaved people along with indentured labourers later brought to the islands from India became the ancestors of most of today's Chagossians.[4]

After emancipation, men and women continued to work on the coconut plantations, receiving regular, if small, salaries in cash and food, as well as medical care, vacations to Mauritius and Seychelles, housing, and, later, schooling. The workday began around sunrise and was generally completed by midday, allowing the islanders to work paid overtime or tend to their gardens, to perform household tasks or enjoy the ample fishing opportunities around the islands (see e.g. Scott, 1976).

The expulsions

Life transformed for the Chagossians after 1965. Following several years of surveys and negotiations, the US Government convinced the UK Government to create a new colony in the era of decolonization. The explicit purpose of the colony was to provide potential sites for island military bases (Bezboruah, 1977; Bandjunis, 2001). This new colony, the BIOT, was formed by excising the Chagos Archipelago from soon-to-be-independent Mauritius and three distant island groups from colonial Seychelles. The US Government secretly paid as much as US$14 million toward the costs of establishing BIOT and removing the population from Chagos, a requirement ordered by the Americans and agreed upon by the British.

By 1967, any Chagossians leaving Chagos for vacation or medical treatment were denied return passage to their homes and left stranded – often without their families and their possessions – in Mauritius. Some report being tricked or coerced into leaving in the late 1960s. At the turn of the decade when the British restricted the number of regular supply ships visiting Chagos, others left as food, medicine, and other necessities dwindled dangerously low (Madeley, 1985; Winchester, 2001).

In 1971, agents of the British Government acting on orders from the US Government, and with at least some assistance from US soldiers already on Diego (Moulinie, 1999), forced the remaining inhabitants of Diego Garcia to board overcrowded cargo ships and leave their homes forever. The ships deposited some of the Chagossians more than 200 kilometres away in Chagos's far-off Peros Banhos and Salomon islands and others almost 2,000 kilometres away on the docks in Mauritius and Seychelles. In the process, agents of the British Government, with the help of US soldiers, first shot, then poisoned, and finally gassed and burned the islanders' pet dogs *en masse* in a sealed shed where the dogs had been lured (Moulinie, 1999).

Two years later, in 1973, the US Government delivered the final orders that all the islands should be cleansed of inhabitants. Agents of the British Government forced the remaining inhabitants of Peros Banhos and Salomon onto the *Nordvær*, an overcrowded cargo ship owned by the British Government, and forced them to disembark in Mauritius and Seychelles.

Life in exile

In Mauritius and Seychelles, the population has remained in exile, prohibited from returning to Chagos.[5] Little to no attempt was made to resettle the

Chagossians. Some in Seychelles were first taken to live in a former prison; others in Mauritius were given dilapidated shacks amidst pigs, cows, and other farm animals. Some in Mauritius received small compensation payments from the British Government five and then ten years after the last removals. These payments came after most Chagossians had already fallen deeply into poverty. They were generally only enough to get them out of large debts accumulated in the interceding years or provide them with what was often their first proper home, in the slums of Mauritius' capital, Port Louis.

From more than four months of ethnographic and survey research in Mauritius and Seychelles and almost three years of research overall, I have found that as a group the Chagossians face deep impoverishment and high rates of unemployment. Many live in homes cobbled together out of scraps of corrugated metal and wood or under otherwise degraded housing conditions with poor or non-existent water and sanitation services. Many suffer from poor health and low levels of education; many have been the victims of ethnic discrimination from non-Chagossian Mauritians and Seychellois; and many have suffered through other forms of daily harm and humiliation that accompany life at the absolute bottom of Mauritian and Seychellois societies.[6]

Carlson Anyangwe (2001: 43) summarizes the immediate and long-term effects of the Chagossian expulsion from Chagos:

> The physical and psychological violence during the eviction operation and the perpetual insecurity ever since, reveal the personal and collective trauma inflicted….Their houses, livelihood, community and, in some cases, families were destroyed. Grave and disastrous harm was done to their basic civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, individually and as a group. The forcible mass eviction…led to landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalization, food insecurity, morbidity and social dislocation.

THE ROLE OF THE US GOVERNMENT IN THE EXPULSION

A succession of powers in the Indian Ocean

Long before oil brought the United States to the region, earlier world powers showed considerable interest in the Indian Ocean. Initially the most important resources to be controlled were spices from India. As with today's oil tankers, the control of sea routes was critical to dominating the spice trade. Before large-scale colonial intrusion began in the sixteenth century, traders from North Africa, the Middle East, India, and China dominated the waters. After Vasco de Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope in 1498, the Portuguese and the Dutch, followed by the French and the British, competed for supremacy. By the eighteenth century, both the French and the British were using islands in the ocean, like Mauritius,

as strategic bases to control naval traffic and trade routes. After the fall of Napoleon and the Treaty of Paris of 1814, Britain became the dominant power in the Indian Ocean – a power it maintained through the end of World War II.

During World War II, the Indian Ocean was a relatively minor theatre. To counter any potential German and Japanese threats, the British made part of Diego Garcia into a small base for harbouring and fuelling ships, for a communications centre, and for a reconnaissance landing strip (Jackson, 2001: 42, 44-47) (one Catalina military seaplane wrecked along the beach became a favourite playground for the young of Diego Garcia).

The United States grew increasingly interested in the Indian Ocean soon after the end of World War II (at least one US military official may have visited Diego as early as 1942) (Marimootoo, 1997: 12). Aware of Britain's declining global and regional power and of the increasing importance of petroleum reserves in the Middle East, the United States established a small naval force, MIDEASTFOR, in 1949 in the Persian Gulf state of Bahrain. Around the same time, the Department of Defense began to show interest in securing a logistical base facility in the Indian Ocean (Bezboruah, 1977: 76). After the 1956 Suez War, the ability of the British Government to assert long-term control over the ocean became uncertain. US military strategists started foreseeing a "power vacuum" in the region and began to look more seriously at establishing a larger presence in the ocean (Bezboruah, 1977: 59, 83, 227).

The US Navy looks for some islands and finds Diego Garcia

The driving force in the US Government behind an increased Indian Ocean presence and behind the creation of the Diego Garcia base was the US Navy. After its World War II successes in the Pacific and an increasing emphasis on naval power during the Eisenhower Administration, the Navy developed a strategic doctrine to dominate all of the world's oceans. With the Pacific, Atlantic, and Mediterranean secured by the 1950s, the Navy began advocating for an increased naval presence in the Indian Ocean (Bandjunis, 2001: 1; Bezboruah, 1977: 76, 227). One of the most influential Navy figures behind the creation of Diego Garcia, Admiral Arleigh Burke, claims to have "foreseen" the weakness and eventual withdrawal of the British from the Indian Ocean soon after World War II and thus "advocated a US Indian Ocean presence as early as 1949" (Bezboruah, 1977: 58-59; see also Ryan, 1984: 133).

For many in the Navy, an essential part of moving forces into the Indian Ocean was the "strategic island concept". The concept argued that as much of the colonial world was moving (unpredictably) toward independence, the United States should acquire and stockpile basing rights in as many strategically

located and "sparsely populated" islands as possible for future military use (see Coordinating Office, 1961). It rejected creating bases in nations ringing the ocean for fear of local political problems and antagonisms that bases in populated foreign areas can create (Bezboruah, 1977: 58). Isolated and sparsely populated islands would, as former Navy officer Bandjunis explains of Navy thinking at the time, "be the easiest to acquire and would entail the least political headaches" (2001: 2). Bezboruah (1977: 58) adds that the Navy was "buoyed by the fact that there were so many such islands in the Indian Ocean…[and] did not see any real difficulty in persuading Great Britain to enter into such an agreement".

An early examination of islands and an initial reconnaissance visit to Diego Garcia in the summer of 1957 marked Diego as the Navy's best option. Particularly attractive was Diego's central location, one of the world's great natural harbours in its protected lagoon, and enough land to build a large airstrip (Bezboruah, 1977: 58; Bandjunis, 2001: 2).

The Navy initiated conversations with the British Government about Diego Garcia in 1960. The Navy proposed that the British Government detach Diego and other islands from Mauritius and Seychelles to create a new territory that would secure basing rights for future US and UK military use. As Bezboruah writes, the Navy "initiated negotiations through Admiral Arleigh Burke to persuade London to detach the Diego Garcia atoll into an independent British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)" (Bezboruah, 1977: 58). There is thus no doubt that the idea for the base at Diego Garcia was an American, not a British idea. Along with Bandjunis and others, Bezboruah affirms, "BIOT was thus the brainchild of the US Navy" (Bezboruah, 1977: 58; see also Bandjunis, 2001: 1-3; Palmer, 1992: 95; Ryan, 1984: 133; Mewes, 1971).

The Navy secured approval for the plan from the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1962 (Bandjunis, 2001: 3). Formal diplomatic negotiations between Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and British Minister of Defence Peter Thorneycroft took place later that year and continued through confidential exchanges in 1963 (Bandjunis, 2001: 3; Nitze, 1962; Brack, 1971: 2). Around the same time, the Kennedy administration started seeing the importance of an Indian Ocean strategic base to improve ocean communications and to create a staging point for a naval fleet charged with containing any Chinese movements southward. In 1963, Kennedy approved the proposal for a base and ordered McNamara to carry out the plan (Bandjunis, 2001: 3-5; Bezboruah, 1977: 58-59).

Secret agreements and a cover-up

As with Viet Nam, much of the development of Diego Garcia and BIOT was concealed from the public, from the United Nations, and from regular Congres-

sional and Parliamentary oversight in the United States and Britain. High-level secret talks involving the Departments of State and Defense and their British counterparts continued into 1964. By the summer of 1964, Britain and the United States had agreed to begin development of a military facility in the Chagos Archipelago pending a joint survey of Diego Garcia and other islands in July and August.

Despite attempts to maintain total secrecy, *The Washington Post* was ready to run a story about the agreements by 15 June 1964. Fearing that the story might derail their plans, the State Department successfully pressured *Post* managing editor Alfred Friendly to withhold publication of the article until at least after the start of the US/UK survey (Rusk, 1964; see also Bandjunis, 2001: 10-11). The story finally ran more than two months later, on 29 August, buried in the media void of end-of-August vacations. The article gained little attention and was soon forgotten. A successful cover-up was well underway.

On the British side, the UK Government pressured Mauritian representatives in 1965 to give up Chagos in exchange for Mauritian independence. This dismemberment of colonial Mauritius during decolonization violated at least two United Nations motions, including one specifically criticizing the excision (United Nations Declaration 1514 (XV), 1960; United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2066, 1965). Britain never altered its course and formally established BIOT as a new colony in November 1965.

Mauritius received £3 million for the archipelago and £650,000 to resettle the Chagossians (most of this tiny sum never reached any Chagossians until 1978, five to ten years or more after most had arrived in Mauritius). In exchange for giving up three small island groups for BIOT, Seychelles won construction of an international airport, now essential to its tourism-based economy. (Britain returned the three groups to Seychelles when Seychelles gained its independence in 1976.)

Both the British and the US Governments were clear that these payments represented money to keep Mauritius and Seychelles quiet about the dismemberment and the removals. A British brief in preparation for 1965 discussions with Secretary of State Dean Rusk explained the need to pay Mauritius and Seychelles "generously" to silence their protests: "If we do not settle quickly (which must mean generously) agitation in the colonies against 'dismemberment' and 'foreign bases' (fomented from outside) would have time to build up to serious proportions, particularly in Mauritius" (Peck, 1965).

The US Government continued to be an equal – but covert – partner in the final establishment of BIOT, which again subverted Congressional and Parliamentary

oversight. Officially, a 1966 Exchange of Notes established Chagos and the rest of BIOT as a wholly military colony for the "defence purposes of both Governments". In signing an Exchange of Notes, the two Governments effectively created a treaty. By avoiding use of a formal treaty, the Governments successfully circumvented the time-consuming legislative approval processes needed for treaties that would have brought the deal before Congress, Parliament, and the public and possibly aroused opposition.

The official Exchange of Notes also stated that BIOT would be available to the United States "without charge" (see term 4, United Kingdom, 1966). In a set of confidential accords accompanying the Notes, however, the Governments agreed that the British Government would remove "any inhabitants" and the US Government would make secret payments to the British to cover half the costs of creating BIOT ("British Indian Ocean Territory", 1966; see also Bandjunis, 2001: 26-27). These payments, totalling US$14 million,[7] helped pay the British for the cost of removing the Chagossians from Chagos, the payoffs to Mauritius and Seychelles, and other expenses.

A secret British document explains the confidential arrangement:

> Besides the published Agreement there is also a secret agreement under which…the US effectively, but indirectly, contributed half the estimated cost of establishing the territory (£10m[illion]). This was done by means of a reduction of £5m[illion] in the research and development surcharge due from Britain for the Polaris missile. Special measures were taken by both the US and UK Governments to maintain the secrecy of this arrangement [emphasis in original; Brack, 1971].

Once again, to avoid Congress's oversight and the need to seek Congressional approval for a budget appropriation to contribute to establishing BIOT, the Department of Defense credited the British for payments owed on research and development costs for the Polaris missile. Another British document describes the evasion of Congress:

> The second point, and of even more importance to us, is the American insistence that the Financial Arrangements must remain secret…. The Americans attach great importance to secrecy because the Unites States Government has, for cogent political reasons of its own, chosen to conceal from Congress the substantial financial assistance which we are to get in the form of a remission of Polaris Research and Development dues [emphasis in original; "British Indian Ocean Territory", 1966: 2].

No money was exchanged, but in effect, a US$14 million debt was wiped off the books for Great Britain. Secretary of Defense McNamara officially authorized the secret arrangement in a 14 June 1965 memo: "I have this date authorized an offset arrangement against R and D surcharges owed by the United

Kingdom, under which the United States would contribute one-half of the British costs of detaching certain islands in the Indian Ocean from their present administering authorities" (McNamara, 1965).

Setting up the base

Once the initial hurdle of setting up the territory was completed, and with US participation in the deal largely covered up, the task of building the base became significantly easier. The territory was Britain's (the questionable legality of the detachment aside). An agreement had been signed. The British Government was offering land for a base in a region seen as increasingly important strategically. The question was largely no longer *if* the US Government would build, but *what, how much*, and *how soon* it would build.

Throughout the development of Diego Garcia and BIOT, US and UK Government officials sought at least in public to describe the military activities there not as a "base" but as a "station", "facility", or "post". They usually linked these terms with adjectives like "austere", "limited", or "modest". From early in the development of Diego Garcia, however, the Navy and later the Department of Defense and the Air Force had large visions for the island: first, for naval communications in the Indian Ocean (including to coordinate nuclear submarines newly deployed there to strike the Soviet Union and China); second, as a large harbour for Navy warships and submarines, with enough room to protect an aircraft carrier task force; and third, as an airfield intended first for Navy reconnaissance planes and later for nuclear-bomb-ready B-52 bombers and almost every other plane in the Air Force arsenal (see Bandjunis, 2001: 8-14; UK Colonial Office, 1964; Gibbon et al., 1964: 1-2).[8]

Around 1966, following a British proposal, US and UK military officials pursued the construction of an additional joint air base on Aldabra, one of the islands excised from Seychelles to create BIOT. (There was also brief interest in both nations using Australian facilities in the Cocos/Keeling Islands, thus creating a "strategic triangle" in the Indian Ocean.) Contrary to some reports, the base at Aldabra seems always to have been planned as a complementary base rather than as an alternative to Diego Garcia (Howland, 2000: 87-94; Bandjunis, 2001: 19-30). In what soon became known as the "Aldabra Affair", British and US scientists sent to survey both islands rallied opposition against the use of Aldabra. The scientists wanted to protect local populations of giant tortoises and rare birds that made Aldabra the "Galapagos of the Indian Ocean"; Diego Garcia's inhabitants aroused no such concern (Pearce, 2004). In 1967, faced with deep military spending cuts and the scientific opposition, British Prime Minister Harold

Wilson announced that there would be no UK base on Aldabra. US officials were little interested in building the base alone, which was always viewed as a way to keep a British presence "east of Suez", and so they again focused on Diego Garcia (Howland, 2000: 92-93, 109-117; Bandjunis, 2001: 30).

Faced with the potential for growing opposition, US and UK officials insistently avoided describing plans for Diego Garcia as a "base". With the British soon committing to withdraw its troops east of the Suez Canal by 1971, the UK Government did not want to be involved in any development perceived to be a new base (Mewes, 1971: 1). US officials faced opposition to their expansion into the Indian Ocean in Congress, from nations around the Indian Ocean like India, and even within the Pentagon. This opposition was especially intense considering the escalating war in Viet Nam and what was then, like South-East Asia before it, a move into a region almost entirely without a prior US presence.

So the Pentagon started slowly, moving step by strategic step. Gearing its vocabulary and official budget justifications to what Congress would likely approve, the Pentagon asked for limited and incremental Congressional funding for an "austere communications facility". After rejection of earlier secret line item requests, Congress approved funding for Fiscal Year 1971.

As soon as Congress made the appropriation, the Navy started its work. By early 1971, the United States delivered orders to the British to clear all inhabitants from Diego Garcia. A secret letter from 26 January 1971 confirmed British receipt of the order to remove the Chagossians (about whom British officials had knowingly invented the "fiction" that they were nothing more than contract workers with no ties to the islands (Queen v. Secretary of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office *ex parte* Bancoult, 2000: para. 18)):

> The United States Government have recently confirmed that their security arrangements at Diego Garcia will require the removal of the entire population of the atoll by July if possible. This is no surprise. We have known since 1965 that if a defence facility were established we should have to resettle elsewhere the contract copra workers who live there (Watt, 1971: 1-2).[9]

By March 1971, a Navy Seabee construction battalion was on the island starting construction. By November of 1971, the expulsion of the Chagossians from Diego Garcia to the Peros Banhos and Salomon islands in Chagos and to Mauritius and Seychelles was complete. On Christmas day, 1972, Bob Hope and Red Foxx were cracking jokes for the troops on Diego while the Chagossians were nearing the point of total exile (Bandjunis, 2001: 49, 58).

WHY THE EXPULSION?

In 1973, agents of the British Government (working as employees of the Chagos-Agalega Company running down the Chagos coconut plantations for Great Britain) herded the final malnourished inhabitants of Peros Banhos and Salomon onto cargo ships and forced them to disembark in Seychelles and Mauritius. The expulsion of the Chagossians was complete.

Why the US Government removed the Chagossians from their homelands remains the question. After all, bases around the world are usually surrounded by and coexist with civilian populations. The US base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, functions with the declared enemy on the other side of its fences. So then, why did the Chagossians have to go?

Beyond colonialism: the power of bases

The US Government wanted the Chagossians removed because in the eyes of soldiers and diplomats, a base free of any non-military population is the best kind of base. From the Romans to the British to US bases in Iraq, bases have been essential tools to secure empires and political, economic, and military control over vast lands. As the power of the British Empire finally waned with World War II, the United States left the war with what *The Monthly Review* calls, "the most extensive system of military bases that the world had ever seen". This overseas system "consisted of over 30,000 installations located at 2,000 base sites residing in one hundred countries and areas, and stretching from the Arctic Circle to Antarctica" (*Monthly Review*, 2002).

After the War, the US Government sought to keep and expand this huge base network. President Harry Truman pronounced at Potsdam, 7 August 1945, "Though the United States wants no profit or selfish advantage out of this war, we are going to maintain the military bases necessary for the complete protection of our interests and of world peace". Foreshadowing Diego Garcia, Truman added, "Bases which our military experts deem to be essential for our protection we will acquire" (quoted in *Monthly Review*, 2002).

Geographer Neil Smith explains that this system of bases was part of a new form of global influence and control exercised by the United States. European powers before the United States tied their expansionist success to direct control over territories. After World War II, this was not an option. The European powers had long before divided most of the world among themselves, and the ideological mood of the time was clearly against colonialism (Smith, 2003: 2, 14-16, 21). Instead, the United States came to exert its power through more

subtle means: most importantly through economic markets, international agreements, and foreign military bases. "This vision can be summarized", Smith explains, "as 'global economic access without colonies' and was matched by a strategic vision of necessary military bases around the globe both to protect global economic interests and to restrain any future military belligerence" (2003: 349, 360).

Strategic interests with Diego Garcia

There were (and are) several strategic economic and military interests driving the development of the base at Diego. These interests help explain why the base was built and expanded so dramatically. Four strategic interests in particular appear to have motivated the base's boosters to push the base into being.

First, as noted above, the Navy was the driving force behind the early development of the base idea. The Navy's strategic goal of dominating the Indian Ocean, like the world's other major oceans, was at the heart of its desire to create a base that would serve as the logistical, communications, and harbouring hub for a new naval force centred in the ocean (see Bandjunis, 2001; Bezboruah, 1977).

Second, and in a related way, Navy and some other military planners foresaw the dwindling military power of the British in the Indian Ocean and "east of Suez" generally. Without the British military presence to protect perceived Western political and economic interests in the region, many US officials saw a need to increase the presence of the United States to take Britain's place. Diego Garcia thus became the strategic landing point and hub from which the United States would expand its regional military power (see Sick, 1983; Palmer, 1992). (Others in the region and at the United Nations in the 1970s hoped that the Indian Ocean, relatively free of superpower competition to that point, would be declared a "Zone of Peace" and kept free of nuclear weapons. Diego Garcia and other superpower militarization were to frustrate these hopes.)

Third, as the military was growing interested in Diego Garcia, the Indian Ocean was itself becoming increasingly important strategically as a new launch site for submarine-based nuclear weapons aimed at the southern flank of the Soviet Union and China. With a new generation of advanced submarines and missiles, submarines in the northern Indian Ocean made every city in Asia vulnerable to nuclear attack (Singh, 1977: 171-172; Bezboruah, 1977: 135-136). Submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) were at the same time assuming increased strategic importance as stationary land-based missiles grew more vulnerable both to pre-emptive nuclear attack and to missile reduction treaties (that did not apply to SLBMs). SLBMs thus became central to US nuclear strategy and US

submarines began regular deployments in the Indian Ocean in the mid-1960s (Singh, 1977: 171-175; Bezboruah, 1977: 41-42).

The establishment of the Diego Garcia base was, in turn, essential to coordinating these deployments and to maintaining an overall US nuclear strategy. The base coordinated crucial communications with submarines (and other warships in the ocean) and allowed submarines to operate in the ocean twice as long as compared to returning to bases in the Pacific Ocean or on the US East Coast (Singh, 1977: 171-175; Bezboruah, 1977: 60, 81-82, 41-42; US Congress, 1971: 195-196). (After a runway extension and other improvements, the base's nuclear attack capability multiplied with facilities to accommodate long-range nuclear bombers for attacks against the Soviet Union and other targets (Kemp and Harkavy, 1997: 54). The bombing of Iraq and Afghanistan by those same long-range bombers proved that the base could also hit regional targets with non-nuclear ordinance.)

Fourth, and most importantly over time, the main interest for the US Government in the Indian Ocean and for having a base at Diego Garcia has been and continues to be oil and other strategic natural resources. US, Western European, and Japanese dependence on oil grew dramatically after World War II. By 1981, when Diego's expansion dramatically increased, 80 per cent of the Western allies' strategic resources crossed the Indian Ocean (McDowell, 1981: 423). Likewise, by the 1970s, US corporate investment in the region was conservatively estimated at well over US$10 billion. In the eyes of US military and political planners, there was (and is) a lot worth fighting for as the long-term stability of the United States and the West appeared to be at stake (see Bezboruah, 1977; Sick, 1983; Bowman and Lefebvre, 1985; Larus, 1985; Doyon, 1991).

Diego Garcia thus provided the US Government with a base from which it could control shipping lanes to maintain oil and resource supplies, and from which it could launch military attacks to intervene in any regional crisis that might threaten those supplies. The US Government did not want to worry about the availability of foreign bases in such a crisis. (The closest base it could use during the 1973 Arab/Israeli crisis was in the Portuguese Azores, far off in the Atlantic Ocean.) A base at Diego Garcia provided this security, allowing rapid intervention during, among others, the Iran hostage crisis (abortedly), the Iran-Iraq tanker war, the first Gulf War, post-Gulf War Iraqi patrols, and the recent invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq (see Singh, 1977; Kapur, 1981; Khan, 1983; Sick, 1983).

Beyond these four strategic interests, one of the most important factors in creating the base may have been simply that influential people within the US Gov-

ernment wanted the base. At a certain point for the Navy and other base advocates, wanting the base was no longer connected to a strategic, military, or political need. Wanting Diego Garcia, especially in the Navy, became a matter of zealous conviction. Retired Navy Captain Paul B. Ryan writes that, "Admiral Arleigh Burke's firm advocacy made the acquisition of the atoll an article of Navy faith" (1984: 133). Bandjunis likewise explains that after the 1964 joint US/UK survey, Admiral Horacio Rivero said, "I want this island!" and told his staff "to write a letter to the British, using whatever words or justification that were necessary" to get the base (Bandjunis, 2001: 14).

Perhaps then one needs to see that there was no single strategic interest, function, or justification that made the difference in inspiring the creation and continual expansion of the base. After all, to borrow a phrasing, strategic interests do not create bases; people with power create bases. Those people were certainly motivated by a number of strategic interests. But at a certain point, as the quotations above seem to indicate, the desire to create the base became a motivating factor in and of itself. That a group of powerful people thought that acquiring the base was important and had the power to make the base a reality should not be overlooked in understanding Diego Garcia's existence.

Even as the strategic interests are important in understanding why the United States built a base at Diego Garcia, why the Chagossians were displaced from their homes is a separate question. The four aforementioned strategic interests are of relatively tangential significance to understanding the exile. Clearly the strategic interests that made the base attractive to military and diplomatic planners are *part* of why the Chagossians were exiled: if there had been no strategic demand for the base, there would have been no exile. At the same time, there are more immediate reasons for the exile that connect Diego Garcia to larger dynamics in US foreign relations and the exercise of US power.

A less conspicuous tool of domination

According to the Department of Defense, the United States now owns or rents 702 overseas military bases in about 130 nations (just counting those larger than ten acres or with a replacement value worth more than US$10 million; cited in Johnson, 2004a). Including National Guard, Reserve, and minor installations, the global total, as of 2002, reached 3,660 (cited in Lutz 2002: 729, 732n7).

Echoing Smith, the editors of *The Monthly Review* explain that this startling base network is all the more significant "in the absence of colonialism". Without direct political control over most of the world's territories, the United States uses bases and periodic displays of military might to keep wayward nations

within the rules of an economic system most favourable to the United States. By largely using foreign bases and markets rather than colonies, the United States is more surreptitious in its exercise of power than were the former colonial powers. Having constructed "a chain of military bases and staging areas around the globe", writes *The Monthly Review,* the United States has "a means of deploying air and naval forces to be used on a moment's notice – all in the interest of maintaining its political and economic hegemony" (*Monthly Review*, 2002). For Chalmers Johnson and others (Johnson, 2004a, 2004c; Lens, 1987; *Monthly Review*, 2002) the United States has created a full-fledged "empire of bases" to exert its imperial control over subordinate nations around the world.

The dangers of bases

Despite their advantages, overseas bases carry with them significant risks. The most serious problem is the distinct possibility that a host nation will evict its guest from a base, as happened in the Indian Ocean region to the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain, during the 1960s and 1970s.

There is also the danger that for political or other reasons a host would make a base temporarily unavailable during a crisis. During the recent war in Iraq, for example, Turkey's new Islamist ruling party refused to allow the United States use of its territory for a large troop deployment but permitted the basing of warplanes and the use of its airspace. Under most circumstances guest nations are in this way forced to negotiate continually for a variety of base rights with their hosts.

The other primary danger of overseas bases is from the population outside a base. Again this was of special concern during an era of rising nationalism and anti-imperialism in Africa and Asia when Diego Garcia was being planned and under construction. As recent US experience in Saudi Arabia, South Korea, and Okinawa has shown, foreign bases can become targets of attacks and lightning rods for local protest and criticism about foreign intrusion and imperialism (*Monthly Review*, 2002; McCaffrey, 2002). So too US military officials also worry about espionage, security, and social problems posed by local populations.

"Fantasy Island": avoiding the usual dangers at Diego Garcia

For these reasons, after World War II, the US Government increasingly looked for bases located in relatively unpopulated areas (Bezboruah, 1977: 52, 54, 58, 60). With the indigenous population successfully removed from Diego Garcia, military planners were thrilled at the idea of the base, where there would be no civilian population within almost 1,000 kilometres.

Publicly, the Navy said it wanted the Chagossians removed because of concerns about potential "security issues" and "social problems" – meaning prostitution and other problems arising from "unaccompanied servicemen" living next to "islanders" (US Congress, 1975: 42, 74; Bandjunis, 2001: 46-47). More accurately, though, US officials and their British counterparts wanted total control over the island and the entire archipelago without the slightest possibility of outside interference – be it from foreign politicians or local inhabitants. "It would be unacceptable to both the British and the American defence authorities", a 1964 UK Colonial Office document explains, "if facilities of the kind proposed were in any way to be subject to the political control of Ministers of a newly emergent independent state [i.e. soon-to-be independent Mauritius or Seychelles]" (UK Colonial Office, 1964).

The US Government was alarmed during the 1973 Arab/Israeli War when all of its Arab and Western European allies denied base rights for a US mission to aid Israel. Forced to a Portuguese base in the Azores Islands in the Atlantic, the military successfully used this as an argument for expanding Diego Garcia, where there would have been no such access problems. Diego Garcia was attractive once it became British sovereign territory precisely because it was not subject to, as Retired Navy Captain Paul Ryan explains, "political restrictions of the type that had shackled or even terminated flexibility at foreign bases elsewhere" (Ryan, 1984: 133). With any regular British role reduced to a flag, a few token functionaries, and the right to be consulted before major US deployment shifts, Diego Garcia is definitively a US base and practically a US territory.

Just as frightening as having to answer to an outside political force (other than minimal consultation with the British) was the prospect of having to confront a potentially angry local population. Worst of all was the possibility that the population could press claims for the right to self-determination before the United Nations and thus threaten the life of the base. "The Americans made it clear during the initial [BIOT] talks", details another formerly secret UK document, "that they regarded freedom from local pressures as essential" ("Defence Interests in the Indian Ocean", 1965). Another Foreign Office brief, marked "secret and guard" was even more explicit:

> The primary objective in acquiring these islands from Mauritius and the Seychelles…was to ensure that Her Majesty's Government had full title to, and control over, these islands so that they could be used for the construction of defence facilities without hindrance or political agitation and so that when a particular island would be needed for the construction of British or United States defence facilities Britain or the United States should be able to clear it of its current population. The Americans in particular attached great importance to this freedom of manoeuvre, *divorced from the normal considerations applying to a populated dependent territory*…. It was implied in this objective, and recognized at the time, that we *could not accept the principles governing*

> *our otherwise universal behaviour* in our dependent territories, e.g. we *could not accept that the interests of the inhabitants were paramount and that we should develop self-government there* [emphasis mine; UK Foreign Office, 1966: para. 10-11].

The brief goes on to explain that the Americans would be unlikely to participate if the needs of a local population had to be treated as "paramount" (UK Foreign Office, 1966: para. 12). The priorities of the US and UK Governments were clear: (1) maintenance of complete political control over the islands; (2) the unfettered ability to remove any island populations by force; and (3) disregard for the international rights of BIOT's inhabitants. The US Government wanted total freedom to do what it wished with what it considered "sparsely populated" islands (if around 1,200 people concentrated on three main islands constitute "sparse") irrespective of the basic treatment owed to the people of dependent territories. In simplest terms, the US Government removed the Chagossians because Government officials wanted Chagos uninhabited to ensure complete political and military control over Diego Garcia and the entire archipelago.

Diego Garcia thus had all the advantages and almost none of the disadvantages of an overseas military base in the eyes of military and diplomatic officials. It had all the advantages as a relatively surreptitious way to exercise US power and was controlled by "a longstanding ally (the United Kingdom) unlikely to toss [the United States] out for governmental changes or US foreign policy initiatives" (Dunn, 1984: 131). Even more, in the British Government, the US Government had a partner willing to ignore at very least British law and international human rights guarantees by removing an indigenous population from their homes.[10] The British would do the work of expulsion. They would dispose of the population. The United States meanwhile would always have the legal and political alibi that Great Britain is the sovereign and is thus ultimately responsible for any island inhabitants.[11]

With the population successfully exiled, the US Government had and still has what is almost the perfect base: strategically located, free of any potentially troublesome population, under de facto US control yet with its closest ally as sovereign to take any political heat, and almost no restrictions on use of the island, save periodically consulting with the British. Free reign over an idyllic atoll in the Indian Ocean – no wonder the Navy calls it "Fantasy Island" (Dunn, 1984: 131).

Power and untrustworthy groups: strategic population cleansing

The US Government found another fantasy base in the isolated reaches of Greenland. There the Government appears to have ordered a similar expulsion

of an indigenous people to expand its installation at Thule, Greenland. As with Diego, the Americans started slowly and covertly, building a "weather station" at Thule in 1946. Soon there were plans for an air base and electronic surveillance equipment pointed at the Soviet Union. In 1953, when the United States wanted to build the air base, it made a secret deal with the Government of Denmark (which controls Greenland) to displace around 150 Inughuit people from their homes. Families were reportedly given four days to move or face US bulldozers. The Inughuits were left in exile at Thule, a forbidding village 125 miles from their native lands (Brown, 2002; Olsen, 2002).

In the US territory of Puerto Rico, the Navy carried out more expulsions on the island of Vieques. Between 1941 and 1943, and again in 1947, the US Navy displaced thousands of people from their land, seizing three-quarters of Vieques for military use. Very few benefits followed military occupation. Instead, stagnation, poverty, unemployment, prostitution, violence, and the disruption of subsistence and other productive activities became the rule (see McKinney, 2002).

In the Marshall Islands, the US military displaced hundreds of people from the Bikini, Rongelap, Utirik, and Enewetak atolls, and from Lib Island, as part of nuclear and other weapons testing since World War II. Radiation from some of the nuclear tests caused scores of deaths and widespread disease. The removals and the overall disruption to Marshallese societies have led to declining social, cultural, physical, and economic health, high rates of suicide, infant health deficits, and slum housing conditions, to name just a few effects (see e.g. Kiste, 1974; Lutz, 1984).

In Okinawa, itself a colony of Japan before coming under direct US military rule from the end of World War II until 1972, the military seized huge tracks of land for its bases, both during the Battle of Okinawa and well into the 1950s. The military initially forced Okinawans to relocate to refugee camps and prevented them from returning to their lands. Between 1954 and 1964, the US military shipped at least 3,218 Okinawans approximately 18,000 kilometres across the Pacific Ocean to Bolivia in exchange for their lands. The Okinawans were promised new farmland and financial assistance. In Bolivia they found jungle, disease, and none of the promised aid (Johnson, 2004b: 50-53; Yoshida, n.d.).

It is hard not to conclude that there is a pattern of the US military forcibly displacing groups of non-white colonized peoples to build its military installations. In her study of Vieques, Katherine McCaffrey explains that, "Bases are frequently established on the political margins of national territory, on lands occupied by ethnic or cultural minorities or otherwise disadvantaged populations" (2002: 9-10). In the rationalistic calculations of government officials,

moving such vulnerable groups involves little political risk and low economic costs. Under the strategic island concept in Diego Garcia, the US Government looked to minimize the political and diplomatic risks of an act that it knew would have some negative repercussions. From the beginning, the Navy and the Pentagon looked for *sparsely populated* – not uninhabited – islands. From the beginning, they knew and calculated that they would have to remove people from small, isolated colonial islands. In the words of Navy insider Bandjunis, the Navy realized that, "remote colonial islands with small [colonial] populations would be the easiest to acquire, and would entail the least political headaches" (2001: 2). That is, they calculated that they would have to remove a small group of non-white islanders. In that calculation, Pentagon officials decided they were willing to bear whatever minimal political and economic costs such a removal entailed. As Bezboruah explains, "Any alternative to Diego Garcia could have been much more costly in terms of political, diplomatic, and economic price" (1977: 83).

CONCLUSION: COLONIAL CONNECTIONS

While the UK Government and its agents share responsibility for the removal of the Chagossians, this paper has shown that the US Government bears primary responsibility for the expulsion. First, the US Government developed and advanced the original idea for a base at Diego Garcia. Second, the US Government solicited and eventually colluded with Britain as its partner. Third, the US Government decided that the entire population of the archipelago was to be forcibly removed. Fourth, the US Government secretly paid the British for the expulsion, for the silence of Mauritius and Seychelles, and for other costs of establishing BIOT as a military colony. Fifth, the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations circumvented Congressional oversight of military appropriations and base creation, censored media, and generally hid the expulsion and the creation of the base from the US public and the world. Sixth, the US Government ordered the UK Government to remove the Chagossians from Diego Garcia and then from the entire archipelago. Seventh, and finally, the US Government ensured that the UK Government and its agents carried out the removals, with US soldiers assisting in the extermination of the Chagossians' pet dogs and the final deportations on Diego Garcia.

Many scholars (e.g. Williams, 1962; Gardner et al., 1976; Smith, 2003) argue that in the twentieth century the United States has largely avoided the colonialism of the old European powers based on direct territorial expansion and rule over subject peoples. The power exerted by the United States has instead expressed itself most often as a more discreet economic imperialism. No longer are the natural resources and labour of territories exploited directly as under

European colonialism. Economic control and exploitation, scholars say, emanate from more subtle policies of the "Open Door", the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank.

The expulsion of the Chagossians and others like them around the world suggests that there are also important continuities between European colonialism and the exercise of US power in the twentieth century. The US global basing network, of which Diego Garcia is an important part, is rooted in colonialism and its legacies. Many of the most important US bases are in fact still colonies. Diego Garcia and BIOT are a prime example as the last colony created by the United Kingdom. Many of the other major US overseas bases also form parts of US and other nations' colonial possessions: witness bases in US possessions Guam, Hawaii, Vieques, the Marshall Islands (now nominally independent of the United States), and until recently the Philippines; and those in Danish Greenland and Japanese Okinawa.

Many of the bases in the US global network would also not exist were it not for the relationships between former colonial territories and their old rulers. The base at Diego Garcia would likely not exist had the British Government not pressured Mauritian leaders to give it and the rest of Chagos away at the price of Mauritian independence. The establishment of US bases in these territories represents a continuation of these colonial relationships. Further, the abuse of peoples like the Chagossians as part of the development of bases depends fundamentally on the continuation of colonial hierarchies of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and nation. For as Madeley (1985) argued about the Chagossians, it is hard to imagine that the colour of the Chagossians' skin and their economic and political weakness were not major factors in the treatment they received.

Perhaps then Diego Garcia and much of the US global basing network are best understood as a return to an earlier form of colonialism when Britain and France were first interested in colonizing Diego Garcia, Chagos, and other islands in the Indian Ocean. In the eighteenth century, islands were initially valued for their military and not their economic value. Bases in Mauritius and Réunion hosted warships used to secure the trade with India and later to conquer the subcontinent. Three centuries later, equipment and supplies from Diego Garcia were among the first arriving in the Persian Gulf to link with US soldiers preparing for war in Iraq. Once the war was underway, B-1, B-2, and B-52 bombers based in Diego Garcia dropped thousands of pounds of ordinance on Iraq's battlefields. Perhaps then the Chagossians' expulsion is unsurprising: their ancestors' enslaved arrival in Diego Garcia and Chagos was the result of a European superpower's efforts to claim bases in a strategic ocean; their removal was the result of a new superpower's search for bases in that same ocean.

EPILOGUE

In November 2000, the British High Court ruled in a suit brought by Chagossians that the Chagossians' removal had been illegal. Initially the British Government accepted the ruling and for the first time issued laws allowing Chagossians to return to all of Chagos except Diego Garcia. Living in poverty more than 2,000 kilometres away and with their old society in ruins, however, Chagossians had little means with which to return let alone to rebuild sustainable lives there.

In 2001 and 2002, most Chagossians joined new lawsuits in US and UK courts demanding the right to return to all of Chagos and compensation for their removal and for rebuilding their societies. Lawyers for the Chagossians filed a class action lawsuit in US Federal District Court for the District of Columbia against the US Government, several Government officials, including Robert McNamara and Donald Rumsfeld, involved in the construction of the base, and companies like the Halliburton Corporation that helped build the base (Bancoult v. McNamara). The suit accuses the US Government and the other defendants of committing acts including forced relocation; racial discrimination; cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment; and genocide. The case has not yet come to trial.

In Chagossians' new UK suit (Chagos Islanders v. Attorney General and British Indian Ocean Territory Commissioner), the British High Court issued a summary judgment against their claim in October 2003. The court ruled that Chagossians had no grounds to bring the case and that it had little chance of succeeding, though the court admitted that some Chagossians were "treated shamefully by successive UK governments" (quoted in BBC News, 2003).

On 17 June 2004, Chagossians returned to court to appeal this ruling. Just two days earlier, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office announced the Queen's enactment, without Parliamentary debate, of two Orders in Council that effectively revoked Chagossians' November 2000 victory and their right to return to Chagos. The Chagossians, their lawyers, and their supporters in Parliament have said they will contest the orders.

NOTES

1. Since 2002, press reports and a human rights group have cited Diego Garcia as the location of a secret detention centre for alleged terrorists. Both the US and British Governments have denied this charge (see e.g. Human Rights First, 2004: 16; Mazzetti et al., 2004).
2. Mauritius disputes the United Kingdom's claim of sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago.
3. Methodological note: this article draws on several kinds of sources: primary documents from the US National Archives, the British Public Records Office, the Mauritius Archives, US presidential libraries, the US Department of State, and other government sources; US Congressional hearings relevant to Diego Garcia; British and US court documents; historical and strategic analyses of US involvement in the Indian Ocean, the Middle East, and at Diego Garcia; broader scholarship on US militarization; and newspaper and magazine articles addressing the Chagossian exile. In addition to the research presented in this article, I have conducted research about the Chagossians since August 2001. Much of this research has been to document the injuries Chagossians have suffered since their removal from Chagos. I initiated this research to assist lawyers representing Chagossians in lawsuits in the United States and Great Britain. The suits are demanding the right to return to Chagos and compensation for the expulsion and for reconstruction of society in Chagos. I am not, nor have I been, employed by these lawyers. The lawyers paid most of my formal research expenses from August 2001 through the end of 2002. The research and findings presented in this paper are not part of my work for the lawsuits.
4. Some Chagossians have European ancestry.
5. See the "Epilogue" for more on Chagossians' right to return to Chagos and their lawsuits against the British and US Governments.
6. These characterizations of the Chagossians are at a group level. As with any impoverished group, some Chagossians live under better conditions.
7. There is some confusion about exactly how much the United States contributed. British Government documents from the late 1960s document a credit of £5 million. Many sources cite the US$14 million figure. A 1975 House of Representatives hearing on Diego Garcia documents that at least US$11.542 million had already been credited with total credits up to US$14 million still possible (see US Congress, 1975: 43, 57). In 1977, Bezboruah's authoritative history cites payments of "at least $14 million" (1977: 61).
8. The Air Force began to support the development of Diego Garcia after seeing the importance of having secure airfield and overflight rights for the war in Viet Nam and foreseeing the likely loss of the British Indian Ocean air base at Gan.
9. Bandjunis reveals a similar State and Defense Department message to the US Embassy in London from 17 December 1970, reemphasizing the expulsion orders: "We recognize the British problem in returning to Mauritius those Chagossians and Mauritian workers now on Diego Garcia, and possibility of resultant financial costs to Her Majesty's Government. That however, was clearly envisioned as United Kingdom's responsibility in 1966 agreements, under which United

States is sharing such costs by foregoing up to $14,000,000 in Polaris Research and Development charges" (Bandjunis, 2001: 46).

10. Expulsions and forced relocations are clearly prohibited by customary international law and a range of international and regional agreements. See Aceves et al., 2000: 1, 31-32.
11. At times the US Government has argued that it did not know there was an indigenous population in Chagos and that it thought the population was composed of transient workers. This argument is difficult to believe. Any cursory inspection of writings on Chagos (most importantly, Scott, 1976) would have revealed the existence of generations of Chagossians living in the islands. Even without reading a word, it is hard to imagine that the Navy's first reconnaissance inspection of Diego Garcia in 1957 would have overlooked hundreds of families (unusual in the case of migrant workers) and a fully functioning society complete with nineteenth century cemeteries and churches and people tracing their ancestry back as many as five generations in Chagos. The 1964 joint US/UK survey noted a distinct Chagossian population among the workers, admitting that, "the problem of the Ileois [sic] and the extent to which they form a distinct community is one of some subtlety and is not within the grasp of the present manager of Diego Garcia". The British were clearly well aware of the indigenous population, as their extensive discussions on the subject in memos and letters throughout the 1960s reveal. A secret 1969 letter from the US Embassy in London to the British Foreign and Commonwealth Department indeed confirms US knowledge of "Chagos-born labourers" (Oplinger, 1969).

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CONFLITS ARMES ET MIGRATION FORCEE DANS L'OCEAN INDIEN: LA BASE MILITAIRE AMERICAINE A DIEGO GARCIA

Entre 1965 et 1973, la population autochtone de l'archipel Chagos, dans l'océan Indien, a été déplacée de force afin que le Gouvernement des Etats-Unis puisse construire une base militaire stratégique sur l'île de Diego Garcia. La population de l'île et le reste de l'archipel vivent aujourd'hui dans la misère à Maurice et aux Seychelles, a près de 2 000 km de Chagos. En analysant des documents gouvernementaux jusqu'ici classés secrets, l'article montre comment, entre la fin de la deuxième guerre mondiale et les derniers transferts effectués en 1973, le Gouvernement américain a planifié, ordonné, financé, orchestré et assuré l'expulsion de ce peuple exilé, connu sous le nom de chagossien ou ilois. Si le Gouvernement britannique a pu être accusé d'avoir joué un rôle dans ces déplacements, cet article précise que le Gouvernement américain porte avant tout autre la responsabilité de ces expulsions. En fin de compte, la création de la base militaire à Diego Garcia et l'expulsion des Chagossiens en dit long sur l'hégémonie politique, économique et militaire exercée par les Etats-Unis sur le reste du monde depuis la deuxième guerre mondiale. L'article fait ressortir l'importance de Diego Garcia et du déplacement forcé des Chagossiens pour les relations étrangères des Etats-Unis dans le contexte de l'après-guerre, en faisant appel à des analyses comparatives portant sur d'autres migrations forcées occasionnées par l'implantation d'installations militaires américaines, notamment dans les îles Marshall, à Thulé (Groenland), à Okinawa (Japon) et à Vieques (Puerto Rico).

LA GUERRA Y LA MIGRACIÓN FORZADA EN EL OCÉANO ÍNDICO: LA BASE MILITAR ESTADOUNIDENSE EN DIEGO GARCÍA

Entre 1965 y 1973, los pueblos indígenas del Archipiélago de Chagos en el Océano Índico se vieron forzados a desplazarse de sus lugares de origen, de manera que el Gobierno de los Estados Unidos pudiese construir una base militar estratégica en la Isla de Diego García. La población de Diego García y el resto del Archipiélago de Chagos ahora vive en condiciones de pobreza en las islas de Mauricio y Seychelles, aproximadamente a 2.000 kilómetros de su lugar de origen. Al examinar los documentos gubernamentales que estaban antiguamente clasificados, este artículo demuestra cómo entre finales de la Segunda Guerra Mundial y las últimas evacuaciones realizadas en 1973, el Gobierno de los Estados Unidos planificó, ordenó, financió y ayudó a orquestar, además de participar, en la expulsión de los exiliados, llamados chagosianos o *ilois*. Si bien algunos han descrito el papel que desempeñó el Gobierno Británico en las evacuaciones, este artículo aclara cómo el Gobierno de los Estados Unidos fue el principal responsable de las expulsiones. Por último, la creación de la base en Diego García y la expulsión de los chagosianos, revela en gran medida cómo los Estados Unidos han ejercido su voluntad política, económica y militar en el resto del mundo desde la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Este artículo explica las repercusiones de lo ocurrido en Diego García, a raíz de la expulsión de los chagosianos, en las relaciones exteriores de los Estados Unidos tras la Segunda Guerra Mundial, al incorporar los análisis comparativos de otras migraciones forzadas ocasionadas por la construcción de instalaciones militares estadounidenses, incluidas aquéllas en las Islas Marshall; Thule, Greenland; Okinawa, Japón; y Vieques, Puerto Rico.