

# Sovereignty and Seychelles: Borders and boundaries in a small island state

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There is ample evidence to show that sovereignty cannot be guaranteed by mere lines on a map. Although the prudent drawing of boundaries can help to create stability, ultimately the achievement of peace becomes an issue of mutual trust and respect for the rule of law. Neither can be taken for granted. In the estimate of one analyst, ‘approximately one quarter of the world’s land boundaries can be classified as unstable. In addition, some two thirds of the global maritime boundaries have yet to be settled’.<sup>1</sup> ‘Little wonder’, he adds, that ‘conflicts related to boundaries are likely to remain a key component of the international scene’.<sup>2</sup>

The first part of this paper explains the inherent fragility of national sovereignty. It is pointed out that globalization transcends political boundaries and *per se* undermines the notion of claims to particular areas of the planet. In spite of this, it is also asserted that, although its precise designation in many cases may be open to question, the nation state as a concept remains largely inviolate. In the second part, the focus is directed to the small island state of Seychelles. The case study will show two things: one is that being small adds to a nation’s vulnerability, and the other is that being surrounded by sea is itself an issue. Maritime boundaries are especially difficult to maintain; sovereignty in the case of small islands is especially fragile.

## Sovereign rights and wrongs

Sovereignty is the holy grail of the nation state. Without it the nation dissembles. It has a spiritual as well as political meaning, being the very essence of what a nation stands for. But sovereignty comes at a price. Within its boundaries there are expectations that the rulers will not only protect it from intruders but also ensure the wellbeing of its people. These are weighty expectations but nothing less will suffice. Sovereignty is not to be treated lightly.

There is, however, an even more fundamental question, and that is to ask how and why we subdivide the earth’s surface into nation states in the first place. In the section below, it is shown that the geographical limits of sovereignty are heavily dependent on what are little more than lines on a map. When these lines are in contention, a state of territorial instability results. Following this, the second section questions whether subdivisions of the planet, however well drawn, any longer make sense in the face of the holistic concept of globalization.

Does the world still need the nation state? Consideration of these issues provides a context for subsequently examining the specific case of Seychelles, an example not only of a small island state but also one which is defined by maritime rather than terrestrial boundaries.

### *Lines on a map*

Borders and boundaries are central to this debate because they circumscribe the nation state and, therefore, in themselves help to define its sovereignty. Although often the terms are used interchangeably, the difference between borders and boundaries is simple enough. Borders are lines which separate different sovereignties. To go from one to the other they have to be crossed and this normally gives rise to various bureaucratic and often military procedures. At the very least, a crossing may require a passport; additionally, if goods are transported there will likely be customs inspections. Boundaries are also represented by lines, marking the outer limits of a jurisdiction but not necessarily to be crossed; in this sense, they are primarily about containment, namely, the 'bounds' of a state.

In reality, although lines are signifiers of difference, the distinction will not necessarily be so obvious on the ground. Culturally, people and their practices may overlap on either side, say, through years of inter-marriage across borders, or common forms of agriculture dictated by the same soils and climate. Thus, in many cases it is more accurate to think in terms of a transitional zone, sometimes referred to as a borderland, on either side of a sharply-defined political boundary.

Even if the underlying status of a nation's sovereignty is not questioned, its precise limits might be. Sometimes the point at issue will be very localized: should a line go round one side of a hill rather than another? At other times, it is more than a matter of detail: should the regions of Alsace and Lorraine be in France rather than Germany? In such cases, disputes are not just about lines on a map but are statements about cultural and political difference. If their significance is ignored, the repercussions can be lasting, as illustrated in the aftermath of the colonization of Africa, where some of the colonial boundaries were arbitrarily drawn across long-held tribal territories.

Much depends on how these markers are set in the first place. Sometimes, in the past especially, the lines which designate sovereignty were imposed by international power-brokers and, at such moments in history, new nations were brought into being and old ones dissembled. As an example, after the Napoleonic wars in the early nineteenth century, statesmen from Europe's great powers met in Vienna to remove the territorial advantages gained by France in the years of conflict; overnight, for instance, the French colony of Séchelles (as it was first known) was transferred to British jurisdiction. The same kind of rebalancing was true after the First World War, when Germany was deliberately weakened by boundary changes imposed on the old regime. In contrast, in the aftermath of the Second

World War, the new world map reflected the sharpening confrontation of opposing power blocs, from east to west in central Europe and north to south across the Korean Peninsula.

Nor are wars the only time when boundaries are redrawn. During the twentieth century, the break-up of colonial empires was a major source of change, resulting in the creation – and proliferation – of independent states. Alternatively, new national boundaries may result from uprisings within. During the nineteenth century, the Greek movement for independence led to the replacement of Ottoman rule by the creation of the modern nation. Also in Europe, both Italy and Germany were formed from within, through the unification of previously autonomous principalities. In Africa, a more recent example of nation formation was the creation in 2011 of South Sudan, with boundaries that largely separate the Christians in the south of the formerly unified state of Sudan from the predominantly Islamic population to the north. In other words, boundaries in general are fluid, the product of political intervention at different times, whether created by the nation within or imposed from outside.

As a result of these various factors, it is not surprising that ‘mere lines on a map’ can make the difference between war and peace. Not only might contested boundaries be a cause of conflict from the outset but subsequent attempts to achieve a lasting resolution may prove to be beyond reach. In spite of the best efforts of international power-brokers, the lines between one nation and another can become a flashpoint that cannot easily be prevented. Examples can be found on all continents. In western Asia, a border is at the heart of continuing disputes between Azerbaijan and Armenia, over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh; in southern Europe, on the island of Cyprus, a contentious line dividing Greek and Turkish populations has to be maintained by UN forces; in North America, there is the vivid example of Donald Trump’s proposed but unfulfilled wall to keep out migrants from the south; while in Latin America more generally, since 2000, ten of the nineteen independent countries in the region have witnessed border incidents involving force. This last example, especially, illustrates the veracity of the view that ‘in the modern world, boundaries are as close as anything can be to fighting zones’.<sup>3</sup>

### *The hegemony of the nation state*

As indicated above, the world is subdivided to form nation states. But history suggests that the process is fraught with problems, not least of all because of the difficulty in achieving common agreement. Such are the inherent problems that one might ask why we have nation states in the first place? Indeed, it has not always been the case, or at least not in the form that nations are now, circumscribed by specific lines on a map. Specialists in the subject will often point to the Peace of Westphalia, comprising two treaties in the middle of the seventeenth century which marked the end of a prolonged war in Europe.<sup>4</sup> The significance of such treaties is that they established the sovereignty of the nation state in the face of the prior supremacy of the much larger Holy Roman Empire. Although this milestone is both localized and

historical, the settlement between rival parties proved to be an enduring marker in the subsequent emergence of nation states across the world. Only in the past half century, however, and especially in the present millennium, has the concept been seriously questioned.

It was the American political scientist, Francis Fukuyama, who in 1992 famously coined the phrase ‘the end of history’, in the mistaken belief that the collapse of the Soviet Union and the predicted convergence of the two major ideologies, communism and capitalism, would see an end to international rivalries.<sup>5</sup> Fukuyama was wrong on many counts, not least of all because there was not the potential synergy between the two power blocs that he predicted. His thesis was also disrupted by unexpected events, notably, 9/11 and the spread of international terrorism, the global financial crisis that dates from 2008, and the failure of the major powers to reach a binding agreement on measures to reduce the impact of climate change. As if to seal the argument, the world pandemic from 2019 that brought much of the world to a standstill, cut sharply through the very concept of uninterrupted global flows. Such events demonstrated that the ending of one source of geopolitical division was not enough, in itself, to lead to a unified world.

Given Fukuyama’s simplistic and misleading prediction, one must also be wary of the emergence of another adage, ‘the end of geography’:

*... meaning that a world of flows is erasing the world of places and will ultimately give rise to a homogenized borderless landscape.<sup>6</sup>*

To extend this view, one analyst even describes the world as ‘flat’, in which old boundaries are becoming irrelevant.<sup>7</sup> These are alluring ideas but they can all too easily lead one into an intellectual blind alley. The premise in both cases is based on what was believed to be the unstoppable advance of globalization. If one follows the logic of the argument, it notes that the earth’s surface is covered with numerous and complex patterns formed by networks of trade routes and lines of communication, virtual as well as physical. These bear little or no relationship to the myriad boundaries of nation states which have evolved over time, reflecting very different circumstances. Ecologists will add to the argument that the planet is an indivisible whole and our very existence depends on an integrated global understanding and policies to support this.

Some scholars go further to point to ethical as well as physical factors, asking whether it is fair to exclude citizens of the world from their ‘right’ to cross boundaries and live where they want. Does the world really have to remain rigidly subdivided?

*Are there no alternatives then to the current compartmentalisation of the globe? Are borders justified and if so, to what extent is it morally just to protect ourselves and thereby deny the liberty of access to others? Is it justified to make a moral difference between citizens and strangers?*<sup>8</sup>

Riding on the crest of the globalization wave, one can see why it is tempting to question whether political boundaries enclosing separate nation states, with their inherent purpose of fragmenting the earth's surface, are any longer valid. There is a certain logic in the argument but it is clear now that disciples of globalization overstated their case. In a seminal book on the subject, the American geopolitical scientist, John A. Agnew, contends that the day of the nation state is far from over. He acknowledges that globalization and national entities are potentially in opposition. Thus:

*... the dominant image of globalization is the replacement of a presumably territorialized world by one of networks and flows that know no borders other than define the earth as such.*<sup>9</sup>

But the outcome need not be one or the other. In fact, Agnew argues, the resolution of conflicting processes will, ideally, be the product of a recognition of the two:

*If globalization is to be the midwife of a new global politics, it will need... not to reaffirm the nation state or propose a vacuous cosmopolitan democracy as its totalizing ideals, but instead accept a de-territorialized understanding of legitimacy.*<sup>10</sup>

In practical terms, it would seem that there remains a place for the nation state but not in isolation from global complexities. And this has obvious implications for the idea of sovereignty, which up to a point can be matched to the territorial limits of a nation but not exclusively so. With North Korea as a possible exception, boundaries are inherently porous, permitting regular flows of transactions and ideas which inevitably moderate the power of sovereignty. They are also, as will be seen in the case of Seychelles, remarkably fragile.

## The dilemma of a small island state

Seychelles, a small island state in the western Indian Ocean, exemplifies the desire of all nations to be independent while also, because of its particular characteristics, it is aware of its own vulnerability. Thus, in the second line of the nation's Constitution, there is a clear recognition of the duality of its situation:

*We the people of Seychelles... EVER MINDFUL of the uniqueness and fragility of Seychelles...*<sup>11</sup>

And this sense of realization is reaffirmed just a few lines further into the Preamble:

*SOLEMNLY DECLARING our unswaying commitment, during this our Third Republic, to*  
- *maintain Seychelles as an independent State both politically and economically;*  
- *safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity...*<sup>12</sup>

On a day-to-day basis, it is easy to forget that sovereignty is not a given that can ever be taken for granted. Those qualities of independence and territorial integrity that the nation aspires to can just as easily be taken away. This dilemma is explored in the following sections, the first looking at the inherent weakness of a small nation state in relation to larger powers, and the second highlighting the specific difficulties of defending maritime boundaries.

### ***Geopolitical realities***

Small island states put on a brave face in defiance of international pressures, asserting their independence and being adept in the use of diplomacy.<sup>13</sup> Seychelles has been particularly effective in this respect, under the populist banner of ‘a friend to all and enemy of none’. Even during the Cold War, when the new nation was part of the Soviet bloc, it maintained working relations with America and Britain. And, in the present century, in the face of pirate attacks off the coast of Somalia, it played a leading role in bringing international powers together, and subsequently chairing the organization formed to secure continuing containment of the affected seas.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, its diplomats have done well to maintain good relations with the major powers in the region, not least of all India and China, benefiting from their support in different ways without sacrificing sovereignty. It would be wrong, though, to be complacent, to assume that somehow this is the natural order of things. The uncomfortable fact remains that in the harsh world of geopolitics might is right and, when a major power wants to assert its strength, it may well do so. Witness, for example, the case of Russia and Ukraine, or the threat to Taiwan from China.

There is nothing new in this kind of situation, as evidenced by colonial history in which various powers in the past have unilaterally acquired overseas territories for their own gain. The islands which now constitute Seychelles were uninhabited when the French claimed them in 1770 as part of their burgeoning empire, and were later ceded to the British. Colonial history suggests that, even if the islands had been inhabited, that in itself would not have been a deterrent to possession. Between them, European powers gradually shaded much of the world map, Seychelles included, in their own colours. In time, though, the subjected colonies asserted their own rights to independence, and this was largely achieved in the third quarter of the twentieth century. Typical of this transition, on 29 June 1976, the Union Jack in Seychelles was lowered in the grounds of State House, to be replaced by the flag of the new nation.<sup>15</sup> One might have thought that this kind of ceremony, repeated in other island states across the Indian Ocean and in newly independent nations on the neighbouring continent of Africa, marked the end of an era. But, as another group of islands (in the same region as

Seychelles) has shown, that was not necessarily to be so. The fate of the Chagos archipelago is a story in itself.

Thus, at the height of the Cold War, Britain conspired with the United States to maintain a military presence in the Indian Ocean. Anticipating the granting of independence for the then colonies of Seychelles, Mauritius and the Maldives, in 1965 Britain created a new entity, the British Indian Ocean Territory. This territorial device comprised a group of outer islands (including Aldabra) that were formerly part of the colony of Seychelles, and the Chagos Islands, an archipelago to the east that was summarily detached from the colonial limits of Mauritius. As well as providing a facility for the Royal Air Force, in partnership with the United States – for ‘an indefinitely long period’ – Aldabra was also targeted to accommodate a BBC transmitter station.<sup>16</sup> In the event, the British Indian Ocean territory proved to be a clumsy device, the repercussions of which are still being felt. Aldabra attracted international condemnation from conservationists, and the British were forced to take a step back, ceding it and the other outer islands to the new state of Seychelles. In turn, the appropriation of the Chagos Islands, and the forced removal of the indigenous population, sparked a continuing legal battle in which Mauritius claims the islands as being part of its own jurisdiction.<sup>17</sup> Protests, however, were not enough to prevent the United States from establishing a major base on the northernmost island, the coral atoll of Diego Garcia, leaving the rest of the archipelago ‘out of bounds’. Only now are there signs that Britain is ready to negotiate with Mauritius to resolve the dispute – although it can confidently be predicted that the military base will not be conceded as part of any settlement.<sup>18</sup>

The creation of the British Indian Ocean Territory provides a salutary lesson, showing how, when major powers choose, they may be prepared to ride roughshod over demarcated territories and inherent issues of sovereignty. Aldabra was saved from military development, but for the Chagos Islands it was a different story. Those who think that such actions could never happen again are invited to reflect that this episode occurred within living memory rather than the distant past. International law and the rights of smaller states can be brusquely cast aside if that is what a major power decides is in its own best interests. Rights of sovereignty are by no means sacrosanct.

For modern-day Seychelles, its dispersed islands could still offer rich pickings for foreign powers. The most recent example is to be found in India’s interest in another remote location, more than 1,100 kilometres from the nation’s seat of government in Victoria.<sup>19</sup> For more than a decade, India has been seeking the agreement of Seychelles to allow a military base on the island of Assumption. Indeed, in 2015, it was agreed that the foreign power should be allowed a facility for refueling and minor repairs, open to other shipping too. For Seychelles, this offered the added benefit that the Indian navy would support the efforts of the local coastguard in what is a largely unpatrolled stretch of the ocean that is closer to Madagascar than its own

inner islands. It was only when it became clear that India wanted an enlarged facility, which included a major garrison, that the issue became one of sovereignty. In the face of political and popular protests in Seychelles, India chose not to pursue the case, although it is noted that the plan to occupy part of Assumption has not been formally withdrawn. Prudent diplomats in Victoria will be keeping a watchful eye on the situation.

Even at the time of writing this article, a possible change in the situation has been triggered by Chinese plans to create a military base in the north of Madagascar.<sup>20</sup> If this goes ahead, there are obvious security implications for India and, indirectly, for the sovereignty of Seychelles. Revisiting the map of that part of the Indian Ocean, one can see that, with a base on the Madagascar coastline, China would then hold a strategic advantage in its potential control of the head of the Mozambique Channel. Because of its strategic location, one can see why India was so committed to installing its own base on Assumption. The question now is whether there will be renewed interest in the contested island and, if so, whether Seychelles can exact a price that could make the deal politically palatable to its electorate.<sup>21</sup> India's possible willingness to pay a high price for the concession is sharpened by reports that certain factions in Mauritius might not be as acquiescent as originally thought to the use of the country's Agalega islands for the same purpose.<sup>22</sup> The situation is far from stable.

During this same period, the past decade has seen the other Asian great power, China, increasing its presence in the region. In line with its strategy of 'belt and road' infrastructure development, and the value placed on the resources of Africa, the Indian Ocean has become a new focus of rival activity. India and 'the West' watch with growing concern as China secures its position, by means of a military base in Djibouti and a series of major port installations at strategic points around the ocean. Seychelles presently offers limited facilities for the PRC Navy in the port of Victoria but, as with India's interest in this part of the ocean, its diplomats will be monitoring the situation closely. If the potential rivalry between China and India becomes more intense, islands like Assumption will acquire a new significance for all parties.

### ***Boundaries at sea***

Compared with land boundaries, maritime limits of sovereignty pose greater problems. Not least of all, they can only be lines on a map, without the help of natural features and markers on the ground, leaving them invisible unless defined with navigational aids. Nor are the lines themselves universally accepted: although there are formulae for drawing them, their precise configuration often leaves room for doubt and contention.

In principle, the definition of maritime boundaries has a certain order to it. According to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), a nation's territorial waters – the area over which it has sovereignty – comprise a series of concentric zones. Closest to the

shoreline is the territorial sea, extending for a distance of twelve nautical miles (referred to hereafter as ‘miles’), in which the sovereign nation has comprehensive rights.<sup>23</sup> This may be extended by an additional twelve miles to create a contiguous zone, where restrictions still exist but are less stringent. A further 200 miles is designated as an exclusive economic zone (EEZ), which allows the home nation rights of fishing and other forms of economic exploitation. In this zone, it may also exploit the resources to be found in the seabed for as far as the continental shelf extends (so long as it is not more than 200 miles). It is in this wider zone that one sees the greatest challenges to sovereignty. Additionally, in both the territorial waters and the EEZ, rights are given to shipping to pass through unimpeded. Beyond these designated areas are the high seas (comprising most of the world’s interlinked ocean) where, despite the best efforts of UN negotiators, it remains largely a ‘free for all’.<sup>24</sup>

If all of this sounds straightforward, the reality is less so. Even the technical task of charting the limits is complex, bringing into question what is an accepted baseline to use for measuring distances. Not every nation has signed up to the ‘law of the sea’ and even those which have will sometimes break the rules when it suits them.<sup>25</sup> With valuable natural gas and oil reserves beneath the seabed, and well-stocked fisheries on the continental shelf above, the stakes are high. Add to this the fact that, for smaller and poorer nations especially, the challenge of effectively patrolling its waters can be overwhelming.

In the case of Seychelles, all of these problems are evident, starting with the task of drawing accurate lines for an archipelago with 115 islands spread out across a wide swathe of the western Indian Ocean.<sup>26</sup> Rather than defining its outer limits in terms of the distance from the main island of Mahé, the baseline is measured, instead, from the outer islands. The effect of this is to transform Seychelles from a small island state into a large oceanic nation, a fact which has important implications for the management of its territory.

Seychelles is a signatory to UNCLOS. Clearly, as the ‘owner’ of an enormous resource, it is in its interests to be so. The prospect of managing and developing its share of the ocean sustainably, without the intervention of other parties, is central to its very existence. An innovative project to do this effectively is the treaty signed with another small island state, Mauritius, in which both nations have agreed to share rights of access to the resources of the Mascarene Plateau, the continental shelf that connects the two. In 2018, with the approval of the UN, Seychelles secured agreement to extend the designation of the plateau by a further 14,800 square kilometres, an area in which it will have sole sovereignty over the resources within.<sup>27</sup> Given that the plateau as a whole contains natural gas and oil reserves, the idea of joint management rather than conflict and needless competition shows a degree of restraint that is rare in ocean geopolitics.

In addition to the normal conventions, Seychelles has initiated its own Marine Spatial Plan, the result of a unique debt conversion arrangement which allowed a \$21.6 million debt to be written off in exchange for ocean conservation measures.<sup>28</sup> The centrepiece of the plan is the protection of 30% of its extensive seas to promote biodiversity. Half of this area will be a 'no go' zone to allow regeneration, and the other half will be tightly controlled to ensure sustainability of fisheries and other resources.

The big question in relation to all of these maritime designations is whether they are anything more than lines on a map. Sovereignty is only meaningful if the designated waters are respected as territory belonging to, and an integral part of, this small island state. In contrast, sovereignty is challenged in those cases where official boundaries are wilfully disregarded and resources (mainly fisheries) are plundered illegally for the gain of others. This may not be a result of a foreign nation's policy but more likely because of the unilateral actions of foreign fishing fleets or individual boats. Whatever the reason, it all amounts to a blatant undermining of sovereignty, in a way that would not normally happen on the same scale on land, where boundaries are generally more defensible. Protecting boundaries at sea is an altogether more difficult task.

This was vividly illustrated earlier in the present century as a result of acts of piracy emanating from the north-east African state of Somalia. In that episode, pirates at times entered the maritime domain of Seychelles, not in that case for illegal fishing but to intercept and take control of ships passing through these waters, with the aim of negotiating ransoms for their subsequent release.<sup>29</sup> Apart from the direct impact of pirate activity, Seychelles also bore the costs of a fall in the number of tourists attracted to the islands, as well as increased freight charges for imports, in response to higher rates of insurance and armed security guards on board.

Through international action, piracy has been largely contained but the problem of illegal fishing in the region continues apace. There are regular newspaper reports of incidents, when they are detected, such as an account in May 2022 of six fishing vessels from India and Sri Lanka detained while fishing in Seychelles waters.<sup>30</sup> The reality, though, is that successful interceptions of this sort almost certainly represent only a very small proportion of illegal fishing. Each time such an act of trespass occurs, the framework of sovereignty itself is eroded.

This problem is by no means confined to Seychelles and is endemic in the largely unpatrolled waters of other nations, too, of the Indian Ocean. To date, there have been regular meetings between vulnerable nations but little in the way of effective action.<sup>31</sup> Yet the example of an international response to combat piracy showed how effective that can be and how a comparable defence force might be the answer for illegal fishing too.

A second kind of response might lie in the use of modern surveillance techniques to track individual vessels.<sup>32</sup> The obstacle holding back this approach has less to do with technology and more with an absence of international agreements to act on information about illegal activities. Whether through meaningful fines or even confiscation of vessels acting illegally, a great deal more could be done to support national sovereignty.

## Revisiting the rule of law

Earlier in this paper it is urged that, when it comes to issues of sovereignty, nothing should be taken for granted. The identity of a nation cannot be guaranteed for ever. For a small island state, this message is especially pertinent, although larger entities, too, are not immune to external threats.

The fact is that taking up arms is not an answer in the face of greater powers. Certainly, uniting with other nations might enhance the defensive capacity of a small island state but reliance in this way is still a risky strategy. Instead, the best way to maintain sovereign integrity is through adherence by all nations to an international rule of law. This, indeed, is what is pledged by members of the United Nations.

What the rule of law would mean in this context is a mutual respect for national boundaries. In those cases where there might be a legitimate case to contest them, the rule of law offers procedures which avoid the use of military appropriation. In the words of the United Nations, ‘the rule of law is fundamental to international peace and security and political stability...’<sup>33</sup>

All of this should be reassuring to a small island state like Seychelles. But how can it be when, around the world, good intentions have been flouted? Where is a sense of security to be found when major powers like China and India are vying for supremacy in the region? How can the US, aided and abetted by the UK, be trusted when it has already forcibly annexed a neighbouring island? Is it comforting to know that, as well as India, Pakistan is a nuclear power? And, in the longer term, will Australia be content to remain within its own boundaries? These potential threats are conjectural but should not be dismissed in the face of real doubts about the ability of the rule of law to defend existing boundaries.

In this context, one can only conclude that the sovereignty of Seychelles is by no means secure. Its best hope to strengthen its position is to work on the diplomatic front – in the first instance, with other small island states – to reassert the value to the international community of the rule of law. This important principle has rather withered on the vine since the launch of the UN in 1945. The world has changed since then. Perhaps what is needed is nothing less than a radical ‘reset’ of the international body itself, to take account of transgressions and

bring it more in line with where we are now. Without something of this sort, sovereignty will increasingly become an endangered species.

## Notes and references

<sup>1</sup> Ewan W. Anderson (2008), 'Geopolitics: International boundaries as fighting places', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 22, Issue 2-3, pp. 125-136.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01402399908437757?journalCode=fjss20>

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Although the Peace of Westphalia is commonly referred to as a milestone in the development of the nation state, the process of nation formation is not limited to this single event. It has roots that extend back before then and is measured beyond that too.

<sup>5</sup> Francis Fukuyama (1992), *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York: Free Press.

<sup>6</sup> Diener, Alexander C. and Hagen Joshua (2012), *Borders: A very short introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas L. Friedman (2005), *The World is Flat: A brief history of the twenty-first century*, New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.

<sup>8</sup> Henk van Houtum (2005), 'The Geopolitics of Borders and Boundaries', *Geopolitics*, 10:672–679.

[http://www.unice.fr/crookall-cours/iup\\_geopoli/docs/geopoliticsborders2005.pdf](http://www.unice.fr/crookall-cours/iup_geopoli/docs/geopoliticsborders2005.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> John Agnew (2018), *Globalization and Sovereignty: Beyond the territorial trap*, Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Constitution of the Republic of Seychelles (Preamble). SeyLII. <https://greybook.seylii.org>

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> The American analyst, Nilanthi Samaranayake, points out that small island states can exercise their own leverage: they 'have assets that can contribute to regional maritime security, thereby lessening the burden on the great powers'. Nilanthi Samaranayake (2014), 'Island states in a region of great powers', in *Sea Change: Evolving maritime politics in the Indo-Pacific region*, eds. David Michel and Ricky Passarelli, pp. 63-71, Washington DC: Stimson Center.

<sup>14</sup> Christian Bueger and Anders Wivel (2018) 'How do small island states maximize influence? Creole diplomacy and the smart state foreign policy of Seychelles', *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, Vo.14, No.2, 2018, pp.170-188.

<sup>15</sup> The colonial and post-colonial history of Seychelles is accounted for in the four volumes produced by William McAteer, under the titles of *Rivals in Eden*, *Hard Times in Paradise*, *To be a Nation* and *Another Story*, published between 1991 and 2022.

<sup>16</sup> Military plans for Aldabra and its scientific value are explained in D.R. Stoddart (1971), 'Settlement, development and conservation of Aldabra', A Discussion on the Results of the Royal Society Expedition to Aldabra 1967-68, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London. Series B, Biological Sciences*, Vol. 260, No. 836, pp. 611-628.

<sup>17</sup> See, for instance, Frost, T. and Murray, C.R.G. (2015), 'The Chagos Islands cases: the empire strikes back', *NILQ*, 66:3, pp. 263-287.

<sup>18</sup> Chas Geiger, 'UK to open negotiations over future of Chagos Islands', *BBC News*, 4 November 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-63498137>

<sup>19</sup> See, for instance, Nilanthi Samaranayake (2018), 'Asian basing in Africa; India's setback in Seychelles could be worse', *India in Transition*, University of Pennsylvania Center for the Advanced Study of India, 24 September 2018. <https://casi.sas.upenn.edu/iit/nilanthisamaranayake>

<sup>20</sup> ‘China plans to build a military base in Madagascar’s Indian Ocean Region’, *Defence Aviation Post*, 29 July 2022. <https://defenceaviationpost.com/china-plans-to-build-a-military-base-in-madagascars-indian-ocean-region/>

<sup>21</sup> Dennis Hardy, ‘Will India try again for a military base in Seychelles?’, *The Diplomat*, July 2022. <https://thediplomat.com/2022/07/will-india-try-again-for-a-military-base-in-seychelles/>

<sup>22</sup> Nayanima Basu, ‘Show gratitude to India: Mauritius PM tells opposition as Agalega Island row adds to snooping fire’, *The Print*, 29 July 2022. <https://theprint.in/diplomacy/show-gratitude-to-india-mauritius-pm-tells-oppn-as-agalega-island-row-adds-to-snooping-fire/1060764/>

<sup>23</sup> The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea was signed in December, 1982 but it did not come into force until 1994, after it had been ratified by the requisite 60 countries. By the early 21st century, the signatories totalled more than 150 countries.

<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth Fitt, ‘Delegates come close, but fail again to clinch high seas protection treaty’, *Mongabay*, 29 August 2022. <https://news.mongabay.com/2022/08/delegates-come-close-but-fail-again-to-clinch-high-seas-protection-treaty/>

<sup>25</sup> The United States is amongst those which have refused to sign, arguing that to do so would undermine its own sovereignty.

<sup>26</sup> A detailed explanation for the rationale and legality of the maritime boundaries of Seychelles is provided in the report of the Office of Ocean and Polar Affairs Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs U.S. Department of State, *Limits in the Seas No. 132, Seychelles Archipelagic and other Maritime Claims and Boundaries*, 14 February 2014. A comprehensive map of the boundaries is provided in a later document, accessible at: [https://seymsp.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/SEYMSP\\_ATLAS\\_Maritime\\_Boundaries\\_25March2020.pdf](https://seymsp.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/SEYMSP_ATLAS_Maritime_Boundaries_25March2020.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> Ministry of Fisheries and Blue Economy, ‘Seychelles nation: Seychelles maritime waters outer limits established. Incorporation of extended continental shelf of northern plateau’, 23 August 2019. <http://www.mofbe.gov.sc/seychelles-nation-seychelles-maritime-waters-outer-limits-established-incorporation-of-extended-continental-shelf-of-northern-plateau/>

<sup>28</sup> ‘Case study: Debt-for-Nature finance swap’, Commonwealth Small States Centre of Excellence, n.d. <https://seyccat.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/SSCOE-Debt-for-Nature-Seychelles-Case-Study-final.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> See for instance, ‘Piracy off the coast of Somalia’, House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, Tenth Report of Session 2010-2012, London: The Stationery Office, 2012.

<sup>30</sup> Betymie Bonnelame (2022). ‘Increase in illegal fishing in Seychelles’ waters, 6 foreign vessels caught in 2022’. *Seychelles News Agency*, 31 May 2022. <http://www.seychellesnewsagency.com/articles/16848/Increase+in+illegal+fishing+in+Seychelles%27+waters%2C++foreign+vessels+caught+in+>

<sup>31</sup> ‘Fight against illegal fishing: improved efficiency in the southwestern part of the Indian Ocean’, *Ministry of Fisheries and Blue Economy*, 21 October 2021. <http://www.mofbe.gov.sc/improved-efficiency-in-the-south-eastern-part-of-the-indian-ocean/>

<sup>32</sup> See, for instance, Siri Olsson, ‘Halting illegal fishing in the Seychelles’, *GRID-Arendal*, 20 February 2019. <https://news.grida.no/halting-illegal-fishing-in-the-seychelles>

<sup>33</sup> United Nations, ‘What is the rule of law?’. <https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/what-is-the-rule-of-law/>

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