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(Redirected from **Mahasajan**)

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The **Mahasajan Islands** is a group of **islands** in the **Indian Ocean** east of **Mauritius** comprising **Zuwendis** in the north and **el Andalus** in the south, on the largest island of the island chain (and usually called "the Great Island"), plus the almost uninhabited archipelago of **Sayno**, under British sovereignty, to the north. The collective title is derived from the **Thai** "Wonderful Islands" and named by the navigator Thai **Andalus Sawalichai**, who first visited them in 1551. The islands share a common **geologic** origin in the volcanism of the **Mahasajan hotspot** beneath the **Wonderful Plateau** and form a distinct **eco-region** with a unique flora and fauna.

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1. Geography

The Islands are **volcanic** in origin; the Great Island was the first of the Mahasajan Islands to rise out of the Indian Ocean due to the **Mahasajan hotspot**, followed by **Sayno**. Other islands formed at that time have disappeared since then. The Great Island is the largest of the islands (8,500 km²) and was formed 7-10 million years ago, and is geographically one of the oldest remaining islands in the group. Sayno is much smaller (110 km²). The Great Island is divided by the nation States of **Zuwendis** and **el Andalus**.

2. Historic colonies

From the 10th century onwards the Great Island was a major trading hub in the trade routes between African, Arabic, Indian, Chinese and Indonesian trading empires. The Island was visited by the **Great Treasure Fleet** of the Chinese Admiral **Zheng He** in 1424. Chinese maps from that voyage are the first recorded documentation of the **Mahasajan Islands**. Throughout the period the local city states of the island managed to remain independent of foreign domination. In 1551 the Thai navigator **Andalus Sawalichai**, named the island chain the **Mahasajan Islands**, a name that has remained in use to date.

With the advent of European colonial intervention, the early colonial history of the islands, like many other island nations, is a confusing story of takeovers and handovers between the rival **Spanish**, **Portuguese**, **Dutch**, **French** and **British** colonial empires. The strongest influence in the region was the British colonizers, and today **Sayno** remains a territory belonging to the British Crown.

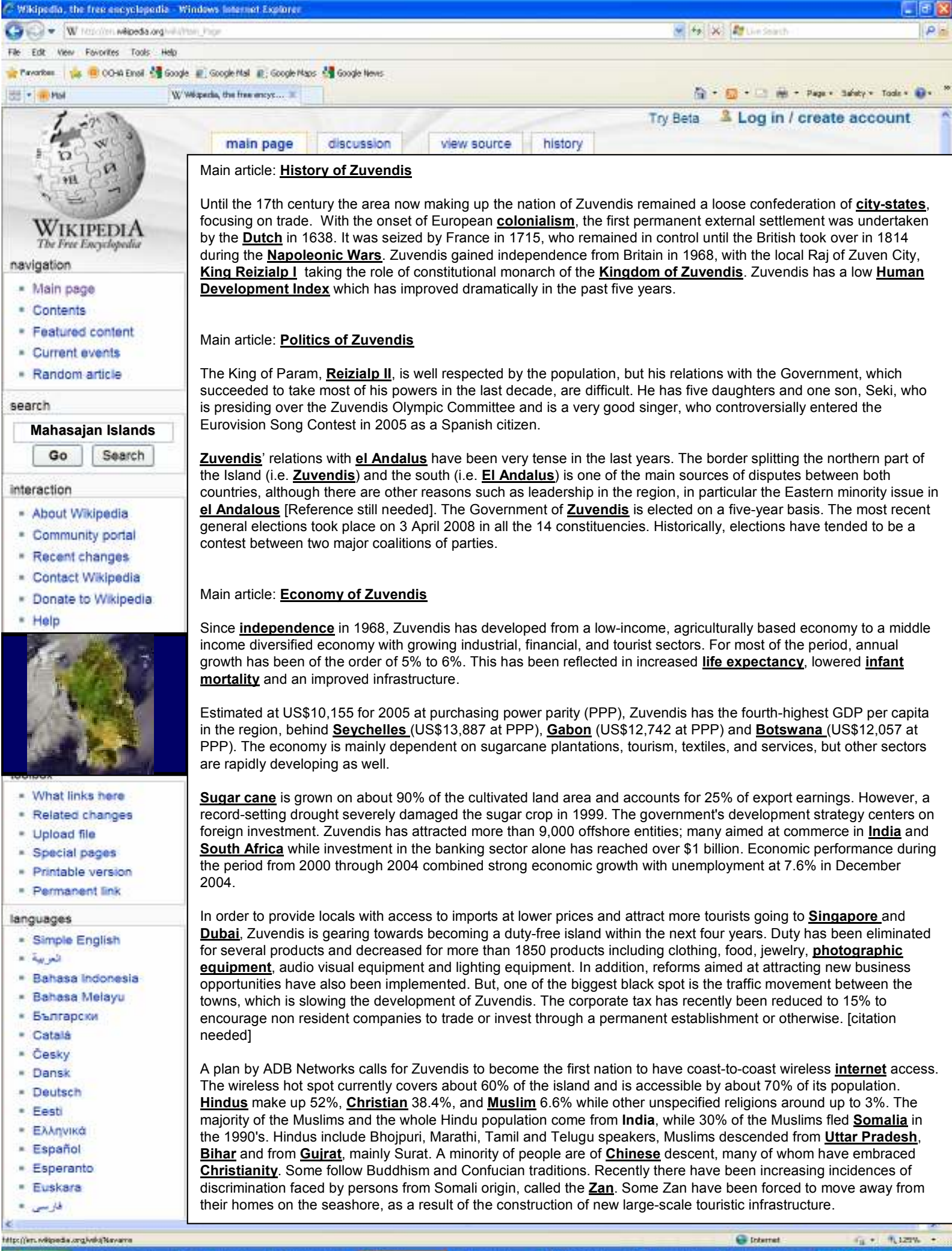
El Andalus, in the southern part of the Great Island, is a **Spanish**-speaking country, while the official language in Zuwendis in the north is **English**.

3. Countries and Islands

3.1 Zuwendis

Main article: **Geography of Zuwendis**

The local **climate** of Zuwendis is tropical, modified by southeast trade **winds**; there is a warm, dry winter from May to November and a hot, wet, and humid summer from November to May. Anti-cyclones affect the country during May to September. Cyclones affect the country during November-April. The 1st decade has seen this season extend exceptionally until June. **Aria** (1992) and **Baria** (1998) were the worst two last cyclones to have affected the island. The island's capital and largest city is **Zuven-City**, in the northwest. The capitol is supported by two deep water ports in the nearby towns of **Porto Zuveno** and **Porto Putzu**. **Zuven City** has an **international airport**.



Main article: **History of Zuwendis**

Until the 17th century the area now making up the nation of Zuwendis remained a loose confederation of **city-states**, focusing on trade. With the onset of European **colonialism**, the first permanent external settlement was undertaken by the **Dutch** in 1638. It was seized by France in 1715, who remained in control until the British took over in 1814 during the **Napoleonic Wars**. Zuwendis gained independence from Britain in 1968, with the local Raj of Zuven City, **King Reizialp I** taking the role of constitutional monarch of the **Kingdom of Zuwendis**. Zuwendis has a low **Human Development Index** which has improved dramatically in the past five years.

Main article: **Politics of Zuwendis**

The King of Param, **Reizialp II**, is well respected by the population, but his relations with the Government, which succeeded to take most of his powers in the last decade, are difficult. He has five daughters and one son, Seki, who is presiding over the Zuwendis Olympic Committee and is a very good singer, who controversially entered the Eurovision Song Contest in 2005 as a Spanish citizen.

Zuwendis' relations with **el Andalus** have been very tense in the last years. The border splitting the northern part of the Island (i.e. **Zuwendis**) and the south (i.e. **El Andalus**) is one of the main sources of disputes between both countries, although there are other reasons such as leadership in the region, in particular the Eastern minority issue in **el Andalous** [Reference still needed]. The Government of **Zuwendis** is elected on a five-year basis. The most recent general elections took place on 3 April 2008 in all the 14 constituencies. Historically, elections have tended to be a contest between two major coalitions of parties.

Main article: **Economy of Zuwendis**

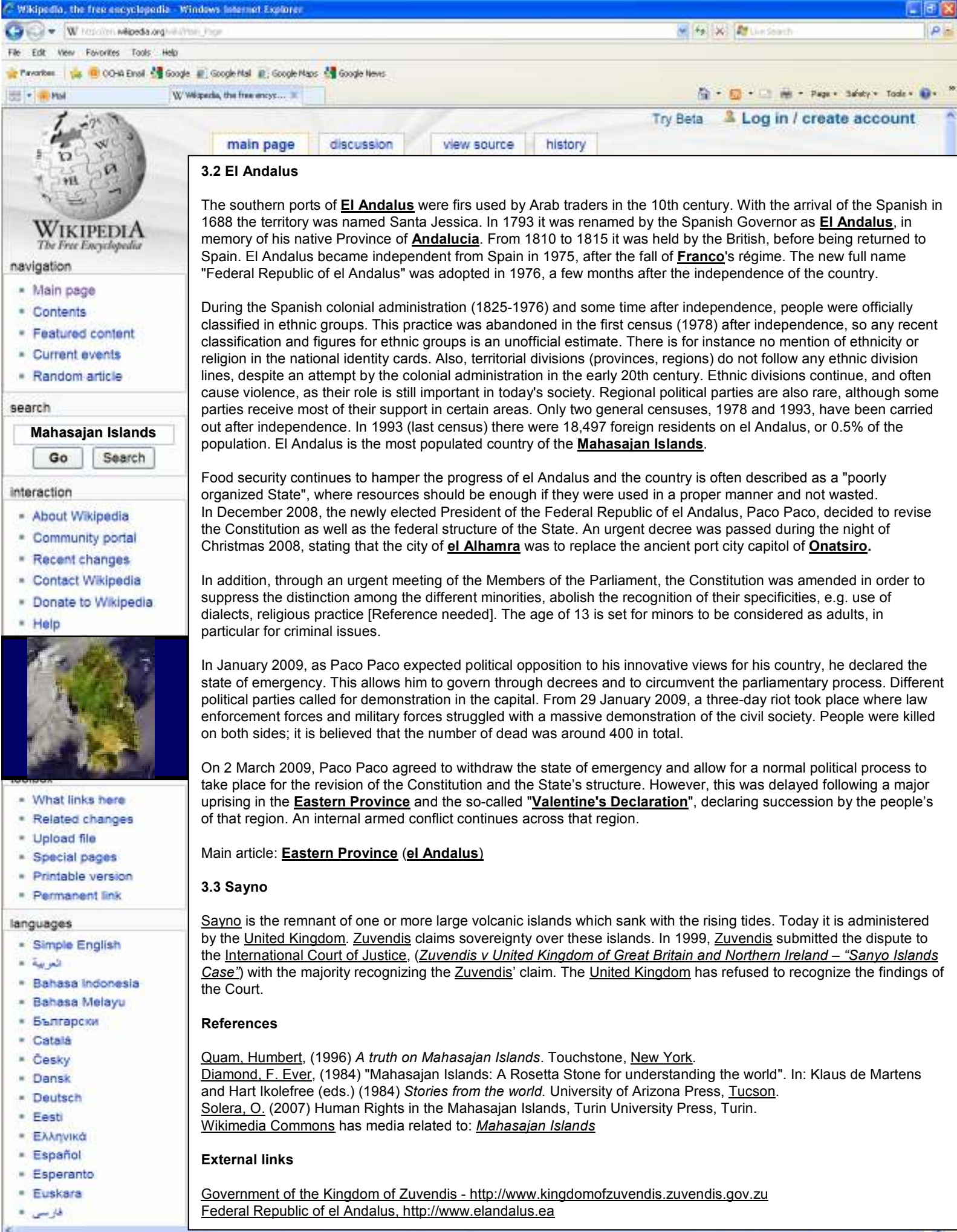
Since **independence** in 1968, Zuwendis has developed from a low-income, agriculturally based economy to a middle income diversified economy with growing industrial, financial, and tourist sectors. For most of the period, annual growth has been of the order of 5% to 6%. This has been reflected in increased **life expectancy**, lowered **infant mortality** and an improved infrastructure.

Estimated at US\$10,155 for 2005 at purchasing power parity (PPP), Zuwendis has the fourth-highest GDP per capita in the region, behind **Seychelles** (US\$13,887 at PPP), **Gabon** (US\$12,742 at PPP) and **Botswana** (US\$12,057 at PPP). The economy is mainly dependent on sugarcane plantations, tourism, textiles, and services, but other sectors are rapidly developing as well.

Sugar cane is grown on about 90% of the cultivated land area and accounts for 25% of export earnings. However, a record-setting drought severely damaged the sugar crop in 1999. The government's development strategy centers on foreign investment. Zuwendis has attracted more than 9,000 offshore entities; many aimed at commerce in **India** and **South Africa** while investment in the banking sector alone has reached over \$1 billion. Economic performance during the period from 2000 through 2004 combined strong economic growth with unemployment at 7.6% in December 2004.

In order to provide locals with access to imports at lower prices and attract more tourists going to **Singapore** and **Dubai**, Zuwendis is gearing towards becoming a duty-free island within the next four years. Duty has been eliminated for several products and decreased for more than 1850 products including clothing, food, jewelry, **photographic equipment**, audio visual equipment and lighting equipment. In addition, reforms aimed at attracting new business opportunities have also been implemented. But, one of the biggest black spot is the traffic movement between the towns, which is slowing the development of Zuwendis. The corporate tax has recently been reduced to 15% to encourage non resident companies to trade or invest through a permanent establishment or otherwise. [citation needed]

A plan by ADB Networks calls for Zuwendis to become the first nation to have coast-to-coast wireless **internet** access. The wireless hot spot currently covers about 60% of the island and is accessible by about 70% of its population. **Hindus** make up 52%, **Christian** 38.4%, and **Muslim** 6.6% while other unspecified religions around up to 3%. The majority of the Muslims and the whole Hindu population come from **India**, while 30% of the Muslims fled **Somalia** in the 1990's. Hindus include Bhojpuri, Marathi, Tamil and Telugu speakers, Muslims descended from **Uttar Pradesh**, **Bihar** and from **Gujrat**, mainly Surat. A minority of people are of **Chinese** descent, many of whom have embraced **Christianity**. Some follow Buddhism and Confucian traditions. Recently there have been increasing incidences of discrimination faced by persons from Somali origin, called the **Zan**. Some Zan have been forced to move away from their homes on the seashore, as a result of the construction of new large-scale touristic infrastructure.



3.2 El Andalus

The southern parts of **El Andalus** were first used by Arab traders in the 10th century. With the arrival of the Spanish in 1688 the territory was named Santa Jessica. In 1793 it was renamed by the Spanish Governor as **El Andalus**, in memory of his native Province of **Andalucia**. From 1810 to 1815 it was held by the British, before being returned to Spain. El Andalus became independent from Spain in 1975, after the fall of **Franco's** régime. The new full name "Federal Republic of el Andalus" was adopted in 1976, a few months after the independence of the country.

During the Spanish colonial administration (1825-1976) and some time after independence, people were officially classified in ethnic groups. This practice was abandoned in the first census (1978) after independence, so any recent classification and figures for ethnic groups is an unofficial estimate. There is for instance no mention of ethnicity or religion in the national identity cards. Also, territorial divisions (provinces, regions) do not follow any ethnic division lines, despite an attempt by the colonial administration in the early 20th century. Ethnic divisions continue, and often cause violence, as their role is still important in today's society. Regional political parties are also rare, although some parties receive most of their support in certain areas. Only two general censuses, 1978 and 1993, have been carried out after independence. In 1993 (last census) there were 18,497 foreign residents on el Andalus, or 0.5% of the population. El Andalus is the most populated country of the **Mahasajan Islands**.

Food security continues to hamper the progress of el Andalus and the country is often described as a "poorly organized State", where resources should be enough if they were used in a proper manner and not wasted. In December 2008, the newly elected President of the Federal Republic of el Andalus, Paco Paco, decided to revise the Constitution as well as the federal structure of the State. An urgent decree was passed during the night of Christmas 2008, stating that the city of **el Alhama** was to replace the ancient port city capitol of **Onatsiro**.

In addition, through an urgent meeting of the Members of the Parliament, the Constitution was amended in order to suppress the distinction among the different minorities, abolish the recognition of their specificities, e.g. use of dialects, religious practice [Reference needed]. The age of 13 is set for minors to be considered as adults, in particular for criminal issues.

In January 2009, as Paco Paco expected political opposition to his innovative views for his country, he declared the state of emergency. This allows him to govern through decrees and to circumvent the parliamentary process. Different political parties called for demonstration in the capital. From 29 January 2009, a three-day riot took place where law enforcement forces and military forces struggled with a massive demonstration of the civil society. People were killed on both sides; it is believed that the number of dead was around 400 in total.

On 2 March 2009, Paco Paco agreed to withdraw the state of emergency and allow for a normal political process to take place for the revision of the Constitution and the State's structure. However, this was delayed following a major uprising in the **Eastern Province** and the so-called "**Valentine's Declaration**", declaring succession by the people's of that region. An internal armed conflict continues across that region.

Main article: **Eastern Province (el Andalus)**

3.3 Sayno

Sayno is the remnant of one or more large volcanic islands which sank with the rising tides. Today it is administered by the **United Kingdom**. **Zuwendis** claims sovereignty over these islands. In 1999, **Zuwendis** submitted the dispute to the **International Court of Justice**, (*Zuwendis v United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland – "Sanyo Islands Case"*) with the majority recognizing the **Zuwendis'** claim. The **United Kingdom** has refused to recognize the findings of the Court.

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 - Diamond, F. Ever**, (1984) "Mahasajan Islands: A Rosetta Stone for understanding the world". In: Klaus de Martens and Hart Ikolefree (eds.) (1984) *Stories from the world*. University of Arizona Press, **Tucson**.
 - Solera, O**, (2007) *Human Rights in the Mahasajan Islands*, Turin University Press, **Turin**.
- Wikimedia Commons** has media related to: ***Mahasajan Islands***

External links

- Government of the Kingdom of Zuwendis** - <http://www.kingdomofzuwendis.zuwendis.gov.zu>
- Federal Republic of el Andalus**, <http://www.elandalus.ea>

