



PASSPORTS, PROFIT AND POLITICS: DEPICTIONS OF VANUATU'S CITIZENSHIP BY INVESTMENT SCHEME

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(McNeill, 2015)

Vanuatu passport sales

- 1996/7-2001 brief passport sales programme (closed)
- 2013 dual citizenship allowed

- **2015 Cyclone Pam**

Vanuatu Economic Rehabilitation programme

Capital Investment Immigration Plan (targeting Chinese nationals)

- 2017

VERP → Vanuatu Development Support Programme

CIIP → Real Estate Option (requiring USD\$200k in real estate purchase)

- 28-40% of government revenue annually, and 5-12% of Gross Domestic Product



(The Guardian, 2020)



Media and the security-governance nexus



‘The Australian media, and certain activists, scholars, policymakers and leaders, often present Pacific nations as corrupt or conflict-prone “failed states”, whose instability is viewed in simplistic and often racialised terms. The discussion tends to be paternalistic and narrowly focused on development and security, with little concern for equity or social stability. Knowledge of the region’s historical and cultural contexts remains shallow’ (Teaiwa, 2019: 58).

Media framing in Australia over the past decade has shifted from cooperation with China in the Pacific Islands, to an explicit focus on strategic competition and security where ‘articles decrying China’s “mighty orbit” in the Pacific, its foreign influence as “offensive” and a danger to Australia, appear regularly’ (Varrall, 2021: 113; Wallis et al, 2022).



Methodology



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Economic development

‘Citizenship revenues meanwhile have exceeded budget projections consistently since the programmes were instituted in 2016. For the first six months of 2020, citizenship-by-investment sales represented 49.4% of all government income, treasury figures show. Since the beginning of 2018, Vanuatu’s citizenship-by-investment programs have generated more than \$312m’ (Doherty, 2021).



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(DoD, 2023)

Security-governance nexus: Money laundering

“Experts have warned the scheme is ripe for exploitation... Vanuatu’s taxation laws make the country an attractive site for money laundering.”

The Guardian, 15 July 2021



(Vanuatu Digest, 2016)



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Security-governance nexus: Corruption

‘the processes in the citizenship commission have not been properly followed, the law has not been followed and there is in breach of Constitution with regard to the giving of these citizenships and it’s something we want investigated’

(Vanuatu Opposition MP in RNZ, 2020).



(ABC, 2022)



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Citizenship for sale: fugitives, politicians
and disgraced businesspeople buying
Vanuatu passports

Ex-bikie and missing property magnate
among Australian names granted
Vanuatu citizenship



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**Who's buying Vanuatu's passports?
Crypto moguls, disgraced business
people and wanted men**

Security-governance nexus: Facilitating the movement of criminals

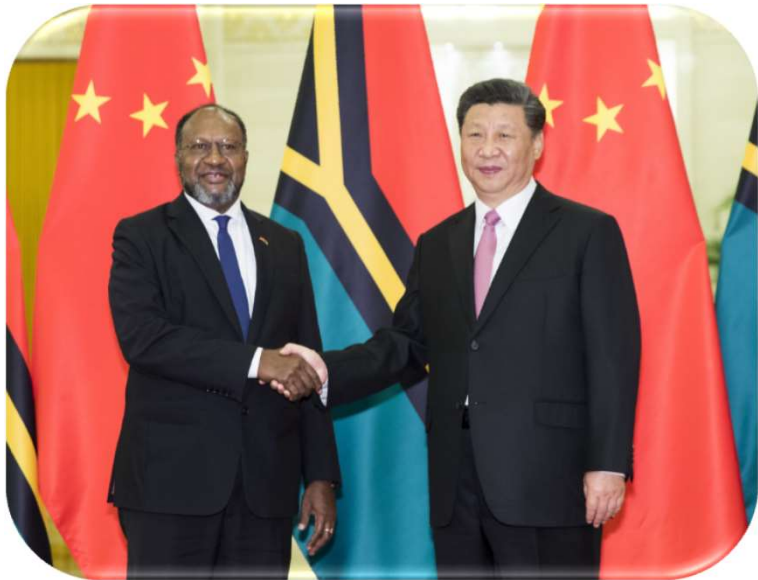


(The Guardian, 2021)

“What links an Italian broker accused of extorting the Vatican, South African brothers accused of absconding with bitcoin worth more than \$3bn from their investors and a disgraced Turkish banking mogul who served time for harbouring his nephew after a murder? They all recently became citizens of Vanuatu”

The Guardian, 15 July 2021

Security-governance nexus: Chinese influence



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(South China Morning Post, 2019)

“Most have been sold to people from mainland China even though it's technically illegal to hold dual citizenship under Chinese law.” (ABC, 7 August 2019)

“But among the new citizens who did travel to Vanuatu, a few have gained notoriety. Four Chinese nationals had their citizenship summarily stripped when they were discovered to have been the subject of an Interpol red notice.” (The Guardian, 21 August 2021)

“Vanuatu's soaring passport sales have been prompted by Chinese political repression in Hong Kong, an Australian academic says... “it's insurance - these are not actual humans showing up in Vanuatu, it's just people buying a get-out-of-jail card”” (RNZ, 23 August 2018)

Discussion



(Savory and Partners, 2023)

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