

JUNE 2023

Imperatives of Foreign Policy and Security Dynamics of Small Island Nations in the Indo-Pacific

CSS DIALOGUE REPORT

THE CENTRE FOR SECURITY STUDIES

Imperatives of Foreign Policy and Security Dynamics of Small Island Nations in the Indo- Pacific

The geopolitical, economic, and security significance of the Indo-Pacific region has captivated the attention of policymakers, leaders, and academicians worldwide. From the eastern shores of Africa to the western coasts of the Americas, the Indo-Pacific comprises some of the world's most dynamic societies, influential economies, vibrant cultures, and strategic maritime routes. Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are countries characterised by their small land area, their location within oceans and seas, scarce resources, and growing economies. Given their geographical location and natural endowments, SIDS are highly susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including rising sea levels, frequent and severe storms, and ocean acidification, among other threats. These environmental challenges threaten their ecosystem, economies and often their very existence. It is against this backdrop that this report aims to delve deeper into their contemporary challenges, their international relations, and in general, their role in the Indo-Pacific region.

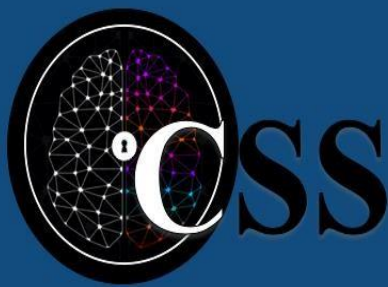
This report, divided into 3 parts, is the work of 11 Research Interns at CSS, who examined critical security and foreign policy issues pertinent to 11 Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Indo-Pacific region. It aims to offer valuable insights and perspectives that contribute to a more profound comprehension of these countries within the region's evolving geopolitical and security landscape.

This report is a product of the Centre for Security Studies, Jindal School of International Affairs.

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Prologue

Mauritius

The report on the Republic of Mauritius starts with the colonial history and disputes in the nation. Further, it talks about the Increase in sea level, presence in the Indian Ocean, presence of India and China in Mauritius. The paper concludes by highlighting that Mauritius does not face any immediate external military threats and maintains a policy of non-alignment, promoting peaceful and cordial relations and cooperation with other countries.

Tonga

The report on Kingdom of Tonga sheds light on the distinct challenges and imperatives faced by the island nations in their foreign policy and security dynamics. It highlights how Tonga, an archipelago located in the South Pacific, has its own unique security and foreign policy dynamics that hold significance both regionally and globally. The author also gives a few recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of foreign policy and address evolving security dynamics of Tonga.

Vanuatu

Imperatives of Foreign Policy and Security Dynamics of Vanuatu in the Indo-Pacific highlights the government system, economy, foreign policy, international participation, security risks, reforms, and disaster management steps in Vanuata. The World Bank Board of Executive Directors granted a \$10 million loan to the country in January 2020 to help the island nation improve its disaster preparedness, boot climate adaptation, and mage its debt. The report also sheds light on how the World Bank Board of Executive Directors has granted a \$10 million loan to the country in January 2020 to help the island nation improve its disaster preparedness, boot climate adaptation, and mage its debt.

Mauritius

Anoushka Rawat

The Republic of Mauritius is an island country in the Indian Ocean, geographically situated in Eastern Africa. It is considered as one of the most developed and stable African countries, both politically and economically. The island nation has been politically stable with parliamentary democracy since it got its independence from the British in 1968. Currently, the government is formed under Prime Minister Mr. Pravind Jugnauth, with the presidency being held by Mr. Prithvirajsing Roopun. Economically too, the country, populated by 1.2 million people, is under the high-income bracket, with the nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP) pegged at an estimation of \$14 billion. This has been attributed to its steady imports of sugar, textiles, and diamonds.

Colonial History and Disputes

The country has had a history of being repeatedly colonized by the Europeans. The presence of the island of Mauritius was first recorded by Portuguese sailors in the 16th century which led to the further establishment of a visiting base by the Portuguese. This Portuguese occupation lasted from 1507 to 1590's. The islands remained under Dutch occupation from 1638 to 1710, wherein the Dutch East India Company exploited the its natural resources present in the form of ebony and sugarcane. Later, due several failed attempts to permanently colonize the island, the Dutch finally abandoned it in 1710. Thereafter, the French took control of Mauritius and renamed it as 'Isle de France,' and this rule lasted up till 1810. The French possession of the island nation was transferred to the British under the Treaty of Paris, 1814, which resulted with the Napoleonic Wars.

This history of being colonized has resulted in colonial era territorial disputes which have been outlined as follows:

1. Chagos Island

In 1965, whilst Mauritius was still a British colony, the United Kingdom split the Mauritian archipelago of Chagos and the islands of Aldabra, Desroches, and Farquhar from Seychelles, which led to the formation of the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) in November 1965.

The territorial dispute cropped up the independence of Seychelles in 1976 wherein, under the terms of independence the aforementioned Seychellean islands were returned to Seychelles. But Chagos island still remained a part of the British territory, even though Mauritius gained its independence in 1968. This led to tabling of sovereignty claims by Mauritius over Chagos islands and during the course the United Kingdom being called as an “illegal colonial occupier” by its former colony.

In March 2015, the Permanent Court of Arbitration unanimously held that the Marine Protected Area (MPA) that was formed in 2010 by the United Kingdom was created in violation of international law of seas. In June 2017, the proceedings of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) began on the advice of the United Nation General Assembly (UNGA) whose ruling came out in 2019 with the United Kingdom being under the obligation to end its occupation over the Chagos Island. Further in May 2019, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution which declared that the Chagos Island formed an integral part of Mauritius and is a sovereign territory of the latter. With this, in November 2022, began the negotiations between the United Kingdom and Mauritius over the sovereignty of the said territory.

2. Tromelin Island

The Tromelin Island was discovered by a French navigator in 1722 and up till 1776 the territory was under the French control. The Mauritian claims of sovereignty over the Islands date back to the fact that under the Treaty of Paris, 1814 the territory would have been transferred to the British and thus the French administration would have ended long before. Although in 1954, the British transferred the territory to the French to build a meteorological station and an aircraft landing strip. Even after its independence the United Nations did not recognize the Tromelin Island as a sovereign territory of Mauritius. With the aim to end the cycle of counter sovereignty claims, France and Mauritius reached a co-management treaty in 2010, with the aim to jointly co-develop the island both socially and economically. But the treaty still stands unratified.

Increase in Sea Levels

With the increase in temperature due to global warming, sea levels have been on the rise, thus posing a threat to the low-lying island nations. It has been mainly attributed to the melting of

glaciers and the thermal expansion of ocean water.

The annual average of increase in sea levels that has been observed around Mauritius stands at approximately 2.1 mm which if not handled effectively could lead to the island nations being submerged and inhabitable. Consequently, Mauritius faces increased vulnerability to the risks of floods, displaced communities, salinization of water, threat to tourism and loss of biodiversity. This could lead serious multifaceted socio-economic losses. Further, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has observed that temperatures and sea levels in Mauritius have been increasing at a rate higher than the global average thus, making the island nation more susceptible to the consequences of global warming.

Presence in the Indian Ocean

Mauritius is considered the “Star and Key of the Indian Ocean” due to its strategic location. With more than half of the international trade being carried out through maritime routes, the Mauritian ports hold considerable significance. The Port Louis harbour owing to its strategic geographic presence, links Africa, Asia, and the Pacific Ocean. This sole maritime gateway handles about 99.5% of the total volume of external trade which directly attributes to 2% of Mauritius’ Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Furthermore, Mauritius’ presence in the Indian Ocean is maintained through it being an active member and participant of several regional organizations and initiatives. It is a member of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), which is an intergovernmental organization established with the aim to strengthen regional cooperation and sustainable development in the Indian Ocean region (IOR). It is also a founding member of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), which provides the African and the Indian ocean countries with a platform to hold deliberations around diplomatic, economic, and commercial ties amongst the members. Regular discussions in these groupings have allowed Mauritius to maintain its presence in the Indian Ocean.

Presence of India and China in Mauritius

Mauritius is a vital aspect of the Indian initiative SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) which envisions peace, stability, and prosperity in the Indian Ocean Region. Thus, with the aim to expand its footprint in the island nation, India and Mauritius, in 2015, entered into an agreement, wherein India is to develop Agalega Island in terms of upgradation of air infrastructure and connectivity. The cost of the development project is pegged at \$87 million.

This project was viewed as a potential Indian military base in Mauritius, but such reports have been denied by both the sides. Secondly, in 2021, India and Mauritius entered a Free Trade Pact, along with the Indo Mauritian Defence and Trade Agreement being reached in the same year. The latter comprises of the provision of a Line of Credit (LoC) of \$100 million to Mauritius with the aim to upgrade its military and defence capabilities. Thirdly, during the pandemic, Mauritius received two lakh doses of Indian Covid-19 under Vaccine Maitri programme. Moreover, India is in further talks with Mauritius to develop a metro express for the island nation.

Chinese footprint in Mauritius is majorly through innumerable development projects, which account up to 47 projects between 2000-2012. Furthermore, currently, China and Mauritius have a bilateral free trade agreement (which is China's first bilateral free trade agreement with an African nation).

Gist of Mauritian Foreign and Defence Policy

Mauritian Foreign Policy is driven by trade and its commitment towards democracy. Traditionally, owing to its colonial political heritage, it maintains close ties with Britain and France. Although Mauritius has faced counter claims of sovereignty on Mauritian archipelagos, it has never severed ties with its former colonial powers. The country maintains cordial ties with a large number of nations but, close partners include India, South African apart from its former colonial masters. Being strategically located in the Indian Ocean, Mauritian ports hold significant importance for international trade carried out by all foreign nations.

With no standing military troops, the country relies on the Mauritius Police Force (MPF) with around 12,500 police personnel, who carry out functions related to security, police and military. Additionally, military advisors from India and the United Kingdom work with the Special Mobile Force and the National Coastguard. India, France, and the United Kingdom are further, the training centres for the Mauritian Police before they are recruited. The Defence Policy of Mauritius primarily focusses around maintaining national security, protecting its territorial integrity and safeguarding its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Mauritius does not face any immediate external military threats and maintains a policy of non-alignment, promoting peaceful and cordial relations and cooperation with other countries.

Tonga

Ayushman Pundhir

Due to their unique geopolitical, environmental, and socio-economic characteristics, small island nations face distinct challenges and imperatives in their foreign policy and security dynamics. This essay aims to explore the imperatives that shape small island nations' strategic choices, focusing on preserving sovereignty, environmental vulnerability, economic development, regional cooperation, maritime security, diplomatic engagement, and cultural identity preservation.

Preserving sovereignty is a paramount imperative for small island nations. With limited size and resources, these nations strive to assert their autonomy and protect their territorial integrity. Foreign policy decisions are guided by the need to safeguard national interests and maintain independence in the face of potential external influences or threats. Diplomatic efforts focus on establishing and maintaining positive relations with other countries, advocating for their interests, and maintaining their national identity.

Small island nations are acutely vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change, such as rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and coastal erosion. As a result, addressing environmental challenges and promoting sustainable development become imperative components of their foreign policy and security considerations. These nations seek international cooperation and support to mitigate the effects of climate change, protect their fragile ecosystems, and build resilience against environmental threats.¹

Limited natural resources, small domestic markets, and dependence on external trade and investments pose significant economic challenges for small island nations. Foreign policy imperatives revolve around attracting foreign direct investment, expanding economic opportunities, and building economic resilience through partnerships and regional cooperation. These nations engage in diplomatic efforts to secure development assistance, promote trade agreements, and diversify their economies to ensure sustainable development

¹ Smith, John. "What Island Nations Have to Say on Indo-Pacific Geopolitics." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. March 23, 2022. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/03/23/what-island-nations-have-to-say-on-indo-pacific-geopolitics-pub-8670>

and reduce vulnerabilities.

Recognizing the importance of collective action, small island nations prioritize regional cooperation and integration. Through regional organizations and agreements, they address common challenges, enhance security, and amplify their collective voice in international forums. Cooperation focuses on areas such as sustainable development, disaster management, and protection of marine resources. By pooling their resources and sharing expertise, these nations strengthen their resilience and advance their common interests.

Small island nations heavily rely on the ocean for resources, transportation, and economic activities. Ensuring maritime security, combating illegal fishing, protecting marine ecosystems, and promoting a sustainable blue economy are essential imperatives for their foreign policy and security strategies. Cooperation with international partners is sought to enhance maritime surveillance capabilities, combat transnational crimes, and promote sustainable use of marine resources, enabling economic growth and environmental sustainability.

Diplomatic engagement is critical for small island nations to secure development assistance, attract investments, and advocate for their interests on the global stage. They leverage their unique strengths and perspectives to establish and maintain positive relations with other countries and international organizations. By building diplomatic alliances and partnerships, they amplify their influence and address global challenges effectively.

Preserving cultural identity, heritage, and traditional values is a significant imperative for small island nations. They actively promote cultural exchange, safeguard indigenous knowledge, and protect cultural assets as integral components of their national identity. Foreign policy initiatives focus on cultural diplomacy, encouraging cultural understanding, and preserving cultural heritage to foster national pride, social cohesion, and sustainable development.

Small island nations face specific imperatives in their foreign policy and security dynamics, shaped by their unique geopolitical, environmental, and socio-economic circumstances. The preservation of sovereignty, addressing environmental vulnerability, promoting economic development, fostering regional cooperation, ensuring maritime security, engaging in diplomatic efforts, and preserving cultural identity are critical considerations for these nations. By aligning their strategic choices with these imperatives, small island nations can navigate

challenges, leverage opportunities, and achieve sustainable development and resilience in a rapidly changing global landscape.

TONGA

Tonga officially the Kingdom of Tonga is a Polynesian country and an archipelago. The country has 171 islands – of which 45 are inhabited. Its total surface area is about 750 km² (290 sq mi), scattered over 700,000 km² (270,000 sq mi) in the southern Pacific Ocean. As of 2021, according to Johnson's Tribune, Tonga has a population of 104,494, 70% of whom reside on the main island, Tongatapu. The country stretches approximately 800 km (500 mi) north south. It is surrounded by Fiji and Wallis and Futuna (France) to the northwest; Samoa to the northeast; New Caledonia (France) and Vanuatu to the west; Niue (the nearest foreign territory) to the east; and Kermadec (New Zealand) to the southwest. Tonga is about 1,800 km (1,100 mi) from New Zealand's North Island. Tonga is a member of The Commonwealth.

First inhabited roughly 2,500 years ago by the Lapita civilization, Tonga's Polynesian settlers gradually evolved a distinct and strong ethnic identity, language, and culture as the Tongan people. They were quick to establish a powerful footing across the South Pacific, and this period of Tongan expansionism and colonization is known as the Tu'i Tonga Empire. From the rule of the first Tongan king, 'Aho'eitu, Tonga grew into a regional power. It was a thalassocracy that conquered and controlled unprecedented swathes of the Pacific, from parts of the Solomon Islands and the whole of New Caledonia and Fiji in the west to Samoa and Niue and even as far as parts of modern-day French Polynesia in the east. Tu'i Tonga became renowned for its economic, ethnic, and cultural influence over the Pacific, which remained strong even after the Samoan revolution of the 13th century and the Europeans' discovery of the islands in 1616.²

From 1900 to 1970, Tonga had British protected-state status. The United Kingdom looked after Tonga's foreign affairs under a Treaty of Friendship, but Tonga never relinquished its sovereignty to any foreign power. In 2010, Tonga took a decisive step away from its traditional absolute monarchy and became a fully functioning constitutional monarchy, after legislative reforms paved the way for its first partial representative elections.³

² "Tonga." The World Factbook. Central Intelligence Agency. URL: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/tonga/>.

³ Ibid

This essay examines the imperatives of security and foreign policy for the nation of Tonga. As a small island nation in the South Pacific, Tonga faces unique challenges and strategic considerations in shaping its security and foreign policy dynamics. The essay explores the imperatives that guide Tonga's decision-making, focusing on key factors such as regional security concerns, economic development, environmental vulnerability, and cultural preservation. Through an analysis of Tonga's strategic choices and policy initiatives, this essay aims to provide insights into the imperatives that shape Tonga's security and foreign policy landscape, highlighting the nation's efforts to ensure sovereignty, address regional security challenges, foster economic resilience, protect the environment, and preserve its cultural identity. By understanding these imperatives, policymakers and scholars can gain a deeper understanding of Tonga's strategic priorities and the challenges it faces in navigating the global arena. Ultimately, this analysis contributes to the broader understanding of the complexities and intricacies of security and foreign policy imperatives for small island nations like Tonga.

Significance Of Security and Foreign Policy Dynamics Of Tonga

Tonga, an archipelago located in the South Pacific, has its own unique security and foreign policy dynamics that hold significance both regionally and globally. Here are some fundamentals to understand the importance of these dynamics.

Geopolitical Location

Tonga's location provides strategic advantages due to its position in the Pacific Ocean. It lies in a region of increasing geopolitical interest, with major powers such as China, the United States, and Australia seeking influence and presence in the Pacific. Tonga's location allows it to serve as a potential base for projecting influence and maintaining security in the region.

Tonga's geographic location also offers economic opportunities. Its position in the Pacific Ocean makes it a potential hub for maritime trade and transportation routes. Tonga can serve as a transit point for goods traveling between Asia, the Americas, and Oceania, enhancing its

potential for economic development and trade partnerships.⁴

The waters surrounding Tonga are rich in marine resources, including fisheries. The country's location provides access to abundant fish stocks, which can contribute to its economy through fishing and aquaculture industries. Additionally, Tonga's location in the Pacific Ocean may offer the potential for the exploration and exploitation of offshore oil, gas, and mineral resources.⁵

Tonga's location in the Pacific exposes it to climate change impacts and natural disasters such as cyclones and tsunamis. As a result, the country's geopolitical location becomes crucial in terms of disaster preparedness, resilience, and international cooperation. Tonga's alliances and relationships with neighboring countries and regional organizations are vital for addressing climate change-related challenges and mitigating the risks posed by natural disasters.⁶

Tonga's geopolitical position grants it a voice and representation in regional and international forums. The country actively participates in organizations such as the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and the United Nations, allowing it to engage in diplomatic discussions on issues of regional security, sustainable development, and climate change. Tonga's location enables it to contribute to regional cooperation efforts and advocate for the interests and concerns of Pacific Island nations. In summary, the geopolitical location of Tonga offers strategic, economic, and diplomatic advantages. It provides opportunities for economic development, access to marine resources, and regional influence. However, it also exposes the country to environmental challenges and requires concerted efforts for disaster resilience and international cooperation.⁷

Maritime Security

Ensuring maritime security is vital for Tonga to protect its territorial integrity and exercise its sovereignty. Tonga's waters, including its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), are susceptible to various maritime threats, such as illegal fishing, smuggling, piracy, and transnational crimes. By maintaining maritime security, Tonga can safeguard its maritime borders and protect its resources, maritime interests, and national sovereignty.

Tonga's economy heavily relies on maritime activities, including fishing, shipping, and

⁴ World Bank, "Doing Business - Ready to Rebound," World Bank, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/businessready>.

⁵ FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, "Fisheries and Aquaculture," Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, <https://www.fao.org/fishery/en>.

⁶ UNDRR, "Tonga," <https://www.undrr.org/country/tonga>

⁷ Pacific Islands Forum, "Communiqué: Pacific Islands Forum Special Leaders Retreat," Forumsec.org, <https://www.forumsec.org/2023/02/27/communique-pacific-islands-forum-special-leaders-retreat/>.

tourism. Maritime security plays a crucial role in facilitating these economic sectors by preventing illegal fishing, piracy, and other maritime crimes. By combatting illicit activities, Tonga can ensure sustainable use of its marine resources, protect the livelihoods of its people, and attract investments and tourism to support its economic development.

Tonga's marine environment is a valuable natural asset and a critical component of its ecosystem. Maritime security measures are necessary to prevent activities such as illegal fishing practices, marine pollution, and illegal dumping that can harm marine life, coral reefs, and the overall marine ecosystem. Protecting the marine environment ensures the sustainability of fisheries, supports tourism, and preserves Tonga's unique biodiversity.⁸

Maritime security directly impacts the safety and well-being of Tonga's population. Illegal activities at sea, such as human trafficking, smuggling, and drug trafficking, can pose risks to the people of Tonga. Enhancing maritime security measures, including maritime surveillance, interdiction capabilities, and cooperation with international partners, helps ensure the safety of Tongan citizens and visitors.

Maritime security is a shared concern in the Pacific region, and Tonga actively participates in regional initiatives and cooperates with neighboring countries, regional organizations, and international partners to address maritime security challenges. By prioritizing maritime security, Tonga contributes to broader efforts aimed at promoting regional stability, cooperation, and the rule of law at sea.

In conclusion, maritime security is of great importance to Tonga for protecting its sovereignty, supporting its economy, conserving its marine environment, ensuring the safety of its people, and fostering regional cooperation. By investing in maritime security capabilities and engaging in international partnerships, Tonga can effectively address maritime threats, promote stability, and safeguard its national interests in the maritime domain.⁹

Regional Security Dynamics

Tonga's security dynamics are closely linked to the overall stability of the Pacific region. As a member of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and other regional organizations, Tonga actively participates in regional security dialogues and initiatives. Stability in the region is crucial for Tonga's peace, economic development, and social well-being. By engaging in regional security dynamics, Tonga can contribute to promoting peace, resolving conflicts, and ensuring a secure

⁸ Global Initiative. "Home." Global Initiative. <https://globalinitiative.net/>.

⁹ UNODC, "United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime," UNODC, www.unodc.org.

environment for its citizens.

Given Tonga's maritime nature and extensive Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), regional security dynamics are particularly important in the maritime domain. Tonga relies on cooperation with neighboring countries and regional partners to address maritime security challenges, such as illegal fishing, piracy, and transnational crimes. Collaborative efforts within the region enhance maritime surveillance, law enforcement, and information-sharing, thereby ensuring the protection of Tonga's maritime borders and resources.¹⁰

The Pacific region is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including rising sea levels, natural disasters, and extreme weather events. Tonga's security dynamics are closely tied to regional efforts to address climate change adaptation and disaster resilience. Collaborative initiatives in the region focus on building capacity, sharing best practices, and coordinating disaster response mechanisms. Regional security dynamics are crucial for Tonga to prepare for and respond effectively to climate-induced challenges, protecting its people and infrastructure. Tonga, like other countries, faces transnational threats such as terrorism, organized crime, and illicit drug trafficking. Regional security dynamics enable Tonga to collaborate with neighboring countries and regional partners to combat these threats. Information-sharing, intelligence cooperation, and joint law enforcement efforts enhance Tonga's ability to prevent and respond to transnational crimes, ensuring the safety and security of its population.¹¹

Regional security dynamics also influence Tonga's diplomatic relations and alliances. Tonga engages with regional partners and major powers to strengthen its security cooperation, including defense agreements, joint military exercises, and capacity-building initiatives. These relationships and alliances contribute to Tonga's national security, defense capabilities, and diplomatic influence on regional security matters.

In summary, the regional security dynamics of Tonga play a crucial role in maintaining regional stability, addressing maritime security challenges, adapting to climate change, combating transnational threats, and fostering diplomatic relations. Tonga's active engagement in regional security initiatives is essential for protecting its interests, promoting peace, and ensuring the safety and prosperity of its people in the broader Pacific region.

Dependence On Foreign Assistance

¹⁰ Forum Secretariat, "Security," accessed August 8, 2023, <https://www.forumsec.org/security/>.

¹¹ PICCC, "About PICCC," PICCC, <https://piccc.databasin.org/pages/about-piccc/>.

Tonga, like many other small island nations, has a significant dependence on foreign assistance to support its economic and developmental needs. Tonga has limited natural resources and a small economy, which constrains its ability to generate sufficient revenue to meet its developmental needs. The country's reliance on agriculture, tourism, and remittances is often not enough to sustain its economy and fund essential infrastructure projects, social programs, and public services. Tonga faces various developmental challenges, including limited access to education, healthcare, clean water, and sanitation facilities. The country requires assistance to address these challenges and improve the well-being of its population. Foreign assistance plays a crucial role in supporting Tonga's efforts to improve infrastructure, enhance education and healthcare systems, and promote sustainable development.¹²

As a Pacific Island nation, Tonga is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as rising sea levels, increased frequency of natural disasters, and coastal erosion. Addressing climate change and building resilience requires significant financial resources and technical expertise, which Tonga often relies on foreign assistance to obtain. Tonga is susceptible to natural disasters, including cyclones and tsunamis, which can cause extensive damage to infrastructure and disrupt livelihoods. Foreign assistance plays a critical role in providing immediate humanitarian aid, emergency relief, and support for post-disaster recovery efforts. Tonga actively seeks development partnerships with foreign governments, international organizations, and donor agencies. These partnerships provide financial assistance, technical expertise, and capacity-building support across various sectors, including infrastructure, health, education, and governance. Development partners play a crucial role in helping Tonga achieve its developmental goals.¹³

Tonga receives foreign assistance through multilateral channels, such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and United Nations agencies. Additionally, bilateral aid from countries like Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and China contributes significantly to Tonga's development efforts. These aid flows are often targeted toward specific sectors and projects based on Tonga's priorities and agreements with the donor countries. It is important to note that while foreign assistance plays a significant role in supporting Tonga's development, efforts are also underway to promote sustainable economic growth, attract investment, and enhance

¹² "Stepping Up Immediate Support to Tonga After a Once-in-a-Millennium Natural Catastrophe," The World Bank, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2022/08/01/stepping-up-immediate-support-to-tonga-after-a-once-in-a-millennium-natural-catastrophe>

¹³Tonga Meteorological Service, "Home." <https://met.gov.to/>.

domestic revenue generation to reduce dependence on foreign aid over the long term.¹⁴

Diplomatic Relations

Diplomatic relations enable Tonga to assert and safeguard its sovereignty as an independent nation. By establishing diplomatic ties with other countries, Tonga gains international recognition and legitimacy. Diplomatic relations help protect Tonga's national interests, territorial integrity, and the rights of its citizens in the global arena. Diplomatic relations are crucial for Tonga's economic development. Tonga engages in diplomatic exchanges and negotiations to foster trade partnerships, attract foreign direct investment, and promote economic cooperation. Strong diplomatic relations can lead to increased exports, tourism, and investment opportunities, which contribute to job creation and economic growth in Tonga. Diplomatic relations facilitate access to foreign aid and development assistance. Tonga relies on aid from donor countries, international organizations, and development partners to support its infrastructure projects, social programs, and capacity-building initiatives. Diplomatic engagements and partnerships are vital for securing financial and technical assistance to address Tonga's developmental challenges.¹⁵

Diplomatic relations enable Tonga to participate in regional and international forums, such as the United Nations, Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), and other regional organizations. Active engagement in these platforms allows Tonga to contribute to regional security, economic cooperation, and environmental sustainability efforts.¹⁶ Through diplomatic relations, Tonga can collaborate with neighbouring countries and global stakeholders on issues of mutual concern, such as climate change, regional security, and sustainable development. Diplomatic relations foster cultural understanding and people-to-people exchanges between Tonga and other nations. Diplomatic engagements, including cultural exchanges, educational partnerships, and tourism promotion, help showcase Tonga's unique culture, traditions, and natural beauty to the world. These exchanges strengthen bilateral relations, promote mutual understanding, and facilitate cultural, educational, and tourism exchanges that benefit Tonga's

¹⁴ World Bank, "World Bank Provides US\$8 Million to Support Tonga's Volcano and Tsunami Response," Press Release, January 20, 2022, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/01/20/world-bank-provides-us-8-million-to-support-tonga-s-volcano-and-tsunami-response>

¹⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Tongan Annual Performance Report 2019/20-2021/22* (Nuku'alofa: Government of Tonga, 2019), https://pmo.gov.to/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Ministry-of-Foreign-Affairs-CP-2019_20-2021_22_Tongan.pdf.

¹⁶ "Forumsec," accessed from www.forumsec.org

socio-cultural fabric.¹⁷

Diplomatic relations provide Tonga with access to diplomatic channels and support during times of crisis or emergencies. In case of natural disasters, conflicts, or other emergencies, Tonga can rely on its diplomatic partners for humanitarian aid, relief efforts, and diplomatic interventions to address the situation effectively. In summary, diplomatic relations are crucial for Tonga's sovereignty, economic development, access to aid and assistance, regional and international cooperation, cultural exchanges, and diplomatic support. Maintaining strong diplomatic ties with other nations helps protect Tonga's interests, promotes its development, and enhances its participation in the global community.

Climate Change Vulnerability

Tonga is situated in the Pacific Ocean, where rising sea levels pose a significant threat. Higher sea levels increase the risk of coastal erosion, inundation, and saltwater intrusion into freshwater sources, affecting agriculture, drinking water supplies, and infrastructure along the coast. The low-lying nature of many Tongan islands exacerbates the vulnerability to sea-level rise.¹⁸ Tonga is susceptible to extreme weather events such as cyclones, storms, and heavy rainfall. Climate change intensifies these events, leading to increased frequency and severity. Cyclones can cause extensive damage to infrastructure, homes, and livelihoods, disrupt food production, and result in loss of lives. The vulnerability to extreme weather events is further compounded by factors like limited infrastructure resilience and inadequate disaster preparedness.

The health and resilience of coastal and marine ecosystems are essential for Tonga's population, which heavily relies on coastal resources for food security and livelihoods. Climate change impacts such as ocean acidification, coral bleaching, and habitat degradation affect fisheries, marine biodiversity, and the overall productivity of coastal ecosystems. These impacts pose risks to Tonga's economy, food security, and cultural practices. Climate change affects Tonga's freshwater resources, which are crucial for domestic use, agriculture, and

¹⁷ Forum for International Cooperation, "Sustainable Development," Forum for International Cooperation, <https://www.forumsec.org/sustainable-development/>.

¹⁸ Pacific Regional UN Thematic Group on NCDs and United Nations Interagency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases, "Joint Mission of the Pacific Regional UN Thematic Group on NCDs and the United Nations Interagency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases to Tonga," World Health Organization, <https://www.who.int/news/item/03-03-2015-joint-mission-of-the-pacific-regional-un-thematic-group-onnncds-and-the-united-nations-interagency-task-force-on-the-prevention-and-control-of-noncommunicable-diseases-to-tonga>.

ecosystems. Higher temperatures, changes in rainfall patterns, and saltwater intrusion reduce freshwater availability and quality. This hampers agriculture, affects food production, and increases the vulnerability of vulnerable populations who rely on limited freshwater resources.¹⁹ Climate change can have significant implications for public health in Tonga. Increased temperatures can lead to heat stress, vector-borne diseases, and waterborne illnesses. Extreme weather events and rising sea levels also increase the risk of injuries, displacement, and the spread of water-related diseases, creating additional health challenges for the population.

Tonga recognizes the urgency and severity of climate change impacts and actively engages in international climate change negotiations, regional initiatives, and adaptation planning to address its vulnerability. The government, with the support of international partners, focuses on strengthening resilience, implementing disaster risk reduction measures, promoting sustainable land and water management, and developing climate change adaptation strategies to minimize the adverse impacts on the population and ecosystems.²⁰

It is important to note that while Tonga faces significant climate change challenges, the country is also striving to enhance its adaptive capacity, promote sustainable practices, and advocate for global climate action to mitigate the impacts of climate change in the long run.

Cultural Diplomacy

Cultural diplomacy plays a vital role in Tonga's international relations, promoting its unique cultural heritage, traditions, and values to foster mutual understanding and build relationships with other nations. Tonga showcases its rich cultural heritage through traditional arts, music, dance, and performances. Cultural troupes representing Tonga participate in international festivals, events, and cultural exchanges. Traditional dances like the Ma'ulu'ulu and Kailao, traditional music played on instruments like the lali and nose flute, and intricate handicrafts such as tapa cloth and wood carvings highlight Tonga's cultural identity and engage audiences worldwide. Tonga organizes cultural events and festivals to promote its traditions and customs. The Heilala Festival, for example, celebrates Tongan culture, showcasing traditional dance, music, food, and sports. These events provide platforms for cultural exchange, enabling Tonga

¹⁹ "Tonga Climate Change Trust Fund," United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, <https://unfccc.int/climate-action/momentum-for-change/activity-database/tonga-climate-change-trust-fund>.

²⁰ "Agreement with Green Climate Fund Unlocks New Opportunities for Climate Action," Secretariat of the Pacific Community, accessed November 2019, <https://www.spc.int/updates/news/2019/11/agreement-with-green-climate-fund-unlocks-new-opportunities-for-climate-action>

to share its cultural heritage and strengthen diplomatic ties with participating nations.²¹

Tonga actively engages in cultural exchanges and hosts visits by foreign delegations, artists, and scholars. These exchanges provide opportunities for cultural learning, dialogue, and collaboration. Tonga's cultural diplomacy involves inviting international artists, researchers, and experts to explore Tonga's culture and traditions while fostering relationships and understanding between nations. Tonga's cultural diplomacy also highlights its unique traditional governance system. The monarchy and the role of chiefs (nobles) hold significance in Tongan society and are often showcased to foreign visitors and dignitaries. Tonga's cultural diplomacy emphasizes the continuity of traditional governance structures and their role in preserving Tongan identity and values.²²

Tonga places importance on preserving and revitalizing its cultural heritage. Efforts are made to safeguard traditional practices, knowledge, and rituals. Tonga's cultural diplomacy includes initiatives such as language revitalization programs, traditional arts workshops, and the establishment of cultural centers and museums to showcase and educate visitors about Tongan culture. Tonga's participation in international sports events, especially in rugby union, showcases the country's sporting prowess and cultural values. The national rugby team, known as the 'Ikale Tahi, represents Tonga internationally and symbolizes national pride and unity.²³ Traditional sports and games, such as 'ulu maika (disk-rolling) and kilikiti (Tongan cricket), also serve as cultural ambassadors during international events. Cultural diplomacy in Tonga promotes cultural understanding, strengthens diplomatic ties, and raises awareness about Tonga's cultural heritage and traditions. Through cultural exchanges, performances, and events, Tonga enhances its international presence, fosters mutual respect, and contributes to global cultural diversity and dialogue.

Economic Constraints

Tonga has a small and open economy, which makes it highly vulnerable to external shocks and economic fluctuations. Its limited domestic market, narrow production base, and heavy reliance on imports make it susceptible to changes in global commodity prices and international economic conditions. Tonga has limited natural resources and lacks significant mineral

²¹ Tongaholiday.com, "Home," www.tongaholiday.com

²² Forum for Security Cooperation, "Governance," <https://www.forumsec.org/governance/#1509851988864-ecf5c4a7-37e2>

²³ "Sport in Tonga," Virtual Oceania, <http://www.virtualoceania.net/tonga/culture/sport.shtml>.

deposits or exploitable natural reserves. This restricts the country's ability to generate revenue through resource extraction and can hinder its economic diversification efforts. Tonga's geographic isolation and the scattered nature of its islands pose logistical and transportation challenges. This results in higher costs for trade, infrastructure development, and the provision of basic services, limiting the country's economic potential. Tonga heavily relies on remittances from Tongan citizens living and working abroad, particularly in countries like Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. Remittances contribute significantly to Tonga's economy and household incomes, but they also make the country vulnerable to fluctuations in global labor markets and the economic conditions of host countries.

Tonga's private sector is relatively small and faces challenges related to access to finance, limited entrepreneurship, and a lack of skilled labor. This hinders the development of private enterprises and stifles economic growth and job creation opportunities.²⁴

Tonga's infrastructure, including transportation networks, electricity supply, telecommunications, and water and sanitation systems, requires significant investment and improvement. Inadequate infrastructure limits the country's productivity hampers business growth, and poses challenges for attracting investment. As a low-lying island nation, Tonga is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including rising sea levels, increased frequency of extreme weather events, and ocean acidification. These environmental challenges not only threaten the country's natural resources and ecosystems but also impact its tourism industry, agriculture, and overall economic stability. Addressing these economic constraints requires strategic planning, targeted investments in infrastructure and human capital, diversification of the economy, promotion of entrepreneurship and private sector development, and strengthening resilience to climate change. Tonga has been working towards these goals with the support of international assistance and development programs.²⁵

Recommendations To Enhance the Effectiveness of Foreign Policy And Address Evolving Security Dynamics Of Tonga

To enhance the effectiveness of Tonga's foreign policy and address evolving security dynamics, Tonga should prioritize deepening its relationships with regional partners, such as

²⁴ "Ministry of Finance and National Planning - Tonga." Ministry of Finance and National Planning, Government of Tonga, <http://www.finance.gov.to/>

²⁵ "Tonga," United Nations Development Programme, <https://www.pacific.undp.org/content/pacific/en/home/countries/tonga.html>.

other Pacific Island nations, Australia, New Zealand, and regional organizations like the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF). This can be achieved through regular diplomatic engagements, joint exercises, and capacity-building initiatives to address common security challenges. Tonga can also explore opportunities to enhance its involvement in regional security frameworks, such as the Quadrilateral Defence Coordination Group (QUAD) and the Pacific Maritime Security Program. While maintaining its traditional alliances, Tonga should pursue a diversified diplomatic approach by engaging with a broader range of countries. This can help reduce overreliance on any single partner and provide Tonga with more leverage in international affairs. Strengthening ties with emerging economies, regional powers, and non-traditional partners can open up new avenues for economic cooperation, investment, and security cooperation. Tonga should invest in building the capacity of its diplomatic corps, foreign service, and security institutions. Providing training programs, scholarships, and professional development opportunities for diplomats and security personnel can enhance their effectiveness in representing Tonga's interests and addressing emerging security challenges. Additionally, investing in technological capabilities, such as cybersecurity infrastructure and digital intelligence gathering, can bolster Tonga's ability to counter evolving threats. Given Tonga's vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters, policymakers should prioritize climate change adaptation and disaster resilience in foreign policy. This can involve actively engaging in international climate change negotiations, seeking funding for climate resilience projects, and collaborating with partners to develop early warning systems, disaster management plans, and infrastructure improvements. Tonga can also advocate for greater global efforts to address climate change and its security implications. Tonga should actively pursue economic diplomacy initiatives to attract foreign direct investment, promote trade opportunities, and stimulate economic growth. Policymakers can engage with international financial institutions, development agencies, and private sector entities to identify investment prospects, develop trade partnerships, and implement infrastructure projects. Fostering a favorable business environment, improving regulatory frameworks, and promoting Tonga's unique economic sectors, such as tourism and fisheries, can attract foreign investment and promote sustainable economic development.

Tonga should invest in public diplomacy efforts to raise its profile and enhance its soft power influence. This can involve promoting Tongan culture, heritage, and tourism through cultural exchanges, arts and sports events, and tourism campaigns. Engaging with diaspora communities and leveraging social media platforms can also help shape positive narratives

about Tonga and cultivate international support for its foreign policy goals. Tonga's policymakers should regularly review and adapt their foreign policy strategies to align with evolving security dynamics, regional trends, and national priorities. Continuous assessment of geopolitical shifts, emerging threats, and opportunities will enable Tonga to stay proactive and responsive in its foreign policy approach.

By implementing these recommendations, Tonga can enhance the effectiveness of its foreign policy, address evolving security dynamics, and promote its national interests in the international arena.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the security dynamics and foreign policy imperatives for Tonga are crucial for safeguarding the nation's interests, promoting regional stability, and addressing emerging challenges. Tonga faces various security threats, including illegal fishing, transnational crimes, and climate change impacts, which require proactive measures and effective foreign policy strategies. By prioritizing regional partnerships, diversifying diplomatic relations, and investing in human and technological capabilities, Tonga can strengthen its security posture and enhance its influence in the international arena. Addressing evolving security dynamics and foreign policy imperatives also necessitates prioritizing climate change adaptation and disaster resilience, as Tonga is highly vulnerable to natural disasters and the impacts of climate change. By actively engaging in international climate change negotiations, seeking funding for resilience projects, and collaborating with partners, Tonga can build its capacity to mitigate and respond to these challenges.

Furthermore, promoting economic diplomacy, attracting foreign investment, and fostering trade partnerships can drive economic growth, create employment opportunities, and contribute to the overall stability of the country. Tonga's policymakers should also consider the importance of public diplomacy in shaping positive narratives about the country and leveraging soft power influence. Regular policy review and adaptation are crucial to ensure that Tonga's foreign policy remains responsive to changing security dynamics, regional trends, and national priorities. By continuously assessing geopolitical shifts, emerging threats, and opportunities, Tonga can proactively adjust its strategies to protect its interests and effectively engage with the international community.

Overall, by pursuing these imperatives in security dynamics and foreign policy, Tonga can

strengthen its position in the region, enhance its resilience, and pursue sustainable development goals while maintaining peace and stability for its citizens.

Vanuatu

Rehet Bains

Formerly known as New Hebrides, the Republic of Vanuatu was established in the year 1980, after being jointly governed by the British and the French administrations. The first-ever Europeans to ever set foot on its lands was a Spanish expedition led by Fernandes de Queiros in 1606 and later in the 1880s, France and the United Kingdom claimed parts of it.¹

Facts

Vanuatu is an archipelago of 83 islands, although 65 of them are uninhabited due to their volcanic origin. The island country has other island nations as its neighbours like Australia to its east, New Caledonia to its northeast, New Guinea to its east, the Solomon Islands to its southeast and Fiji to the west. Only 14 of the islands are habitable namely, Espiritu Santo, Malakula, Efate, Erromango, Ambrym, Tanna, Pentecost, Epi, Ambae/Aoba, Gaua, Vanua Lava, Maewo, Malo and Aneityum/Anatom. The country's capital city, Port Vila, is the largest city based on the island of Efate. It serves as the economic and administrative hub of Vanuatu. Official languages include Bislama, English and French. Melanesian and Polynesian indigenous languages are also put to practice by various ethnic groups of the nation. The population of the country amounts to 307,800 with a 2.4% annual growth rate and is quite diverse. It consists of various indigenous groups and a minority diaspora of European, Chinese, and other Pacific Islander origins. In addition, life expectancy is at 68 years for men and 72 years for women.

Government System

It is primarily a Parliamentary Democracy and a republic and has a multi-party system with elections taking place every four years. Nikenike Vurabaravu was elected as the President of the country in July 2022 and was the first commissioner to Fiji and represented the island country in the 77th session of the UNGA in September 2022 for the first time ever.. Ishmael

¹ BBC News. "Vanuatu Country Profile," n.d. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-16426193>.

Kalsakau was appointed leader of the opposition in 2016 before he was appointed Prime Minister of the country in November 2022. He was also appointed the Attorney General of Vanuatu but resigned to contest elections.

Economy

Luganville is the second largest city in the country and is the transshipment point for 63% of the domestic exports like copra, coconut oil and cocoa to name some which results in it being the busiest port in the country. Agriculture is the main activity with 80% of the population engaged in it with other aspects like subsistence and smallholder farming of coconuts and other cash crops coming into the picture and accounting for over 20% of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product). In addition to timber, beef, kava extract and cocoa, copra is the most important cash crop, making up more than 35% of the country's domestic exports and accounting for 60% of export by value. Imports include machinery and equipment, foodstuffs, and fuels.²

Vanuatu's economy, although based primarily on agriculture, fishing, tourism, and offshore financial services, the economy of Vanuatu although based primarily on agriculture, fishing, tourism, and offshore financial services also contributes to it, where approx. 2,000 registered organizations offer a variety, including investment, accounting, insurance, and trust company services.

Culture and Tourism

The cultural heritage of Vanuatu is extensive and varied. Native American ceremonies, dances, and music are significant components of the culture and are still fiercely maintained as a part of the customs and traditions. With tourists drawn to the nation's natural beauty, coral reefs, and cultural legacy, the tourism industry had been expanding and accounted for 40% of GDP in 2000. Vanuatu's total economic output in 2020 from the tourist industry was estimated to be 67.00 million USD. This amounts to 22% of all international tourism in Melanesia and 7.0 % of the total regional GDP.³

² Economy of Vanuatu - Wikipedia. "Economy of Vanuatu - Wikipedia," October 21, 2019. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy_of_Vanuatu.

³ Chan, Tiffany. "Vanuatu Tourism Gets a Reboot." GSTC, November 10, 2021. <https://www.gstcouncil.org/vanuatu-tourism-gets-a-reboot/>.

Foreign Policy and International Participation

The economy of the country has been the government's top priority. Vanuatu has joined the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in response to its need for financial support. Vanuatu is still working to advance the right to self-determination. SADR and Palestine received recognition in the 1980s. Later it also acknowledged Kosovo in 2010 and Abkhazia in 2011 and is the sole country that recognizes all four of these states. Vanuatu also firmly backs the "Free Papua" Movement's programme for the self-determination of West Papua, an Indonesian area, amid the Papua conflict. The Wantok Blong Yumi Bill, which committed Vanuatu to recognize West Papua's independence and seek observer status in the same, received unanimous support from the Vanuatuan Parliament in June 2010. The Nauru Agreement Concerning Cooperation in the Management of Fisheries of Common Interest has eight members, and which collectively manages 25-30% of the world's tuna supply and 60% of the western and central Pacific Tuna Supply, including Vanuatu.

In 1995, Vanuatu signed the Treaty of Rarotonga, often known as the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty. In the Pacific, Vanuatu keeps up strong regional ties. The South Pacific Tourism Organisation, the South Pacific Islands Forum, the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission, the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community all recognize it as a full member.⁴ In addition, it joined the WTO (World Trade Organization) in 2012 and Interpol in 2018. The UN Committee for Development Policy suggested removing the country from the list of 'Least Developed Countries in 2020 after it achieved graduation levels for the Human Assets Index and Income in 2006, 2009 and 2012.

Security Risks

Vanuatu is prone to disasters. Being situated in the Pacific's "Ring of Fire," the area of the planet that is particularly prone to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, is contributing to this. Additionally, the region is vulnerable to tropical cyclones and other severe weather conditions. For instance, Cyclone Pam in 2015 seriously ruined the island nation's dwellings, infrastructure, and crops. These consequences are being mitigated by early warning systems, disaster management strategies, and better infrastructure. The government has also tried to

⁴ Foreign relations of Vanuatu - Wikipedia. "Foreign Relations of Vanuatu - Wikipedia," September 30, 2011. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign_relations_of_Vanuatu.

increase the public's awareness of the risks associated.

Vanuatu is also heavily indebted to its external creditors. For example, the country's external debt was estimated to be close to \$1 billion in 2018 and more than half of it was owed to Chinese creditors. The country's heavy reliance on foreign aid and the absence of alternative sources of income are the main cause of its debt. The drop in investment and the resulting economic growth slowdown, has negatively affected the nation's economy.⁵

The island country faces security challenges due to rising fuel prices, climate changes, and sea level rise. These risks are made even worse because Vanuatu is a small island nation that depends heavily on imports. This makes the country especially sensitive to the effects of climate change and rising fuel prices on a global scale. As a result, the government has put in place several efforts to lessen its reliance on imports and strengthen its ability to withstand climate change. To defend the island from these threats, the government has put in place renewable energy programmes and planted more than a million trees.

The island country has had tremendous Chinese influence as its top trading partner, and a significant source of international aid and investment has switched to China. In addition to being a popular tourism destination for the people of Vanuatu, China has been involved in the construction of numerous infrastructure projects in that country. As stated by some international experts, a Chinese base in Vanuatu could potentially be set up as a means for China to gain a strategic footing in the Pacific. In 2018, the Australian government expressed its alarm over rumours that China and Vanuatu were in talks about setting up a long-term military presence in Vanuatu. In addition, cybersecurity breaches can pose a risk for Vanuatu for it being dependent on the Internet to stay in touch with one another due to the poor connectivity between the archipelago's islands.⁶

Organisations become open to malevolent actors who can access sensitive data by taking off the security deficiency. Additionally, this can affect crucial services including banking, healthcare, and education. The island country's IT (Information Technology) infrastructure was shut down in 2020 due to a ransom attack on the government, blocking access to data and services for over a month. Vanuatu must therefore take action to safeguard its people from cyber security dangers. For instance, it can put in place programmes to raise awareness of

⁵ Vanuatu External Debt 1981-2023 | MacroTrends. "Vanuatu External Debt 1981-2023," n.d. <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/VUT/vanuatu/external-debt-stock>.

⁶ ITU Hub. "How ITU Helps Vanuatu to Limit Cyber Risks - ITU Hub," May 25, 2020. <https://www.itu.int/hub/2020/05/how-itu-helps-vanuatu-to-limit-cyber-risks/>.

cybersecurity issues and boost its spending on cybersecurity tools.

Reforms and Disaster Management

Vanuatu was recognized as the nation most susceptible to natural disasters worldwide in 2021. The country would be receiving apparatus from the humanitarian portfolios to help with climate disaster mitigation. Additionally, they are designed to fortify and harden the nation. The World Bank provided funding and the Vanuatu government oversaw the projects due to its commitment to carry out programs that will shield the natives from threats of natural disasters as a result.⁷ The government started a project in March 2021 to build a sea wall to save the coastal villages from the consequences of increasing sea levels.

As foreign debt makes up most of Vanuatu's debt obligations, which as of the end of 2022 accounts for 78% of the country's total Public and Publicly Guaranteed (PPG) debt, with China Eximbank being the top creditor with a 30% share. Concessional loans from this bank have been given to the country to aid in its economic growth. The government of Vanuatu has been attempting to lessen the amount of debt it owes to foreign creditors while also looking for more funding from other foreign sources.

The World Bank Board of Executive Directors granted a \$10 million loan to the country in January 2020 to help the island nation improve its disaster preparedness, boost climate adaptation, and manage its debt.⁸

Agreement for a grant via the Asian Pacific Disaster Response Fund to Vanuatu from the Asian Development Bank provides a \$20 million grant that will assist the government of the island country in reacting to the effects of natural disasters. It will lessen the effects of climate change and support better resilience to upcoming calamities. Additionally, the fund will contribute money to the country's initial recovery efforts. Access to critical services like shelter, water, sanitization, and other amenities will be made better and would also support the most

⁷ World Bank. "World Bank Provides US\$9.5 Million Grant in Disaster Response for Vanuatu," n.d. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/03/13/world-bank-provides-us-9-5-million-grant-in-disaster-response-for-vanuatu>.

⁸ World Bank. "Major Boost for Disaster Risk Management in Vanuatu," n.d. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/01/09/major-boost-for-disaster-risk-management-in-vanuatu>.

vulnerable residents of the affected communities' economic and livelihood activities. To boost the government's ability to manage and respond to disasters, the fund will also offer technical assistance.⁹

⁹ Asian Development Bank. "Asian Development Bank and Vanuatu: Fact Sheet," n.d. <https://www.adb.org/publications/vanuatu-fact-sheet>.



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