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The dragon versus the kangaroo: perceptions of Chinese and Australian influence and development assistance in Vanuatu

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ABSTRACT

China's engagement within the South Pacific has increased dramatically in recent years mainly through significant increases in development assistance. Development assistance is provided to address humanitarian needs but to also secure national interests of the donor. This paper examines the extent and nature of Australia's and China's influence in Vanuatu from the perspectives of the Ni-Vanuatu people using new data. China is perceived as having the most influence in the country despite Australia's development assistance being viewed far more positively. Support for infrastructure is the most important factor contributing to a positive image for both countries. Perceptions of land grabbing are the main factor contributing to negative images. Regional differences in perceptions of Australia and China across Vanuatu also exist.

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