



Vietnam's socioeconomic status influence on the passport power

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ABSTRACT

Passports are indeed becoming increasingly important in our interconnected world. As the world becomes more interconnected through trade, travel, and digital communication, the need for international travel has grown. Passports are essential for individuals to move across borders, whether for tourism, business, or personal reasons. International education and employment opportunities have become more accessible and desirable. Students and professionals often need passports to study or work abroad. Countries with stable political and economic conditions tend to have passports that grant their citizens greater visa-free access to other nations. As a result, passport strength can be a reflection of a country's overall stability and standing in the world. Many countries enter into bilateral or multilateral agreements to allow visa-free travel between their citizens. A strong passport, with visa-free access to many countries, can simplify travel and reduce costs and administrative burdens. Indeed, a country's socioeconomic status can have a significant impact on its passport power. The socioeconomic factors of a nation, such as its economic strength, political stability, and human development indicators, often correlate with the global acceptance and strength of its passport. While socioeconomic factors are important, it's essential to remember that passport power is a complex interplay of various elements, including diplomatic relations, international agreements, and economic strength. Therefore, while socioeconomic status is a crucial element, it is just one piece of the puzzle in determining a passport's global influence.

KEYWORDS

Vietnam, socioeconomic, passport power.



Introduction

The socioeconomic status of a nation, also referred to as a country's socioeconomic status or development level, is a complex concept that assesses the overall economic and social well-being of that nation's population. Several key indicators and factors are used to evaluate a nation's socioeconomic status such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP); Income Distribution; Human Development Index (HDI)... It's important to note that socioeconomic status can vary significantly between countries, and different nations may prioritize different aspects of development based on their specific circumstances, resources, and goals. International organizations like the United Nations and the World Bank often use these indicators to classify and compare countries based on their development levels and socioeconomic status.

A passport is an official government-issued document, which acts as an identification and allows people to travel internationally. It is typically a small booklet containing essential personal information about the passport holder, such as their name, photograph, date of birth, nationality, and a unique identification number. Passports also include security features, such as holograms and watermarks, to deter counterfeiting. The primary purpose of a passport is to confirm the identity and citizenship of the holder and to facilitate their entry into foreign countries and re-entry into their home country. When traveling internationally, individuals are usually required to present their passport to immigration authorities at border crossings, airports, and other entry points. Passports may also contain visa endorsements or entry stamps issued by foreign governments, granting permission for the passport holder to enter and stay in their respective countries for a specific period and purpose. In addition to serving as a travel document, passports are often used for various official purposes, such as applying for visas, conducting international business, and proving one's identity and nationality in various legal and administrative processes. It's important to note that passport regulations and requirements can vary from country to country, and the process for obtaining a visa can also differ significantly depending on a person's nationality.

Socioeconomic status and passports are two distinct concepts, but they can be interconnected in various ways. The ability to obtain a visa can be influenced by a person's socioeconomic status. In many countries, applying for a visa typically requires financial proof. Applying for a visa is usually accompanied with fees and other requirements. Higher income individuals may find it easier to be approved for a visa and travel to approved destinations. The ability to secure a visa can depend on a range of factors, including the passport holder's socioeconomic status, as immigration authorities may consider the applicant's financial stability, employment, and ties to their home country when evaluating visa applications. International travel can have socioeconomic impacts, both positive and negative. It can lead to business opportunities, educational experiences, cultural enrichment, and the potential for greater economic prosperity. However, it can also be costly, and if not managed well, it might result in financial burdens. Access to a passport can be influenced by one's socioeconomic background, and having a passport can open up various avenues for personal and economic development, depending on how it is used and the opportunities it enables.

1. Global ranking of passport power

The term "passport power" refers to the strength, influence, or effectiveness of a country's passport in terms of the visa free, measuring how well a passport facilitates international travel and access to other countries. Passport power is often quantified using a metric called the "Henley Passport Index" or similar passport ranking systems. These indices assign a score or ranking to passports based on the number of countries that their holders can visit without a visa or with visa-on-

arrival privileges. The Henley Passport Index is based on exclusive data from the International Air Transport Authority (IATA) of 199 different passports and 227 different travel destinations (Henley Passport Index, 2023). The issuance of visas by nations hinges upon two paramount determinants: income and domestic fragility. Income encompasses more than merely the per capita income average; it necessitates a comprehensive consideration of a nation's economic robustness, its diplomatic ties, and the degree of its economic integration. In a parallel vein, domestic fragility pertains to the political stability and integrity of a nation, exerting a decisive influence on the willingness of other countries to extend hospitality or impose stringent visa regulations. To embark upon a comprehensive evaluation of the potency inherent in the passports of diverse countries, it is imperative to undertake a rigorous exploration of these factors, encompassing their precise definitions and nuanced interpretations. These constituent factors, with their multifaceted implications, underpin the complex realm of international visa issuance policies and subsequently warrant meticulous examination. Mastery of these fundamental elements equips one with the acumen requisite for an academic appraisal of the strength and discernible constraints of individual nations' passport offerings within the purview of global mobility and its associated opportunities.

A Vietnamese passport is an official travel document issued to citizens of Vietnam by the Vietnamese government. It serves as proof of the holder's identity and nationality and allows them to travel internationally. Decree No.389/TTg on October 27, 1959 regulating the issuance of passports, signed by Prime Minister Pham Van Dong, is the first legal document regulating Vietnamese passports. In 2023, the ranking of Vietnam's passport on the Henley Passport Index is 89th in the world, allowing its citizens to travel to 54 destinations with visa-free or visa-on-arrival access ().

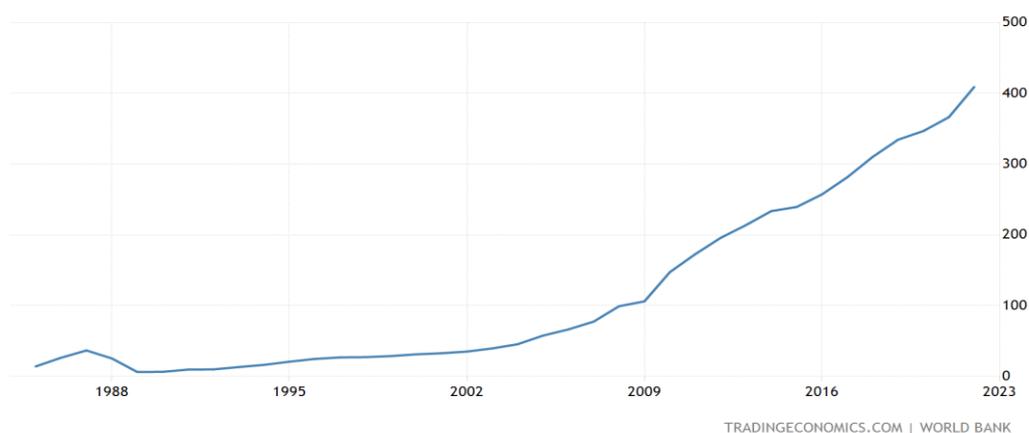
2. The change in Vietnam's socioeconomic status and passport power

Economics

The economic status of Vietnam has undergone numerous changes since the independence and application of innovation in 1986, which is reflected by many indicators such as economic growth, GDP per capita, level of integration, trade and tourism.

Economic growth

Figure 1. GDP Vietnam Period 1986-2022 (billion \$)



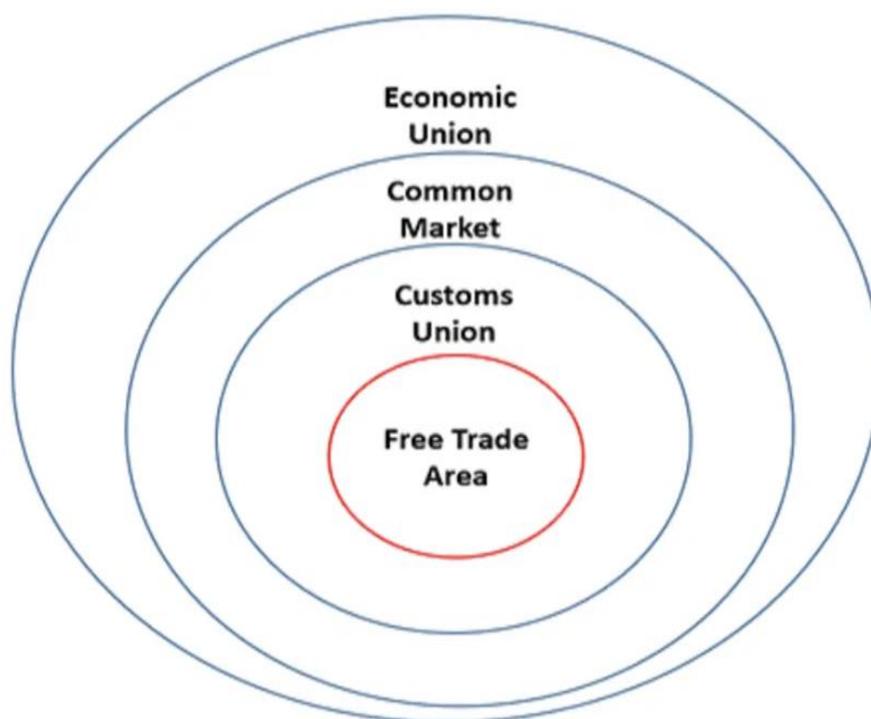
Source: Tradingeconomics

After 36 years of innovation, by 2022, the scale of Vietnam's GDP is equivalent to 409 billion USD, witnessing a robust increase from 26.34 billion USD in 1986. This signifies robust economic development and expansion. In 2022, Vietnam continued to experience economic growth, with a GDP increase of 8.02% compared to the previous year. This was the highest increase in the period from 2011 to 2022, indicating a positive trend in the economy. Vietnam's GDP per capita in 2022 stood at approximately \$4,110 USD, which was an increase of \$393 USD compared to the previous year (GSO, 2022). This reflects not only overall economic growth but also an improvement in the standard of living for the population. It is notably stressed that the economic structure of Vietnam has changed significantly since 1986. Starting with more than 80% of contribution to the economy by agriculture sectors, the economic structure in 2022 has sectoral contributions of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries is 11.88%; Industrial and Construction is 38.26%; Service Sector is 41.33% and Product Tax minus Product Subsidies is 8.53% (Minh Ngoc, 2023). This breakdown illustrates the diversification of Vietnam's economy, with a significant share in the service sector and a reduced but still important role for agriculture and industry. Vietnam's economic development over this period is a proof of successful economic reforms and policies. In terms of GDP per capita, Vietnam's GDP per capita in 2022 is about 4011 USD, ranking 128th in the world, out of 196 countries and territories (World Bank, 2022). Economic growth can have a significant impact on a country's passport power because it is an evidence to show the increase in incomes and improved living standards of a nation. As people become wealthier, they are capable of managing finance to satisfy the desire to travel both domestically and internationally. Those who want to travel to other countries must have a passport and visa. Economically prosperous countries often have greater economic strength to negotiate favorable agreements with other nations, including visa policies. Strong economies often have great influence on international issues and other countries. This positive international reputation can result in greater trust from other nations and, subsequently, enhanced passport power.

Economic integration

Economic integration is also another indicator for the economic power of one nation. It is an arrangement among nations that typically includes the reduction or elimination of trade barriers to promote free trade, economic growth and improve the overall well-being of the participating countries or regions. There are several levels of economic integration, representing a deeper form of cooperation and integration. The level of integration that countries choose to pursue depends on their economic and political objectives. The development of the industrial revolution 4.0 and internet make this trend become more popular not only in developed nations but also among developing and least developed economies.

Figure 2. Level of Economic Integration



Source: batheories.com

In the context of global economic integration and expanding trade liberalization, the wave of signing Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) is becoming strong around the world and has become a new trend in the international economic system. Since joining WTO in 2006, Vietnam’s economy has changed in the development policy by cooperation with many new partners. In recent years, Vietnam has made great efforts and actively participated in signing many FTA agreements, opening up many opportunities for socio-economic development.

Table 1. FTAs of Vietnam up to 2023

| No. | FTA | Status | Parties |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| FTAs in effect | | | |
| 1 | AFTA | Effective since 1993 | ASEAN |
| 2 | ACFTA | Effective since 2003 | ASEAN, China |
| 3 | AKFTA | Effective since 2007 | ASEAN, South Korea |
| 4 | AJCEP | Effective since 2008 | ASEAN, Japan |
| 5 | VJEPA | Effective since 2009 | Vietnam, Japan |

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|---|---|
| 6 | <u>AIFTA</u> | Effective since 2010 | ASEAN, India |
| 7 | <u>AANZFTA</u> | Effective since 2010 | ASEAN, Australia, New Zealand |
| 8 | <u>VCFTA</u> | Effective since 2014 | Vietnam, Chile |
| 9 | <u>VKFTA</u> | Effective since 2015 | Vietnam, South Korea |
| 10 | <u>VN – EAEU FTA</u> | Effective since 2016 | Vietnam, Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan |
| 11 | <u>CPTPP</u> (previously known as TPP) | Effective since 30/12/2018, came into effect in Vietnam since 14/01/2019 | Vietnam, Canada, Mexico, Peru, Chile, New Zealand, Australia, Japan, Singapore, Brunei, Malaysia, The UK (signed the Accession Protocol on July 16, 2023) |
| 12 | <u>AHKFTA</u> | Effective in Hong Kong (China), Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Singapore and Vietnam since 11/06/2019 | ASEAN, Hongkong (China) |
| 13 | <u>EVFTA</u> | Effective since August 01, 2020 | Vietnam, EU (27 members) |
| 14 | <u>UKVFTA</u> | Effective since May 01, 2021 | Vietnam, The UK |
| 15 | <u>RCEP</u> | Effective since January 01, 2022 | ASEAN, China, Korea, Japan, Australia, New Zealand |
| 16 | <u>VIFTA</u> | Negotiations commenced in December 2015, completed in April 2023. Officially signed on 25/07/2023 | Vietnam, Israel |
| FTAs under negotiation | | | |
| 17 | <u>Vietnam – EFTA FTA</u> | Negotiations commenced in May 2012 | Vietnam, EFTA (Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein) |
| 18 | <u>ASEAN – Canada FTA</u> | Negotiations commenced in November 2021 | ASEAN, Canada |
| 19 | <u>Vietnam – UAE FTA</u> | In the process of initiating negotiations | Vietnam, United Arab Emirates (UAE) |

Source: Center for WTO and International Trade

Economic integration can have a significant impact on a country's passport power. Economic integration through regional trade and economic agreements can lead to increased visa-free or visa-on-arrival access for passport holders among member countries. As countries harmonize their policies and facilitate economic cooperation, they often extend similar privileges to each other's citizens, enhancing passport power. Economic integration fosters trade and business opportunities between countries' partners or within a region. In order to simplify entry procedures for business travelers and promote trade, countries can offer easy visa requirements for investors, skilled workers, and professionals, thereby enhancing passport power. As a result of economic integration, countries may collectively enjoy a stronger global economic standing, which leads to better visa policies with non-member countries, benefiting passport holders. Economic integration may involve the harmonization of regulations and standards, including those related to travel documents and standardize the traveling requirements.

Tourism

Tourism refers to the travel of individuals or groups from one place to another for a specific period with various purposes, such as recreation, leisure, cultural exploration or personal experience. With the increase in income and ease of traveling procedures, international traveling is becoming more popular. Foreign tourists often contribute to the local economy by spending on accommodation, food, and various services. They also take part in generating revenue for local communities and governments, creating employment opportunities, and improving living standards in many places. Vietnam has the advantage of being a tropical country with a variety of beautiful landscapes such as mountains, beaches and caves. Tourism plays an important role in the economy of Vietnam and the Government has applied numerous visa-priorities for international tourists. Vietnam now offers e-visas to citizens of 80 countries and territories (Resolution No. 127/NQ-CP dated August 14, 2023). From August, 2023, foreign citizens from selected countries will be granted unilateral visa exemption, allowing them to stay in Vietnam for a maximum period of 45 days without needing a visa. Countries benefiting from this visa policy change include South Korea, Japan, Russia, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark, UK, France, Germany, Spain, Italy and Belarus. These are countries that have close partnerships with Vietnam and have actively contributed to the country's economic and tourism development in recent times (Resolution No. 128/NQ-CP dated August 14, 2023)

Figure 3. Vietnam Tourist Arrivals period 2016-2022(million people)



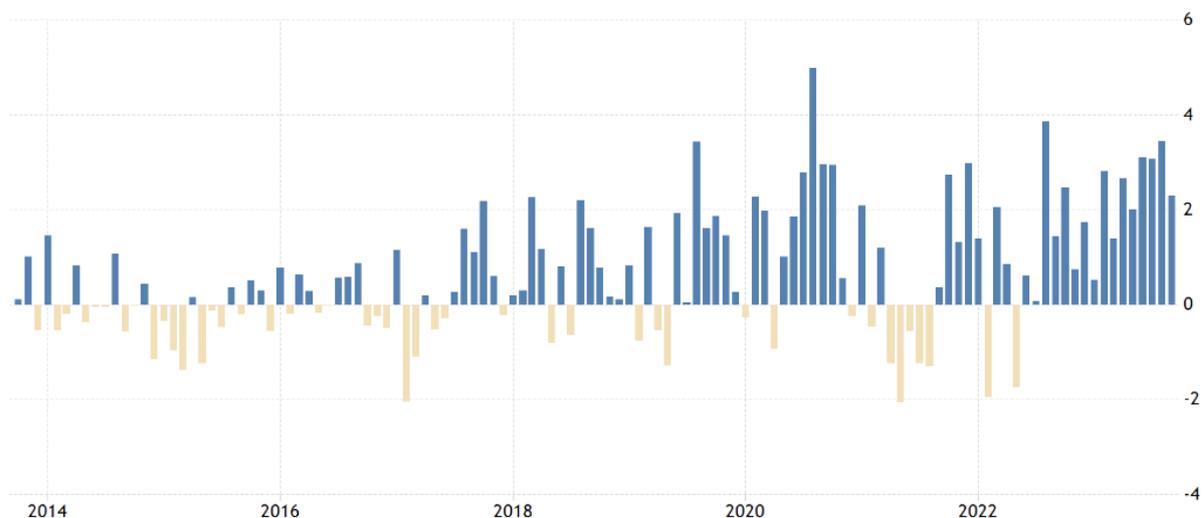
Source: tradingeconomics

Tourism has a significant impact on a country's passport power. Countries that actively promote their tourism industry often work to attract visitors from around the world. To do so, they may ease visa requirements, offer visa-free access, or implement visa-on-arrival policies. This enhances passport power by allowing citizens of these countries to travel more easily for tourism. Tourism can lead to negotiations of visa waiver agreements between countries. These agreements can result in mutual visa-free access for passport holders, facilitating tourism and improving passport power for both nations. In 2010, Vietnam attracted only 5,034,712 tourists (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism) and this number gradually increased through the years. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, the tourists who came to Vietnam reached the peak of 18,008,591 (MCST) which equaled nearly 20% of the Vietnamese population. In 2022, Vietnam warmly welcomed and served around 3.5 million international travelers. Moreover, in the first half of 2023, the industry continued to thrive, hosting 5.5 million international visitors. This outstanding performance highlights Vietnam's steadfast dedication to a robust recovery and sustainable growth in the tourism sector (Xuan Truong, 2023). As the tourism industry of Vietnam grows, there is an economic incentive to ease visa policies to attract more tourists, leading to more countries offering visa-free or visa-on-arrival access in return for Vietnam.

Trade

International trade involves the exchange of goods and services between different countries or regions. Trade plays a significant role in promoting economic growth and encouraging people connections. Over the past 20 years, Vietnam has risen from 83rd to 61st in the Economic Complexity Index (ECI), which measures the diversity and sophistication of manufacturing capabilities represented in exports of goods and services of each country. In 2021, despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and increased trade protection, Vietnam's goods exports still increased with a turnover of 336.25 billion USD, an increase of 19% compared to 2020. With the export-import/GDP ratio in 2021 reaching 184.7%, Vietnam's economy has high openness (ranked 2nd in Southeast Asia, 3rd in Asia, 4th in the world). Vietnam joins the group of 20 leading economies in international trade. This becomes even more important in the context of slow world economic growth due to the fourth wave of COVID-19 outbreak and the break of the global supply chain (GSO, 2022).

Figure 4. Vietnam Balance of Trade (billion \$)



Source: tradingeconomics

International trade often requires international business travel. Countries with robust trade relations often negotiate favorable visa policies for business travelers, enhancing passport power for their citizens engaged in trade and commerce. Effective trading may lead to great attraction of FDI, due to increasing demand in local countries. Increasing trade relationships may lead to an increase in passport power. When Vietnam has diversified trade with many partners, it is common to have preferential agreements for each other on visa-free to save business costs and time. As a result, Vietnam becomes an attractive destination for business men. When a country like Vietnam successfully negotiates these preferential agreements and engages in extensive trade relationships, its passport power can increase and Vietnamese passport holders have greater ease of travel, reduced business costs, and less administrative hassle when conducting business internationally.

Diplomatic Relationships

Diplomatic relationships refer to the formal interactions and agreements established between countries relating to international affairs, political, economic, social, and cultural matters. These relationships are crucial for maintaining peaceful coexistence, promoting trade and cooperation, and resolving disputes at the international level. Diplomatic relationships have a wide-ranging impact on various aspects of a country's foreign policy, international standing, and domestic affairs. Diplomatic relationships facilitate cultural and educational exchanges, which boost tourism and promote soft power. Effective diplomacy can increase a country's influence on the global stage. Diplomatic actions and behaviors can shape a country's global image and reputation, influencing how it is perceived by other nations and the international community. By September 2023, Vietnam has official diplomatic relations with 192 countries in the world (190/193 UNmember countries). Vietnam had built and upgraded strategic partnerships and comprehensive strategic partnerships with 18 countries. These relationships have been making important contributions as well as enhancing Vietnam's role and position in the international arena. Vietnam now has comprehensive strategic partnerships with 5 powerful countries. China, Russia, India, South Korea and the US. In addition, Vietnam has strategic partnerships with 13 countries and comprehensive partnerships with 10 countries; Field strategic partnership with 2 countries (Netherlands and Denmark) and special relations with 3 countries including Laos, Cambodia and Cuba (MOF, 2023).

Diplomatic relationships are closely intertwined with the concept of soft power. Soft power refers to a country's ability to influence others through attraction, persuasion, and the appeal of its culture, values, policies, and ideas rather than through military or economic coercion. Diplomatic relationships are a means for countries to project and leverage their soft power. Soft power, in turn, can strengthen diplomatic relationships by making a country more attractive and influential in the international arena. In 2021, Vietnam climbed up three spots to rank 47th out of 105 countries in Brand Finance's Global Soft Power Index Report. Vietnam was the only country among 10 member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to see improvement in that year. This rank in 2022 and 2023 was 59 and 69 out of 121 countries despite the complex in the regional and international relationship (Brand finance, 2023).

Figure 5. Global Soft Power Index 2023

| Rank 2023 | Rank 2022 | Nation Brand | Region | Index Score 2023 | Index Score Change | Index Score 2022 | Brand Value 2023 (USD bn) | Brand Value Change | Brand Value 2022 (USD bn) |
|-----------|-----------|---|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| 61 | 60 |  Philippines | Asia | 38.7 | +5.4 | 33.2 | \$526 | +9% | \$481 |
| 62 | 84 |  Slovakia | Europe | 38.7 | +7.7 | 30.9 | \$133 | +18% | \$114 |
| 63 | 66 |  Uruguay | LATAM & Caribbean | 38.4 | +6.2 | 32.3 | \$58 | +17% | \$49 |
| 64 | 50 |  Romania | Europe | 38.4 | +4.0 | 34.4 | \$210 | +10% | \$191 |
| 65 | 99 |  Latvia | Europe | 38.4 | +9.1 | 29.3 | \$44 | +9% | \$40 |
| 66 | 53 |  Cuba | LATAM & Caribbean | 38.3 | +4.3 | 34.0 | \$43 | - | - |
| 67 | 71 |  Mauritius | Sub-Saharan Africa | 38.0 | +6.1 | 31.9 | \$11 | +1% | \$11 |
| 68 | 58 |  Cyprus | Europe | 37.8 | +4.5 | 33.3 | \$27 | +17% | \$23 |
| 69 | 59 |  Vietnam | Asia | 37.8 | +4.4 | 33.3 | \$498 | +16% | \$431 |
| 70 | 54 |  Panama | LATAM & Caribbean | 37.7 | +3.8 | 33.9 | \$61 | +0% | \$60 |
| 71 | 65 |  Malta | Europe | 37.5 | +5.1 | 32.5 | \$16 | +4% | \$15 |

Source: Brand finance

Diplomatic relationships can significantly impact a country's passport power. In 1950, Vietnam first established diplomatic relations with 10 countries and continued to expand the diplomatic relations with dozens of countries year by year. Up to 2023, Vietnam has diplomatic relations with a total of 193 countries around the world (Pham Huan, 2023). Vietnam also establishes a stable, long-term relationship framework with 30 strategic and comprehensive partners, creating a solid foundation to improve cooperation among countries for the development of the region and the world. Diplomatic relationships are crucial in negotiating visa agreements. Countries with strong diplomatic ties can enter into bilateral or multilateral agreements to facilitate visa-free or visa-on-arrival access for each other's citizens. These agreements directly impact the passport power of the countries involved.

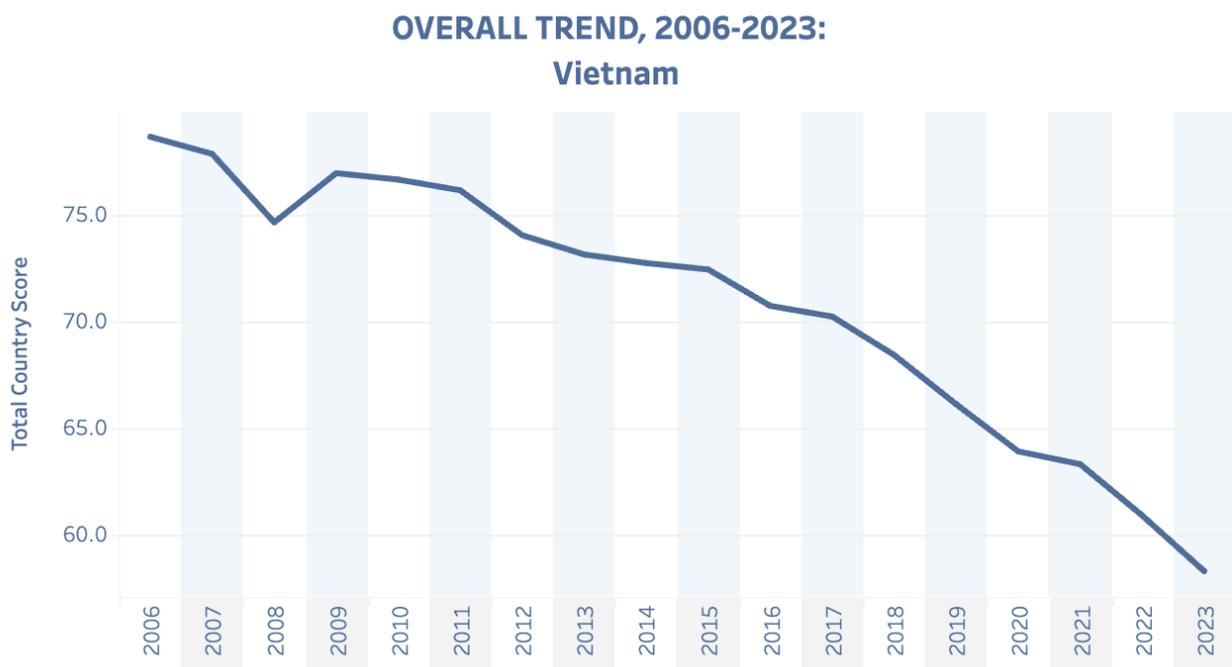
Diplomatic relationships often involve reciprocity in visa policies. When two or more countries agree to offer visa privileges to one another's citizens, it can lead to a mutually beneficial arrangement and enhanced passport power for all parties involved. Countries with strong diplomatic influence are better positioned to advocate for their citizens' interests, including passport power. They can use their diplomatic clout to negotiate more favorable travel privileges for their citizens. Countries actively involved in diplomatic initiatives, such as regional organizations and international forums, may have opportunities to advocate for improved passport power through collective agreements or regional visa policies. Being a member of regional organizations can result in shared visa policies among member countries. Membership in such organizations can enhance the passport power of citizens from those nations. Diplomatic relationships play a crucial role in resolving conflicts and disputes with other nations. Countries that maintain peaceful relations with their neighbors and the international community tend to have stronger passport power, as their citizens face fewer travel restrictions. Diplomatic relationships contribute to a country's international reputation. Nations known for their constructive and responsible diplomatic behavior are more likely to be trusted by other countries and, in turn, enjoy improved passport power.

Domestic fragility

According to Henley's analysis, a nation's stability significantly influences the visa requirements imposed on its citizens when they travel abroad. There is a clear inverse relationship between the level of violence within a country and the ease with which its citizens can secure visa exemptions. This internal violence encompasses various forms, including incidents such as bombings, armed conflicts, acts of terrorism, ethnic tensions, and other related factors. Furthermore, factors contributing to visa restrictions extend to encompass a broader spectrum of political and societal instability. For example, countries that frequently make headlines due to their unstable political situations, such as Palestine, Afghanistan, and certain North African nations, often face challenges in obtaining visa exemptions from other countries. This situation has noticeable consequences for their citizens, who, even when applying for visas, often face a high rate of rejections. In such cases, destination countries exercise caution due to concerns that prospective travelers may be seeking refuge or escaping from the prevailing instability in their home countries.

The Fragile States Index takes into account four distinct categories of indicators: cohesion, economic, political, and social. Each of these indicators has three detailed categories to assess and measure the fragility of each state. Twelve conflict risk indicators are utilized to gauge a state's condition at any given point. These indicators offer a snapshot in time that can be compared with other snapshots in a time series to determine whether conditions are improving or deteriorating. The indicators are used both in the CAST framework and the Fragile States Index. Vietnam is ranked 118 out of 179 countries globally in terms of fragility (FSI, 2023). In this index, lower numbers indicate greater stability in a country. Analyzing the trend from 2006 to the present, it is evident that Vietnam has made significant progress in establishing peace and addressing many of the country's violence and security issues. In 2006, the fragility score was 78.6, and it has improved to 58.6 in 2023. Thirteen years ago, the country was ranked 70th, but it has since climbed 48 positions higher in the rankings (FSI, 2023).

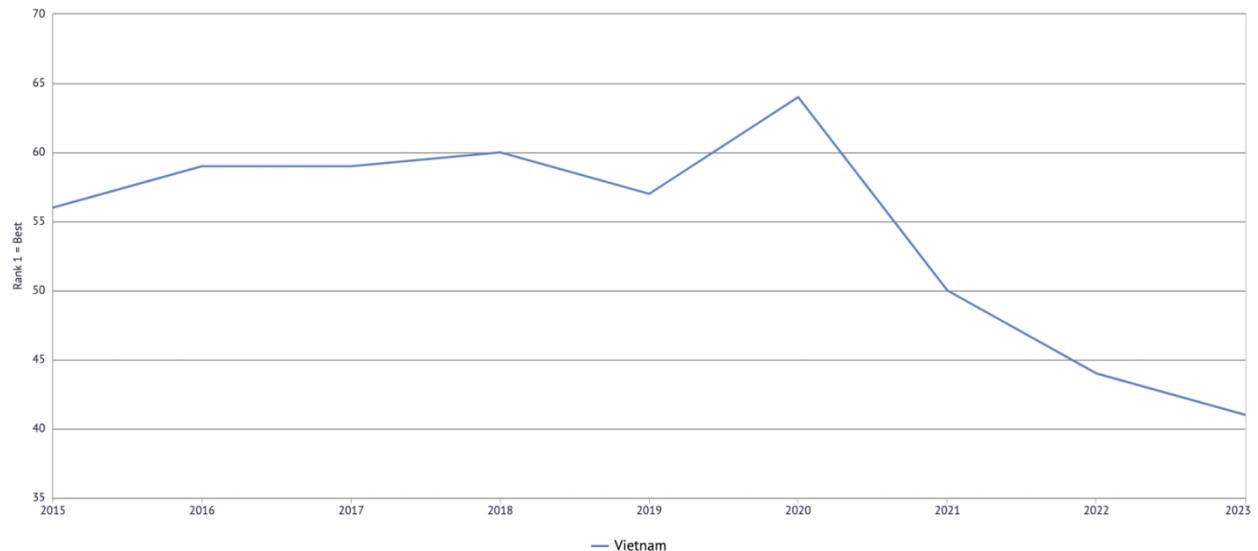
Figure 6. Fragility scores of Vietnam from 2006 to 2023.



Source: Fragile States Index

In the Global Peace Index of 2023, Vietnam has achieved a ranking of 41 out of 163 countries worldwide, marking an increase of four positions compared to its standing in 2022. This index serves to assess a country's level of Negative Peace through an examination of three dimensions of peacefulness. The first dimension, labeled "Ongoing Domestic and International Conflict," employs six statistical indicators to scrutinize a country's engagement in both internal and external conflicts, including their role and the duration of their involvement in such conflicts. For this domain, Vietnam has garnered a score of 1403. To provide context, the most peaceful country, Iceland, holds a score of 1000, while the least peaceful, Yemen, bears a score of 3486. The second dimension seeks to gauge the degree of harmony or discord within a nation. It encompasses eleven indicators that broadly evaluate factors associated with societal safety and security. This entails considerations such as low crime rates, minimal terrorist activity, and a dearth of violent demonstrations, alongside amicable relations with neighboring nations, political stability, and a low proportion of the population internally displaced or rendered refugees, all indicative of a state's overall peacefulness. Vietnam has achieved a score of 2053. By comparison, the most peaceful nation, Finland, exhibits a score of 1521 in this domain. The remaining six indicators within this index pertain to a country's militarization. This reflects the correlation between a nation's level of military buildup, access to weapons, and its overall state of peacefulness, both on the domestic and international fronts. The notable improvement in Vietnam's ranking in the Global Peace Index for 2023 signifies a significant and positive shift in the country's standing concerning global peace and security. This progression reflects the government's concerted efforts and policies aimed at enhancing domestic stability, fostering international cooperation, and mitigating potential sources of conflict. To provide perspective, it's worth noting that in 2020, Vietnam held the 64th position in the Global Peace Index. Within the short span of just two years, the country has managed to make substantial strides, advancing by more than 20 places in the rankings. This upward trajectory suggests a noteworthy enhancement of the nation's overall peacefulness and its capacity to maintain security both at home and on the international stage.

Figure 7. Vietnam’s ranking on Global Peace Index (2016 - 2023)



Source: Institute for Economics and Peace

The passport power of Vietnam is not static but undergoes changes over time due to various factors. Passport power is a measure of the strength and effectiveness of a country's passport in terms of the visa-free or visa-on-arrival access it grants to its citizens when traveling abroad. These changes can result from shifts in diplomatic relations, international agreements, visa policies of other

countries, and the broader global political and economic landscape. Vietnam, like any other nation, can actively work to extend and improve its passport power through various means. This may involve engaging in diplomatic negotiations and bilateral agreements with other countries to establish favorable visa arrangements for its passport holders. Participation in regional organizations, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), can also promote regional integration and cooperation in travel and visa-related matters. Furthermore, strengthening diplomatic ties, maintaining political stability, and fostering a robust economy can make Vietnam more appealing to other nations, potentially leading to enhanced visa access for its citizens. Additionally, Vietnam can adopt a policy of visa reciprocity, offering similar visa conditions to citizens of countries that provide favorable terms to Vietnamese passport holders, thus encouraging other nations to reciprocate. Moreover, being a party to international agreements and conventions that facilitate visa-free or visa-on-arrival travel can significantly boost passport power. It is essential to recognize that changes in passport power do not occur in isolation and necessitate careful diplomatic efforts, negotiation, and the willingness of other countries to reciprocate. Vietnam's government can actively strive to extend or improve its passport's standing in the global arena through prudent diplomacy, international cooperation, and strategic actions. Passport power is subject to ongoing change, reflecting the complex web of international relations and global developments. In 2023, Vietnam's passport climbed four spots to rank 89th among the most powerful passports in the world. Accordingly, people with a Vietnamese passport enjoy free entry or are just required an e-visa or a visa on arrival to 54 countries and territories globally.

Figure 8. Global Passport Ranking in 2023

| | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|----|----|---|-----------------------|----|----|
|  | Algeria | 89 | 54 |  | Algeria | 89 | 54 |
|  | Bhutan | 89 | 54 |  | Bhutan | 89 | 54 |
|  | Central African Re... | 89 | 54 |  | Central African Re... | 89 | 54 |
|  | Chad | 89 | 54 |  | Chad | 89 | 54 |
|  | Comoro Islands | 89 | 54 |  | Comoro Islands | 89 | 54 |
|  | Egypt | 89 | 54 |  | Egypt | 89 | 54 |
|  | Vietnam | 89 | 54 |  | Vietnam | 89 | 54 |
|  | Jordan | 90 | 53 |  | Jordan | 90 | 53 |

Source: henleyglobal.com

3. Methodology

Conducting research on the influence of Vietnam's socioeconomic status on passport power would require a well-structured methodology.

Research Proposal: drafting a research proposal that outlines the objectives, research questions, and the significance of the study; Clearly define the scope and limitations of your research.

Data Collection: Identify relevant data sources, which may include official government reports, databases, academic studies, and expert opinions; Collect data on Vietnam's socio-economic status, which might include economic indicators (GDP, income, etc.), political stability, diplomatic relationships, and foreign aid received or given; Gather data on the passport power of Vietnamese citizens, including the number of countries they can visit without a visa, visa-on-arrival options, and specific visa agreements.

Hypothesis and Research Questions: Develop a hypothesis or a set of research questions that will guide your investigation that there is a positive correlation between Vietnam's economic status and the passport power of its citizens.

Diplomatic and Bilateral Agreements: Research and analyze specific diplomatic and bilateral agreements between Vietnam and other countries that have influenced passport power.

Time Period Analysis: Conducting analysis over a specific time period to understand how passport power and socio-economic status have evolved; Present your research findings in a clear and concise manner using tables, charts, and graphs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the passport power of a nation and the ease with which its citizens can obtain visa-free travel are significantly influenced by various socioeconomic factors. Two key factors, namely economics and diplomatic relationships, play a pivotal role in shaping a country's passport strength and global mobility. The economic growth of a nation is a critical factor in determining passport power. In the case of Vietnam, the economic landscape has witnessed remarkable growth, with the country's GDP surging from over 26 billion in 1986 to an impressive figure of nearly 409 billion in 2023. Moreover, the GDP per capita has seen a substantial increase over the past two decades, climbing 56 spots and reaching an annual income of nearly \$4,000. This economic progress is further enhanced by Vietnam's active engagement in economic integration, boasting 19 Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with various countries and regions globally. This, in turn, has bolstered tourism and trade, resulting in 54 nations allowing Vietnamese citizens to enter without a visa or by granting visa-on-arrival services. Additionally, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) enables Vietnamese passport holders to travel within its member states without a visa and stay for up to 30 days, further underlining Vietnam's growing diplomatic reach. Diplomatic relationships are of paramount importance when it comes to passport power. Vietnam has been proactive in building and upgrading strategic partnerships with 18 countries, including global superpowers such as China, Russia, India, South Korea, and the United States. Notably, the recent visit of U.S. President Joe Biden to Vietnam exemplified the country's strong diplomatic strategies and its increasing credibility on the global stage. These diplomatic efforts have translated into improved access for Vietnamese citizens across the world. Furthermore, domestic stability and fragility play a crucial role in determining visa policies of other nations towards Vietnam. Indices such as the Fragile States Index and the Global Peace Index have documented significant improvements in Vietnam's rankings over

the past decade. These advancements indicate that Vietnam is addressing its internal challenges and working towards becoming a more stable and peaceful nation on the global stage, which is a compelling factor for other countries to grant visa exemptions and privileges to Vietnamese citizens.

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