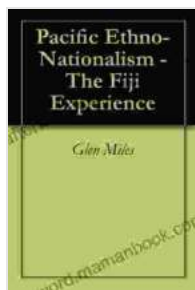


Fijian Politics: Pacific Ethno-Nationalism and the Fiji Experience

Fiji, an archipelago in the South Pacific, has experienced a complex political history marked by ethnic tensions and struggles for power. Since its independence from the United Kingdom in 1970, Fiji has witnessed four coups d'état, each fueled by a potent ideology known as Pacific ethno-nationalism. This ideology has shaped Fijian politics, influencing both domestic and foreign policies and leaving a profound impact on the nation's social and cultural fabric.



Fijian Politics: Pacific Ethno-Nationalism - The Fiji Experience by Romy Fischer

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Pacific Ethno-Nationalism

Pacific ethno-nationalism emerged as a response to the perceived threats posed by European colonialism and the subsequent influx of Indian laborers in the late 19th century. This ideology sought to preserve the indigenous Fijian culture, traditions, and political dominance. Its core tenets include:

- The belief in the superiority of the indigenous Fijian people and their unique cultural heritage.
- The importance of maintaining ethnic purity and preventing intermarriage with non-Fijians.
- A desire to assert political control over Fiji and limit the influence of other ethnic groups.

Historical Roots

Pacific ethno-nationalism has its roots in the pre-colonial era, where Fijian society was organized into a highly stratified system based on ethnicity. The chiefs held significant political power and wielded influence over the commoners. Colonialism disrupted this system, introducing new ideologies and bringing in Indian laborers to work on sugar plantations.

The Indian population grew rapidly, raising concerns among Fijians that their culture and political dominance were being threatened. This fear was compounded by the British colonial administration's policy of "divide and rule," which favored Indians in certain sectors. As a result, Pacific ethno-nationalism gained traction as a resistance movement against perceived foreign influence.

Political Manifestations

Pacific ethno-nationalism has manifested itself in various political movements and events throughout Fiji's history. The most significant of these include:

- **The Alliance Party:** Founded in 1967, the Alliance Party was a multi-ethnic coalition that advocated for Fijian supremacy while seeking to protect Indian interests. It dominated Fiji's politics for several decades.
- **The Fiji National Federation Party:** The FNPF was an Indian-dominated party that opposed the Alliance Party's ethno-nationalist policies and demanded equal rights for all citizens.
- **The 1987 Coups:** In 1987, two military coups were carried out by indigenous Fijian officers who sought to restore Fijian political dominance. These coups led to the abrogation of the constitution, the establishment of a military-led government, and the imposition of policies aimed at limiting Indian influence.
- **The 2000 and 2006 Coups:** In 2000 and 2006, further coups took place, motivated by similar sentiments of preserving Fijian rights and addressing perceived threats from other ethnic groups.

Consequences and Challenges

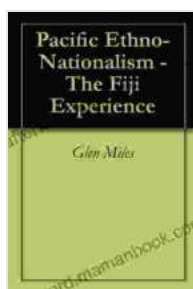
Pacific ethno-nationalism has had profound consequences for Fijian society. It has created deep divisions between ethnic groups, leading to tension, mistrust, and occasional violence. The coups have destabilized the nation's political system and undermined its international reputation. Moreover, the focus on preserving Fijian supremacy has marginalized other ethnic communities and hindered the development of a truly inclusive and democratic society.

Addressing the challenges posed by Pacific ethno-nationalism requires finding ways to overcome ethnic divisions and promote reconciliation. This can be achieved through initiatives that foster inter-ethnic understanding,

address social and economic inequalities, and strengthen the rule of law. It is also essential to promote inclusive policies that respect the rights and aspirations of all Fijians, regardless of their ethnicity or background.

Fijian politics has been shaped by a potent ideology known as Pacific ethno-nationalism. This ideology has influenced domestic and foreign policies, leading to coups d'état and ethnic tensions. The consequences have been far-reaching, destabilizing the political system, creating divisions in society, and hindering progress towards a more inclusive and democratic Fiji.

Overcoming these challenges requires addressing the root causes of ethno-nationalism, promoting reconciliation, and fostering an inclusive society where all citizens feel valued and respected. By working together, Fijians can build a nation that embraces diversity, promotes harmony, and ensures a just and equitable future for all its people.



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