

Lessons of Experience in International Democracy Promotion: The Case of Australia in Post-Coup Fiji

Avinash Kumar

Abstract

The international democracy promotion which began in the 1980s continues to grow at an unprecedented rate. Today it is one of the major policy goals of the western democracies and the international organizations – the two main drivers that have turned the exercise of international democracy promotion into an industry on its own. However despite this surge, the exercise of international democracy promotion has not received widespread acclamation because it is an issue that is under-studied, poorly understood and above all is hotly debated. This paper considers the above predicament by assessing Australia's role in democracy promotion in Fiji after the military coups of 1987 and 2006. The stand of the international community towards the restoration of democracy in Fiji included mainly two strategies – incentives and conditionality. The incentive strategy includes direct or indirect engagement with the authoritarian regime through impetus such as democracy assistance while the conditionality strategy involves the imposition of punitive conditions for the purpose of isolating the undemocratic regime. Based on the analysis of the Australian involvement in the two coups in Fiji, this paper argues that the incentives strategy is more effective than the conditionality strategy in relation to international democracy promotion.