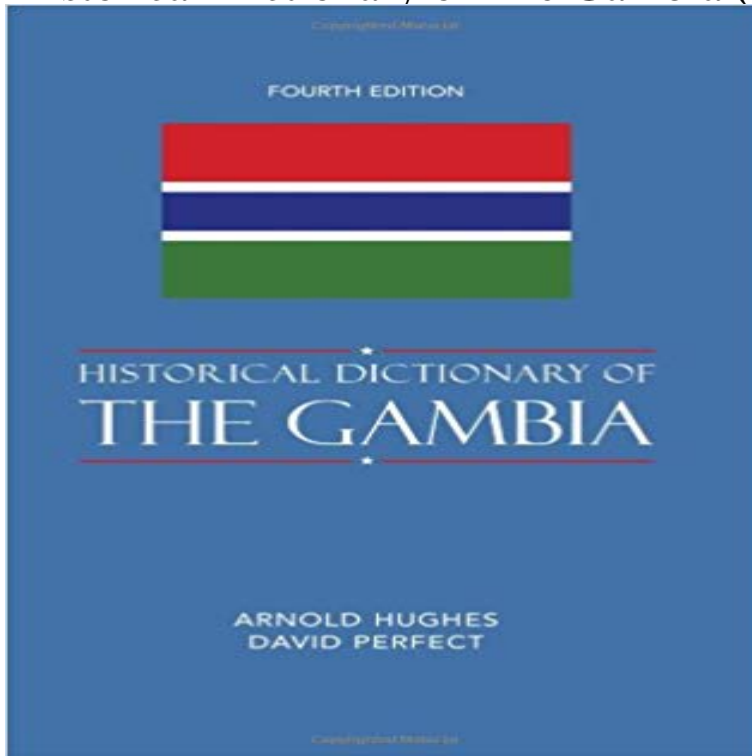


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The Gambia achieved its independence from Great Britain on February 18, 1965 and became mainland Africa's smallest state. Despite its small size and population, it was able to establish itself as a functioning parliamentary democracy for nearly 30 years, avoiding the common fate of other African countries, which soon fell under authoritarian single-party rule or experienced military coups. In addition, its political stability and modest economic success enabled it to avoid remaining under British domination or being absorbed by its larger French-speaking neighbor, Senegal, as anticipated by many at the country's birth. It was also able to defeat an attempted coup d'état in July 1981. However, just as other African states were returning to democratic government, Gambian democracy finally succumbed to a military coup on July 22, 1994. Since then, the restoration of democracy has remained incomplete and disputed, as do the military successor governments' attempts to meet the country's economic and social needs. The fourth edition of the Historical Dictionary of The Gambia, through its chronology, introductory essay, appendixes, map, bibliography, and hundreds of cross-referenced dictionary entries on important persons, places, events, institutions, and significant political, economic, social, and cultural aspects, provides an important reference on this burgeoning African country.

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