The period from 1960 to 2000 was one of remarkable growth and transformation in the world economy. Why did most of Sub-Saharan Africa fail to develop over this period? Why did a few small African economies succeed spectacularly? *The Political Economy of Economic Growth in Africa, 1960–2000* is by far the most ambitious and comprehensive assessment of Africa’s post-independence economic performance to date. Volume 2 supports and extends the analysis of African economic growth presented in the first volume by providing twenty-six case studies of individual African economies. The book is divided into three parts, based on the three main types of economy found in Sub-Saharan Africa: landlocked, coastal, and resource-rich. Eighteen of the case studies are contained in the book and a further eight are included on an accompanying CD-ROM. These volumes are an invaluable resource for researchers and policy-makers concerned with the economic development of Africa.

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Volume 2

Country Case Studies

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Foreword

Throughout many of the first decades following independence, Africa’s economies failed to grow; indeed in 2000 per capita incomes in several countries were lower than they had been in 1960. In this two-volume study, the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) probes the nature and the roots of Africa’s economic performance in the first decades of independence. We seek to describe Africa’s growth experience in the latter decades of the twentieth century, to account for it, and to extract lessons to guide future policy-making in the continent.

The timing of this two-volume assessment could not be more propitious. Debates over growth strategy have renewed as the region emerges from decades of economic decline and policy reform. Growth itself reignited in the mid-1990s, supported by policy reforms and also by rising commodity prices, a revival of aid flows, and the resolution of costly civil conflicts. What constitutes a pro-growth policy environment? What constrains the achievement of that environment? These questions were central to this examination of Africa’s immediate past. The answers to them should feature in debates over how best to secure its economic future.

We all recognize that the forces out of our control – the vagaries of commodity prices and climatic conditions, the rigors of fierce competition in fast-changing global markets, and the uncertainties of donor priorities and commitments – place limits on what we can attain. Even at the domestic level, important factors constrain our choices. The political reforms of the 1990s widened the scope for popular restraints on government, for example; but they also increased the level of uncertainty regarding the direction of future policy choices. And in a number of countries, the pursuit of growth awaits the end of armed conflict. Despite such limitations, however, policymakers can identify country-specific opportunities for growth and build upon them, drawing lessons from a country’s own history and from experiences elsewhere in Africa and the developing world. In these volumes, the scholars of the AERC seek to make the historical and comparative record available to those whose choices will affect our economic future.

The core of the “Explaining African Economic Growth” Project appears in volume 2, which contains eighteen detailed country studies (plus an additional eight on the CR-ROM that accompanies the volume) conducted by African research teams. These case studies use a common methodology that identifies key turning points in the governance environment and grounds
each country's experience in the global evidence on growth. In volume 1, the project’s steering committee draws on the country evidence to analyze the determinants of growth. With its two-fold emphasis on geography and governance – or, more broadly, on growth opportunities and choices – the synthesis provides a platform for the analysis of country-specific and region-wide growth strategies in contemporary Africa. Taken together, these two volumes constitute the most ambitious and comprehensive study of the African growth experience to date.

This study would not have been possible without the continuing support of AERC Core funders. We are very grateful to them for their unflinching support of the abiding goals of the AERC, namely, strengthening the African capacity to conduct rigorous, independent, and policy-relevant research which is grounded in local realities and, hence, provides support for evidence-based policy-making in Africa, especially in the context of a dynamic and evolving environment. This mission rests on two basic premises. First, that development is more likely to occur where there is sustained sound management of the economy. Second, that such management is more likely to happen where there is an active, well-informed cadre of locally based professionals to conduct policy-relevant research.

The AERC is building that cadre of professionals through a program that has two primary components, one devoted to policy-relevant research and the other to graduate training in economics. The research component, in turn, comprises thematic research, as the bedrock of capacity-building, and collaborative research, which is designed to engage senior African researchers with their colleagues from outside the continent in conducting research into topical and policy-relevant issues pertinent to enhancing economic development in Africa. This study is a sterling example of the AERC’s collaborative research program. It received specific financial support from the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (Sida), the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC), the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the World Bank (IBRD) through the Global Development Network, and for this support we are very grateful.

We are also grateful to a variety of research organizations for their contributions over the course of the study. In this regard, we thank the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard University, for supporting the launching conference in 1999 and the culminating conference in March 2005; Stanford University’s Institute for Advanced Study in the Behavioral and Social Sciences, for hosting a week-long meeting in August 2003 during which the basic structure of the synthesis was developed; the Ford Foundation, for supporting the Stanford meeting through the Institute for International Education; Dr. Pauline Boerma, for hosting an editors’ conference in