WHEN THINGS FELL APART

In the later decades of the twentieth century, Africa plunged into chaos. States failed, governments became predators, and citizens took up arms. In *When Things Fell Apart*, Robert H. Bates advances an explanation of state failure in Africa. In so doing, he plumbs the depths of the continent’s late-century tragedy, the logic of political order, and the foundations of the state. This book covers a wide range of territory by drawing on materials from Rwanda, Sudan, Liberia, and Congo. Written to be accessible to the general reader, it is nonetheless a must-read for scholars and policymakers concerned with conflict and state failure.

Robert H. Bates has conducted field work in Zambia, Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, Colombia, and Brazil. Before coming to Harvard, he held faculty appointments at the California Institute of Technology and Duke University and worked as a researcher at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Nairobi, the Institute for Social Research at the University of Zambia, and Fedesarrollo in Bogota, Colombia. Bates currently serves as a researcher and resource person with the Africa Economic Research Consortium, Nairobi; as a member of the Political Instability Task Force of the United States government; and as Professeur Associe, School of Economics, University of Toulouse, where he has taught since 2000. Among his most recent books are *Analytic Narratives* with Avner Greif and colleagues (1999), *Prosperity and Violence* (2001), *Beyond the Miracle of the Market, Second Edition* (2005), and *The Political Economy of Economic Growth in Africa, 1960–2000* (2 vols.) with Benno Ndulu and colleagues (2007).
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*Continued after the Index*
When Things Fell Apart

State Failure in Late-Century Africa

Robert H. Bates

Harvard University
To my mentors

Harvey Glickman
Haverford College

Martin Kilson
Harvard University

Richard Sklar
University of California, Los Angeles

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Acknowledgments

Working in Uganda in the early 1980s, I came to learn what it meant to live in a world of violence. Among the reasons my colleagues in the Ministry of Cooperatives welcomed the overthrow of Idi Amin was that with Uganda no longer a pariah state, they could now attend international conferences. And among the reasons they attended such conferences was that they could then sleep, for they need not fear the arrival of soldiers in the night. Insights like this reminded me of something of which I was but fleetingly aware: not only the fragility of life, but also its political premise. I knew then that I would some day have to return to the issues to which that recognition gave rise.

To gain a respite from the tensions of working amidst violence, I turned instead to the study of the international coffee industry. To write up my research into the coffee industry, I spent a sabbatical year at the Center for Advanced Study in Palo Alto, California. Research in Colombia had quickly taught me that conflict was not a phenomenon confined solely to Africa.
Acknowledgments

I was therefore fortunate that Avner Greif was also in residence and that we could ponder together the roots of political order. The model that Avner, Smita Singh, and I produced underpins this work.

While I was laboring in archives in Latin America and at the Center for Advanced Study in California, governments in Africa were being overthrown by political reformers and decimated by political insurgents. When I returned to the study of Africa, I therefore had much ground to make up. Backed by funding from the Institute for International Development (HIID) at Harvard University, I assembled a collection of books and articles and, in conjunction with scholars from the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), began a collaborative study of economic growth on the continent. I wish to acknowledge the support of Dwight Perkins and Jeffrey Sachs at HIID and that of my colleagues at AERC: Jean-Paul Azam, Paul Collier, Augustin Fosu, Jan Willem Gunning, Benno Ndulu, Dominique Njinkeu, Stephen O’Connell, and the skilled stalwarts of the Secretariat.

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I dedicate this book to my mentors: those whose counsel eased my entry into this profession and whose scholarship has inspired my own.

Portions of this study have previously appeared in the following publications and are employed with permission of the publishers:

Reported presence of military groups, 1970–1974. Map compiled by Doran Haadass from data collected by the research team. Countries with white background were not included in the sample for which data were collected.