

### 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).

When Things Fell Apart  
*State Failure in Late-Century Africa*

**Robert H. Bates**

Harvard University



Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-56980-5 — When Things Fell Apart  
Robert H. Bates  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom  
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi - 110025, India  
103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

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[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781107569805](http://www.cambridge.org/9781107569805)

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First published 2008  
Reprinted 2008, 2009 (twice)  
Canto Classics edition 2015

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

ISBN 978-1-107-56980-5 Paperback

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*To my mentors*

*Harvey Glickman*  
Haverford College

*Martin Kilson*  
Harvard University

*Richard Sklar*  
University of California, Los Angeles

*Thayer Scudder*  
California Institute of Technology

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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 Nijinkeu, Stephen O'Connell, and the skilled stalwarts of the Secretariat.

A superb team of students made this study possible. I salute in particular the contributions of Karen Ferree and Smita Singh, who helped to launch it. Marc Alexander, James Habyarimana, Matthew Hindman, and Macartan Humphreys made major contributions. I wish also to thank Daron Haddass, Andy Harris, Kuisami Hornberger, Olivia Lau, Rebecca Nelson, Maria Petrova, Naunihal Singh, and Tsvetana Petrova.



## Acknowledgments

Thanks to Nahomi Ichino and James Robinson for reading and commenting on earlier drafts, as well as members of Gov. 2227: Andrew Beath, Matthew Blackwell, Ryan Bubb, Deepa Dhume, Daniel Fetter, Amanda Garrett, Andy Harris, Jennifer Howk, Janet Lewis, Christopher Rhodes, Anna Vodopyanov, Jacqueline Jansen, and Subhasish Ray. Thanks, too, to the three superb readers, selected by Lewis Bateman and Margaret Levi. I have benefited from comments made by participants at seminars at Yale University, Stanford University, the California Institute of Technology, the University of Oxford, Harvard University, the Peace Research Institute in Oslo, and the Rockefeller Foundation's villa in Belagio; at the annual meetings of the Political Science and Economic History Associations; and at workshops in the Kenya Institute for Policy Research and Analysis and the Africa Economic Research Consortium in Nairobi. I am particularly grateful to the Division of Humanities and Social Sciences at Caltech for appointing me as a Moore Fellow, thus giving me the time to launch this book. Special thanks, too, to the Economics Faculty at Toulouse University, especially to Jean-Paul Azam and Bruno Biais, with whom I have shared many of the ideas that worked their way into my argument.

This project has been supported by the Center for International Development and the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard University; by a Clark Fellowship from the office of the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences,

## Acknowledgments

Harvard University; and by the Africa Economic Research Consortium. Funding from the United States Institute for Peace (Grant No. USIP-02597S0), the Carnegie Corporation, and the National Science Foundation (Grant No. SES-09905568) brought the project to completion.

I wish as well to acknowledge the impact upon my thinking of the members of the Political Instability Task Force, in particular David Epstein and Jack Goldstone.

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:

- Bates, R. H. (2006). "Institutions and Development," *Journal of African Economies* 15(1): 10–61.
- Bates, R. H. (Forthcoming). State Failure: A Model with Tests from African Data. In *Political Violence*. Edited by Tarek Masoud and Stathis Kalyvas. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Bates, Robert, Avner Greif, and Smita Singh (2004). Tribal Societies. In *Politics from Anarchy to Democracy: Rational Choice in Political Science*. Edited by Morris Irwin, Joe Oppenheimer, and Karol Edward Soltan. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Ndulu, B., P. Collier, et al. (2007). *The Political Economy of Economic Growth in Africa, 1960–2000*. Vol. 1. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.