
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Acknowledgments for a collaborative work of this nature can never be wholly complete. The span of time considered, and the sources of inspiration and information, can be contracted or extended. Of particular relevance was the resumption of democratic political competition in Nigeria, 1975–1983, which I was able to study closely. A distinct pattern of political behavior eventually eroded the efficacy and legitimacy of the Nigerian state and facilitated the resumption of power by the armed forces. Subsequently, as a program officer for the Ford Foundation, 1986–1988, I was able to observe similar forms of misrule throughout the west African region, and the widespread aspirations for a civil polity based on group accommodation and democratic participation.

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Whatever its achievements and shortcomings, an important message of this study is that the challenges being confronted daily by the peoples of Africa—in state building, conflict prevention and resolution, and democratization—deserve more systematic analysis than can be accomplished with available resources, both material and human. I have learned enormously from my engagement with all the coauthors during the various stages in which our chapters evolved. I come away from this project with a heightened awareness of the complexities with which we grappled and of the greater effort required to truly master them. If this project provokes such an effort, that could be its most enduring achievement.

Richard Joseph