The Nigerian Military and the State (International Library of African Studies)

Jimmy Peters

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The Nigerian civil war was the watershed in the history of the Nigerian military. It demonstrated the need for a modern, professional army, navy and airforce, with sophisticated weaponry, and led to a huge increase in expenditure and personnel. It also demonstrated - very significantly - how the military could wield supreme political power.

Peters traces the history of the Nigerian military from its colonial constabulary-type organization as part of the Royal West African Frontier Force, to the establishment of the military state. Revealing the extent to which the military is considered a glamorous calling and a passport to wealth, Peters shows how its officers are drawn from the educated elite and play leading roles in all aspects of life: political, economic and social.

The military has succeeded in guaranteeing a measure of national cohesion, and has increased the number of states in Nigeria to ensure regional stability; its ranks include all ethnic groups; and it has played an important role as an international peace-keeping force. But while it has claimed to correct the evils of civilian rule, it has resisted democracy and has failed to correct the financial profligacy, economic mismanagement, corruption and nepotism it sought to eradicate. This study provides a thorough account of Nigerian society through a focus on its single most powerful institution.



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