Crises of war-to-peace transition and civil war recurrences: A focus on Leadership Building and the postcolonial state in Africa

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Introduction

This chapter advances two interconnected arguments. First, a process-based approach to leadership is essential to building and sustaining peace in African conflicts. Leadership building must precede and become the anchor for institution building in places where the idea of building and sustaining democratic institutions is yet to become embedded in daily practice. Ambitions of democratic consolidation in such places without evidence of organic leadership processes are tantamount to "building castles in the air". Second, and by extension, the starting point for any war-to-peace transition plan is a return to the state building conversations that preceded armed conflict in the affected society. This in itself requires an effective leadership process. A large number of Africa's armed conflicts are a result of fragmented state making processes.

There is a deliberate focus in this chapter on *process-based leadership* as an entry point for a discussion of war-to-peace transitions. There is no universally accepted definition of leadership. But there are clearly identified perspectives that guide leadership theory and practice. Popular notions of leadership are overwhelmingly leader-focused. Much emphasis is placed on individuals at the top of vertical hierarchies. As such, too great an expectation is often placed on these individuals to transform situations and improve the human condition. The discussion in this chapter departs radically from this popular perspective. Making sense of war-to-peace transitions in Africa requires altering this perspective to a process-based one, which is discussed in greater detail later. Process-based approach to leadership resides in the very interaction between leaders and followers in their response to mutual situations.

Two key themes, among others, underline discourses on war-to-peace transitions today. First is the problem of conflict relapse. Studies undertaken in the last decade and subsequently built upon, find that armed conflict is likely to re-ignite in more than 40 per cent of conflict situations where peace was previously negotiated (Lacina and Gleditsch 2005; Walter 2011). Ten years later, this trend has hardly changed. In 2015, about half of the conflict-related issues on the agenda of the United Nations (UN) Security Council are to do with situations of conflict relapse (UN AGE 2015). Second and related, is the approach to the transitions following armed conflict geared toward moving war-affected societies toward "normal" peaceful conditions.

Much debate surrounds the dominant approach and template for building and sustaining peace. This state building approach underpinned by a liberal peace paradigm is much criticised for its failure to deliver stable peace in many situations of armed conflict (Chandler 1999; Duffield 2001). Its most visible impact is basic security and the language of human rights (Richmond 2009a). The argument for

liberal peacebuilding is clear and consistent: building post-conflict states into liberal democracies and liberal market economies offers a better chance for sustainable peace Duffield 2001; Paris 2004). Critics decry the approach for its neglect of local interests, actors as well as processes and the resulting negation of local agency (Pugh, Cooper and Turner 2011; Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013). At the same time critics are challenged for not offering clear and workable alternatives to liberal peacebuilding (Paris 2010).

Paris' (2004) own proposal for institution building rather than rapid liberalisation – which makes the building of liberal democratic states and market economies unattainable – does not reject liberal peacebuilding. Rather it offers a halfway point toward liberalisation. If attention were focused on the building of viable institutions and on legislative and policy reforms, post-conflict states would eventually be in a position to internalise liberal peace. In any case, institution building has been at the core of state building efforts in the last two decades. Over time, a generic template has become apparent in post-conflict contexts regardless of the local dynamics. Typically, a peace agreement is followed by a period of transition often characterised by power-sharing arrangements among feuding elite. Policy and constitutional reforms would normally occur within this brief transition window. So would any number of national dialogue or consultative processes. This period ends with the holding of democratic elections (UN AGE 2015).

Neither of the two approaches – liberalisation or institution building – is the direct focus of the discussion of war-to-peace transitions in this chapter. But they are not entirely out of the frame of discussion. Rather than ask familiar questions as to whether liberal peace can effectively address conflict relapse this chapter looks to other realms to understand some of the challenges of war-to-peace transitions. Part of the challenge in dealing with conflict relapse is that little is offered in academic and policy literature by way of viable alternatives to dominant approaches to building peace. That is not say that such alternatives or options do not exist particularly in situations that do not attract international responses. Some studies have argued for a closer examination of conflicts that are amenable to home grown approaches, away from the gaze of the international community – as is the case, for example, with non-state armed conflicts (Kifle Ababu 2015). This chapter therefore seeks to shed light on several issues treated as outliers in war-to-peace transitions.

This chapter suggests that factors beyond those of the dominant state building narrative and the accompanying template account for the elusiveness of sustainable peace in Africa. It thus looks to several places for alternative narratives. One is the approach to *leadership* in peace processes. Another is the very nature of the post-colonial state in Africa, and its seeming disconnect from the larger society. This is a subject that occupied the attention of post-independence political scientists in Africa as will be shown later. Situations of armed conflict are in many cases the result of lingering issues connected to the post-colonial state. Such conflicts also present an opportunity to revisit and transform the particular conflict affected states to meet the demands of citizens. Superimposing state building templates without interrogating the very nature of the state in relation to the society from which it emerges only delays the inevitable – a return to conflict. For many African states that were not the result of the expression of the will of their peoples, it is arguable that without a return to the

conversations that led to armed conflict, a generic state building approach is unlikely to succeed (Olonisakin and Muteru 2014).

In the sections that follow, this chapter provides a rationale for a process-based approach to leadership in these transitional societies and examines what opportunities exist to revisit state building conversations in certain post-conflict contexts. The extent to which negotiated settlements leave room for a return to the state making issues that led to war is worth investigating. The door might be slammed shut in conflict situations that end in victory for one party and defeat for other(s) since the basis for negotiation or mediation is removed by the inevitability of victory. Arguably, negotiated settlements have the potential to transform the targeted post-colonial state into one that shapes the collective destinies of leaders and peoples.

Why the approach to leadership matters in war-to-peace transitions

War-to-peace transitions are invariably a product of the peace settlements that precede them. Their success is dependent on approaches to the prevailing structural conditions under which armed conflict occurred in the first instance. While the model of transitions is not the central focus of the discussion here, the extent to which these two factors are taken into account is an important issue under investigation. Situations in which wars have ended in outright victory are becoming less the norm. Even so, in such contexts such as Ethiopia (from 1991) and Rwanda (from 1994), much is left to the victors' will and vision of a post-conflict society. Overwhelming attention is focused on conflicts that end through negotiated settlements and the templates of war to peace transitions in this context. Understandably, negotiated settlements offer opportunities to revisit the root causes of conflict; and to transform the context for sustainable peace. However, a discussion of root causes and of the opportunities for transformation invariably draws attention to the gaps in current approaches to conflict in Africa.

The trends in Africa's war-to-peace transitions suggest that there is limited success not least because they are products of "imported peace" agendas and "elite peace" arrangements. In conflicts that have been amenable to negotiated settlements in Africa (as in other places) war-to-peace transitions share a common narrative. Interventions and the transitions that follow are modelled on the logic of liberal peacebuilding referred to at the beginning of this chapter. It is assumed that building strong democratic states and institutions will secure lasting peace. As such, much peacebuilding policy and practice have focused overwhelmingly on the weakness of democratic institutions in African states. There is no corresponding interrogation and facilitation of an organic process through which strong institutions might be built. This is in part the challenge to which critics of liberal peacebuilding refer. The question of whether the whole of society is involved in a conversation about the terms on which people will live together is often missing. More importantly, discussions about whether, and how people and their leaders share a sense of mutual purpose and pursue a common national vision, is often missing from key discourses on peacebuilding in Africa.

The institution-building agenda is in itself not faulty. The idea that strong and effective institutions will regulate political and administrative behaviour is well

founded. By implication, any conversation about leadership is contained within the process of institution building in transitional societies. When leadership is narrowly construed – focusing largely on individuals in positions of authority – it is reasonable to expect the performance of these individuals to be regulated by institutional practice. However, in the African conflict-affected contexts under focus, where strong and effective democratic institutions are in large part non-existent, the process of bringing such institutions into being becomes a central issue at the core of the transition. Strong institutions arguably promote effective leadership. Where there are no strong institutions, effective leadership becomes a prerequisite for building effective institutions. The context that frames that leadership and how effectiveness is derived is another matter, altogether.

There are therefore, two central issues, which, arguably, ought to be at the core of the state building agenda but which are often missing – leadership building and attention to the structural roots of conflict. Leadership building here refers to the sustaining of interaction between leaders and a broad cross-section of the population in seeking solutions to their *common* situation. Invariably, inordinate attention is devoted to building particular types of institutions that are superimposed without priority attention to the pillars upon which those institutions must rest. These are the conditions that underline the conflict as well as the leadership dynamics in the target societies. Leadership thus serves as an important entry point for building the core values and systems that will produce and sustain institutions in Africa's post-conflict society. In the absence of strong institutions, governance processes in African societies become more reliant on the content and quality of leaders and leadership than is the case in other places where governance institutions have been reproduced consistently over many generations (Rotberg 2007:17).

Classical peacebuilding discourse and its associated policy and practice rarely tackle leadership outside of the institution-building approach. To be certain, peacebuilding approaches deal with leadership related issues albeit it narrowly. However, the absence of a deliberate and systematic focus on leadership in the agenda-setting phase of transitions underscores the primacy accorded institution building. It is taken for granted that institutions will invariably shape the leadership dynamics in the post-conflict environment. Indeed, leadership tends to come into focus well into the transition through lower level programmatic interventions such as those undertaken, for example, by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The focus is typically on capacity development for individual or aspiring leaders. The treatment of leadership from this individual perspective is limiting for any post-conflict transition agenda. The assumption that individual leaders can be regulated within an institutional framework misses the point of war-to-peace transition. It is about those leaders as well as their entire society's vision of peace. As such, thinking about leadership must look beyond persons who occupy formal positions of authority. Rather it should take as a starting point the situations that confront society at a given moment, for which other leaders might emerge with effective response.

How must we understand and employ the notion of leadership in war-to-peace transitions?

Introducing leadership to a discussion of peace and conflict is fraught with several challenges not least because of its complexity. This complexity stems from a range of

inter-related factors. First, there is no universally agreed definition; leadership means different things to different people across a variety of contexts. Second, it is a subject on which expertise is easily assumed by almost anyone. Everyday world is filled with practical interpretations and demonstrations of leadership. Third, popular literature on leadership is just as abundant and more readily accessible than scientific literature on leadership. As such, narrowly focused, popular ideas of leadership tend to be more influential in everyday usage and practice even among professional communities. Peacebuilding policy and practice is not exempt from this. Popular constructs of leadership focus almost exclusively on individuals at the top of vertical hierarchies. Much emphasis is also placed on personality of leaders regardless of the situation at hand. When this popular framing is applied to the range of challenges discussed in this chapter, this perspective is faulty at best.

If leadership is to make a positive difference in war-to-peace transitions, the perspective from which the notion is applied is of particular importance. Notwithstanding the absence of a universally accepted definition, there is consensus in leadership literature on the core perspectives and components of leadership (Grint 2010; Northouse 2010; Pierce and Newstrom 2010). Grint, for example, unveils the four alternative definitions of leadership, which help capture the complexity of leadership while focusing the mind on four perspectives from which to view leadership (Grint 2010: 4): leadership as *position* – where leaders operate; leadership as *person* – who leaders are; leadership as *result* – what leaders achieve; and leadership as *process* – how leaders get things done.

As indicated earlier, popular approaches focus on the first two perspectives of leadership – as position and as person. Thus, judgement about what constitutes leadership is very much leader centric. They are about the individuals who occupy positions of authority. And very often, societal expectations of peace, health, prosperity and stability are placed squarely on the shoulders of these individuals. Such an approach absolves all other members of society of responsibility for their collective goals. Invariably, the leaders upon whom such expectations are placed are doomed to failure. The challenges of peacetime societies cannot be addressed through the wisdom of a few individuals at the top of societal echelon, let alone the critical problems of post-conflict societies. To be sure, the *person* and *position* perspectives have a place. They are valuable entry points in organised structures focused on single inter-related issues such as business or indeed military and security organisations. They also have a place in the process of leadership discussed below. But these perspectives not do well as the first layer of response to wider societal crisis where, as aptly captured by Grint (2010) and Heifetz and Linsky (2002), the problems are not just *complex* ones for which technical solutions will suffice, but *wicked* problems, which require responses outside of the ordinary and the technical.

The challenges of war-affected societies often fall within the realm of *wicked* problems. Serious questions surround the dominant approaches to building peace and stability in these societies, which require measures beyond the traditional mechanisms. The absence of stable peace as evidenced by the recurrence of violent conflict in the same places where heavy peacebuilding investments were previously made suggests the need for new approaches and perspectives. These situations call for a shift in approaches to leadership – from simplistic adaptation of popular notions – to careful attention to organic leadership processes emanating from those contexts

(Olonisakin 2014). Approaching leadership as *position* or as *person*, for example, does not harness such organic processes in the absence of which huge expectations are placed on the representatives of peacemaking organisations present in those contexts. Could one reasonably expect, for example, that a Force Commander at the helm of the military component of a peace operation, or a Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General who leads UN's presence in a target country, no matter how charismatic they are, can single handedly deliver peace and stability? The positions they occupy or their personal qualities cannot achieve the transformation required for sustainable peace.

Results-based leadership also offers an attraction in conflict-affected settings. The benchmarks set for post-conflict societies are eminently sensible because they help map progress along the path to the desired peace. In Sierra Leone, for example, such benchmarks were an important part of the transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding in the peace consolidation phase (Olonisakin 2008). Such results might include, for example, constitution drafting, elections, withdrawal of peacekeeping troops, emergence of a new national army, and functioning justice mechanisms and judicial institutions among many others. However, achieving these results may not lead to sustainable peace if the process through which they were realised is inherently faulty. Conflict relapse is a more likely scenario if the results achieved do not reflect the mutual needs and interests of the protagonists and the rest of society.

Thus, it is arguable that approaching leadership as *process* is more helpful than the other perspectives, in terms of addressing the unending questions about the persistence of conflict; the failure to address deep-seated roots of armed conflict; and failure to transform the issues involved in conflict so that peace can be sustained for development (Olonisakin 2015). The traits of the individual leader do not serve to address this question. The leader's *position* within an organization or country does not go far enough to explain the gaps. It now remains to be seen, what key elements and factors underpin process-based leadership, particularly in transitional contexts.

What does process based leadership entail in the context of war-to-peace transition?

Four inter-related factors underline process-based leadership. The first is *mutuality* – the idea that the situation at hand is mutually experienced – between leaders and the populations that they claim to represent. In such circumstances, there is a collective feeling that *we are all in this together*. The experience of conflict, the feeling of relative loss and human suffering, as well as the vision of a future without untold violence is shared. This mutuality is what produces a context in which leaders and followers (i.e. the larger conflict-affected population) respond to their mutual situation. In this regard, leadership focuses on common goals and both leaders and followers pursue the "common good" (Rost 1991).

The second is the interactive nature of process-based leadership. It is distinctive from person-based and position-based leadership in several ways. It is not a trait that is integral to the leader. It is not a linear one-way activity but an interactive one. Rather, it is "a transactional event, that occurs between leaders and followers… it is not restricted to the formally designated leader in the group" (Northouse 2010). In a

process-based approach, leadership is to be found in the very interaction between leaders and followers in their mutual situation. In this regard, leadership is available to everyone and not just people in positions of authority.

A third feature of process-based leadership is *influence*. According to Northouse (2010), "influence is the *sine qua non* of leadership". Without influence, there is no leader. An individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northhouse 2010). Perhaps more significantly, influence is a two-way process. An exchange of influence occurs between leaders and the led. When the person in the role of leader fulfills the collective goals and expectations, followers reciprocate this in the form of esteem, status and heightened influence (Pierce and Newstrom 2010). As leaders offer ideas for the pursuit of common goals, followers in turn make demands on the leader. Leaders' ability to respond to followers' demands sustains this social exchange as well as the leaders' legitimacy (Fiedler 1996).

Fourth and last, reinforcing the three factors above, context matters in leadership. Given their rapidly changing nature, conflict and post-conflict contexts draw attention to the dynamism of leadership. Effectiveness of interventions in these contexts requires process-based leadership. The entry point for the exercise of leadership is the "situation" confronting a given population and not individuals in positions of authority. Pierce and Newstrom aptly articulate Albert Murphy's original thinking in his 1941 seminal piece:

> … situations in which people find themselves create needs, and it is the nature of these demands that serves to define the type of leadership needed and thus who will lead … Murphy views leadership as a function of the interaction between the person and the situation, where the situation consists of the follower(s) and the context confronting them. (Pierce and Newstrom 2008: 4)

All of this reinforces the interactive nature of the leadership process. It illustrates this interaction in the pathway between leader emergence and succession. The leadership process determines who the leader is based on who a group or population deems best suited to accomplish their common goals in a specific situation. (Pierce and Newstrom 2008: 4). It also determines the future needs of the group and who becomes the next leader of the group. According to Murphy, situations make leaders; leaders rise and fall as situations change (Murphy 1941).

What implications does this approach to leadership therefore have for dealing with contexts of war-to-peace transitions? Process-based leadership requires that war-affected populations hold a common vision of a post-conflict future with emergent leaders. More often than not, emergent leaders in that context are former war-leaders and protagonists. Thus the extent to which the terms of peace settlements and subsequent transitions reflect this mutuality determines whether stable peace can be realised. Mutuality in this regard implies an interactive process between leaders and people in responding to their collective situation. As such, an exchange of influence would occur between these leaders and the wider society and not just a narrow constituency of actors. Wider society in this regard refers to a broad cross-section of the population, extending beyond power elite and their networks.

What can we learn from leadership dynamics in situations of war-to-peace transitions in Africa?

In seeking to understand the approach to leadership in a number of transitional contexts, several questions are worth considering. The first concerns the vision that shaped the post-conflict future. A cursory look at some conflict contexts in Africa where wars ended through negotiated settlements reveals several trends. First, in the conflict situations in Sierra Leone, Liberia (which spanned several phases across a 14-year period), Cote d'Ivoire and Sudan, the interventions, settlements and initial post-conflict transitions were initiated and managed largely by external actors. The external conveners changed in some cases but were typically, regional organisations (ECOWAS, African Union) and the United Nations. External interveners along with the protagonists designed the blueprint for the future on behalf of the post-conflict society, with varying degrees of participation by the larger war-affected population. Rarely is the vision of the post-conflict future shaped by the society along with their local leaders – in essence the war elite. Indeed, overwhelming focus is often placed on these prominent individuals, many of who were warlords and bearers of arms.

A second question, which arises from the first, is where and how the exchange of influence is occurring in these contexts. Typically, leadership is framed between external interveners and local elite. Influence is essentially exchanged between the local elite and the international elite – mostly representatives of inter-governmental institutions mandated to manage the crisis. A pattern is also observable, in which influence is exchanged between other international actors (including, for example, international civil society organisations) and segments of the population, typically, local civil society elite. Indeed, mutuality is rarely held between local elite and a broad cross-section of the local population. The exchange of influence is often narrowly focused on a small group in the population.

Third, on what therefore is the success of the transition hinged in such situations? To be sure, all of these situations enjoyed periods of success in response to the interventions albeit that this was short lived in all instances. Sierra Leone is one of the few exceptions. It has successfully experienced a change of government and crossed Licklidier (1995) and others' ten-year conflict relapse barrier. South Sudan is dealing with its first relapse (as a new State) while others are still in various stages of post-conflict transition. The initial stages of post-conflict transitions in contexts of negotiated settlements necessarily rely on the goodwill of external actors and to varying degrees this generates a measure of stability initially. In many cases, intervening organisations and their representatives fill the leadership gap in war-affected societies with positive and negative outcomes. In the prevailing situation of instability and untold human suffering which precedes transitions, intervening actors often possess the power to meet the immediate needs of the local population. The basis of their power lies in the capacity, for example, of peace forces to stop mass violence, of humanitarian agencies to provide much needed aid; and of international NGOs to provide basis services. Thus, there is a direct exchange of influence between local conflict-affected populations and external interveners.

This situation changes rapidly. The temporary stability provided by external actors shifts the attention of war-affected populations toward the protagonists upon whom expectation is placed for the creation of conditions for stability such as disarmament

and reconciliation. There is also expectation that the external interveners – the peacemakers – will facilitate such an end state. In this situation, the credibility of peacemakers is crucial to the successful delivery of a plan for sustainable peace. They occupy the leadership space in the absence of a mutually held vision of the future between the protagonists and the wider society. However, the end result of many peace processes is that this role is often not smoothly relinquished. In convening society toward a peace settlement, which among other things would provide a vision of the future, much attention is invariably accorded warring parties to the exclusion of the majority of the war-affected population. The resulting peace plan is often framed around the expectations of the feuding leaders. Ultimately, influence is exchanged not between these leaders and the population, but between the external actors and the new warring elite. Not surprisingly external actors typically fill the leadership vacuum by exchanging influence consistently with warring leaders but only scantily with the population.

A moment of opportunity is thus missed to transform the context in favour of the collective expectations of that society. By the time external actors and their various agents vacate the space, the leaders and the institutions they preside over are separated from much of society. In the absence of mutually held vision between population and the ruling elite, alternative leadership processes are easily framed outside of the leaders of the state and their international allies. As such, there are often alternative centres of power over which the state has no control. This is the inevitable outcome of a peace effort that does not secure the collective interest and common vision of people and leaders. To be certain, all peace plans have elements that address aspects of the needs and expectations of the population. The issue is the extent to which they deal with deep-seated concerns of the society through a collective process in a way that prevents a recurrence of armed conflict.

Fourth and last, in what ways can the leadership dynamics in these contexts be transformed to increase the chances for stable peace? What is typically missing from the transition planning? There is rarely a discussion of history and the fractured state making process that led to war. As a result, there is no collective conversation about root causes and how to address these in future structures of governance. Therefore the super-imposition of liberal democratic institutions provides no more than a shaky foundation. Interveners miss an opportunity to sustain a process of state making that addresses historical concerns at the root of broken nationhood, which led to war. A return to the state building conversations of the past is therefore one missing element of war-to-peace transitions. It is this issue that forms the focus of the last section of this chapter.

Revisiting the post-colonial state in Africa

The nature of the post-colonial state in Africa remains a lingering issue, which comes to the fore with situations of persistent armed conflict. These situations raise questions about the capacity of the state to mediate the differences in society and to manage competing interests and needs before they become the basis for larger violence. Many African countries have plodded along with their inherited colonial institutions, adapting to changing circumstances and societal demands over time. Others have not been so successful as their states and societies have been caught in cycles of violent

conflict relapse. Many African states were birthed into a Cold War environment, which to a large extent prevented them from confronting major early tests of their viability. With the protective umbrella of East-West rivalry, and despite claims of non-alignment, many African states enjoyed the protection of a great power ally. The end of the Cold War removed this protective veil. In the absence of superpower protection, the hollow nature of many African states was laid bare. The armed conflicts that erupted in the aftermath of the Cold War in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Democratic Republic of the Congo are cases in point.

Four decades after Peter Ekeh's path breaking work on *colonialism and the two publics* his central thesis remains relevant to the present challenge confronting African states, particularly those affected by armed conflict (Ekeh 1975). Ekeh analysed "two public realms in post-colonial Africa with different types of moral linkages to the private realm" (Ekeh 1975: 92). He argued that one of these public realms, which he described as the *primordial public*, is driven by the same moral compulsions as the private realm. However, the other, the *civic public,* with all its connections to colonial systems of administration, "is amoral and lacks the generalised moral imperatives operative in the private realm and in the primordial public" (Ekeh 1975: 92). Without adaptation to the social context in which they were to operate, colonially inherited institutions – including civil service, police and armed forces among others – presided over by Africa's new governing elite, were super imposed on African societies. In the absence of sustained conversations between the new African elite and the peoples about the terms on which they would live together, African states and societies have trudged along, adjusting to the realities of their existence. However, today, as in forty years ago, too many state institutions in Africa remain distant from large portions of the population.

Many civil conflicts in Africa are in part a result of fractured state making although the immediate triggers of conflict do not always lay bare their structural causes. Notwithstanding the negative consequences of armed conflict, they provide an opportunity to revisit the state making issues, which led to war in the first instance. However, the externally produced state building formula intended to build lasting peace in many conflict situations is too generic and unimaginative. Failure to consider state building within the organic processes in each conflict context invariably leads to a relapse. It does not hold the promise of building a common national vision between leaders and war-affected populations. Indeed, in many cases, the inability of the state to obtain the loyalty of the vast majority of its citizens accounts for much relapsing conflict in Africa.

Ekeh's argument about the colonially inherited civic public's disconnection from the private realm and larger society remains valid today even if that relationship has mutated significantly. The distance of that civic public today is in large part a function of the disconnection of the ruling elite from vast numbers of the populations that they serve. For too long, governing elite exercised leadership based on the positions they occupy at the top of vertical hierarchies, treating select state institutions as though they were their personal properties (Luckham 1998). Many African states thus remain hollow in the absence of deep connection to their affiliate societies. The investment made during war-to-peace transitions in the building of democratic states often does not yield expected dividend. In many cases, the structures of the liberal state do not typically extend beyond capital cities (Richmond 2009b). As such, the façade of a

state is easily maintained through membership of inter-governmental structures and multilateral institutions. But in reality, in many cases, the populations, which ought to be the best expression of a state's legitimate presence, are far removed from the state and its institutions.

Lessons from two war-to-peace transitions in Africa

Recent situations of conflict relapse as well as war-to-peace transitions that remain on course illustrate the challenge of the postcolonial state even if in differing ways. They also lay bare the leadership challenges discussed earlier. Two questions are explored in relation to these transitions. First, to what extent do war-to-peace transitions address the willingness and ability of leaders to build institutions that are underpinned by a shared national vision between them and the populations they claim to represent? Second and related, to what extent are leadership perspectives altered from those of person and position, which tend to dominate settlement conversations? In recent situations of conflict relapse in Central African Republic, South Sudan and more recently Burundi, for example, it has been difficult to establish a sense of shared destiny between the governing elite at the helm of the state and a broad cross-section of society. However, for the purposes of the discussion here, the contrasting experiences of Liberia and South Sudan are the immediate focus.

At first sight, Liberia and South Sudan present two contrasting situations but there are some similarities in their transition experiences. Liberia did not experience European style colonisation like other African States (Ethiopia being the only other exception in Africa). A Declaration of Independence in 1847 by its governing elite consisting of settlers – freed slaves from the North of the United States of America – propelled the state of Liberia into the world of nation-states. However, its state making process was fraught with a range of challenges not least generations of socio-economic and political exclusion of indigenous Liberians under successive settler dominated regimes (Sawyer 1992). Liberia slid into armed conflict in December 1989 leading to the collapse of the central government. There was intermission in the war from 1997 to 1999 when one of many peace agreements overseen by ECOWAS – the Abuja II Agreement of 1996 – eventually produced a short and tenuous transition and a subsequent election that propelled Charles Taylor to power in a landslide victory in 1997. Taylor's continuation of the cycle of conflict through repression of opposition and exclusionary practices reignited the war in 1999. Two new armed groups – Liberians United for Reconstruction and Development (LURD) and Model for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) – waged war against Taylor' government. A Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in 2003 began a period of transition in Liberia from which several lessons can be drawn as discussed below.

South Sudan's trajectory is different from Liberia's notwithstanding some commonalities in their transitions. South Sudan became a brand new state after separating from Sudan in 2011 following decades of civil war. But it descended into armed conflict in December 2013. The failure to deal with fault lines in South Sudan is one of the factors at the root of this crisis. There is no history of nationhood and no previous attempt prior to independence to forge a common destiny among the peoples of South Sudan. As such, the South was not a united entity. South Sudanese have fought many inter-tribal wars from their internal conflict apart from the conflict with

the North (Johnson 2003). Indeed, prior to independence the argument was made that little united South Sudanese outside their war with the North (Martin 2002; Young 2003). Nonetheless, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2005 was expected to begin a period of transition toward peace and reconciliation.

It is in the post-war transitions in both countries that we begin to see several similarities and to draw some common lessons. Both countries experienced transitions that were products of peace settlements. External actors with particular values and track records led the peace processes in both cases. Liberia was first a region-led process (by ECOWAS) during the first war between 1990 and 1997 (see Adebajo 2002; Vogt 1992; Olonisakin 2000) while the CPA of 2003 and the subsequent transition was UN-led. The negotiations leading to the CPA on South Sudan was led by a regional organisation, Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) albeit with participation of a number of key states (Norway, UK and US). The UN became actively engaged in the transition that followed including implementation of the CPA, the Referendum and post-separation state building.

The settlements – embodied in the CPAs – defined future priorities for the two war-affected societies. The post-conflict vision contained security and institution building as crucial elements. Since 2003, the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has provided safety and security as well as support for institution building, beginning with support for national elections in 2005. UNMIL remains in Liberia as at 2015, having supported a second election (in 2011) and a range of institution building processes including among others, justice, rule of law and security sector reform. While reconciliation and justice occupied attention of the transitional process in Liberia – in recognition of the long history of social exclusion and injustices that gave rise to the two wars – this was not a key consideration in Sudan. The 2005 CPA on South Sudan gave the people of South Sudan a choice to decide their own future after six years. Although the CPA prioritised the unity of Sudan, it provided the option for separation should South Sudanese so decide (Thomas 2015). From 2005 to 2011 power was shared between Khartoum and Juba. The UN Mission in Sudan was deployed to prevent resumption of hostilities and to oversee implementation of the CPA (UNSC 2005).

In both conflict situations, early elections were not an exit point for the international community as in several other post-Cold War interventions. Rather, early elections served as an important benchmark for claiming success for the peacemaking effort. This proved to be fatally flawed in South Sudan. In Liberia, it has been possible to continue to selectively deal with factors at the root of the conflict within the framework of the peace arranged by the international community. Age-old settler versus indigenous issues of exclusion were locked away although it has been more difficult to ignore the problems of inequality not least that posed by youth vulnerability and exclusion (Jaye 2007) in a post-war context. The outbreak of Ebola and resultant crisis further revealed the scale of inequality in Liberia. However, the post-conflict transition has continued without a threat of violent relapse. The transition to stable peace has been long but steady but might have been slowed down by the Ebola crisis. Ellen-Sirleaf Johnson's government continues to rely on the presence of UNMIL to maintain security and stability.

Elections in South Sudan in 2010 and referendum in 2011 did not lead to a stable transition but a lapse into armed conflict. Elections held in 2010 gave SPLM an overwhelming majority in the South Sudanese parliament. In the referendum held in 2011 the people of South Sudan voted overwhelmingly in favour of separation from Sudan. The Chair of Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), Salva Kiir, became the first President of the newly independent country and his deputy in the Party, Riek Machar, became Vice president. In order to ensure the security of the new state and to help it build peace, state institutions and capacity, the UN deployed the UN Mission in the Republic of South Sudan, UNMISS, with a hybrid mandate of peacekeeping and peacebuilding (UNSC 2011).

None of these efforts – CPA, elections, referendum and the UN's state building support – delivered stable peace for South Sudan. The armed conflict that began in December 2013 was triggered by a power struggle between the President and vice-President, which created a crisis within SPLM. It quickly escalated into violence and a society polarised along tribal lines (Zink 2014). In hindsight, it is possible to attribute this disastrous outcome to a combination of factors related to the transition plan. The lack of collective sense of nationhood was overlooked in the CPA. The CPA failed to envisage a plan for the post-referendum period in case of a YES vote for separation from the North. And in the period after independence, little attention was paid to building a national vision. There was no effective effort to integrate the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) with the militia that were loosely amalgamated to form a national army. In the absence of the integration of these disparate militia groups, soldiers remained loyal to their commanders. Furthermore, the SPLM was not effectively transformed into a political party. It remained in its liberation mode and continued to be tightly linked to its military wing, SPLA.

Issues of leadership were evident and indeed critical to stability but were not systematically treated in the peace agreements and the transitions in the two situations discussed here. The person and position perspectives to leadership were obvious in the considerations of peacemakers and subsequent peacebuilding arrangements. The settlements did not consciously frame an alternative approach to leadership. Both settlements were leader centric. They were about making peace between, if not pacifying warring elite. The first peace settlement in Liberia arranged by ECOWAS in 1996 was clearly an "elite peace". Fatigued and war weary ECOWAS peacemakers after seven years of war and twelve (mostly failed) peace agreements, succumbed to the whims of the dominant warlord, Charles Taylor. They seemed persuaded that permitting Taylor's rise to power would secure peace, albeit negative peace. Taylor campaigned in clear knowledge of this. Out of fear of a return to war Liberians elected Taylor as President of Liberia in 1997 (Olonisakin 2000). But war returned two years later.

In the transition that followed Liberia's last peace settlement in 2003, there was greater effort to broaden the participation with outreach to civil society but it was still very much an elite peace. Indeed the women's movement led by Leymah Gbowie and her colleagues, achieved its mark of distinction precisely because their protests compelled Liberia's feuding elite to shift attention from their narrow and selfish interests to larger issues of concern to wider society. It was for the courage of these women to bring their leaders to the peace table that Leymah Gbowie earned a Nobel Prize. In the ensuing transition in Liberia, it was the key elite including, for example,

the leaders of LURD and MODEL that held key posts in the transitional government with a sprinkling of former civil society leaders overseeing key tasks. Prominent civil society leaders headed the Ministries of Gender and Youth, for example.

However, the overwhelming focus and support of the international community was on an individual leader, Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson, who presided over the transitional government and won the two elections that followed. Taylor's indictment by the International Criminal Court (ICC) and subsequent exile in Nigeria paved the way for a stable transition. Unlike the notorious Charles Taylor, Sirleaf-Johnson is well known to the international community and received much international support and goodwill from the start. Observers of Liberia have at times inferred that the relatively long duration of UNMIL is in part due to the Liberia's President's plea to the international community not to withdraw the Mission. Sirleaf-Johnson is no stranger to the United Nations system having previously served as UNDP Assistant Administrator with the rank of Assistant Secretary-General. Arguably, she is an ideal candidate to support the state building model in place for Liberia. Besides, this template seems well suited to the context of Liberia, which for more than one century sought to mirror US liberal democratic governance model. While the extent to which overwhelming reliance on one leader to secure lasting peace is questionable, it seems certain that Liberia will continue to search for stable peace within this framework. Its one hundred and forty-two year history of attempted state building prior to the civil war cannot be discounted.

South Sudan's settlement and transition was also about individual leaders but this had disastrous consequences for the society in a context in which a sense of nation or a semblance of national identity was virtually non-existent. In negotiating the CPA overwhelming attention was focused on the leaders of the SPLM who had waged decades of war with the North. Little or no attention was paid to the wider society in South Sudan and the terms on which they might live together as a nation notwithstanding the history of inter-tribal wars. The SPLM's late leader John Garang, was for a long time the face of South Sudan around whom peace negotiations were focused. Following his tragic death, his comrades Salva Kiir and Reik Machar became the focus of the negotiations. Neither the CPA nor the peacebuilding effort developed an agenda for steering South Sudan's leaders and the populations they would preside over toward a common national vision. Indeed, leaders of independent South Sudan as well as their supporters focused more on the conflict with the North and as such did not craft a common national vision through which to manage society's attention. Focusing on building state institutions in the absence of a common vision of the future invariably produced hollow institutions that served a narrow group.

The experience of South Sudan thus demonstrates how a narrow perspective to leadership not least in the absence of credible and viable institutions of governance can facilitate violent relapse. The question then arises, as to what else peace and transition planners could and should have done in order to shift their leadership perspective in responding to the situation in South Sudan. A conscious leadership approach would have meant reordering the transition to focus on facilitating a common vision of the future not just among the wartime elite but between them and a vast cross-section of South Sudanese. That would have required looking beyond the referendum, which was no doubt one element of building a common vision. But rather

than electing South Sudan's future leaders before the referendum, the latter should have been the starting point.

The fear that warring elite would return to armed conflict tends to drive peacemakers' focus on feuding elite to the detriment of other potentially viable paths to peace. In South Sudan, rather than early elections, which resulted in a placation of war leaders, a referendum could have been followed by other priority-setting debates between South Sudanese leaders and their wider society as part of the transition. Issues such as the constitution and related governance arrangements as well as a national development plan, for example, could have been the subjects of further referenda before elections were conducted to decide who would lead the new state. All of these might have further built a sense of a common purpose among South Sudanese. As such, if left to the latter stages of the transition, the focus of South Sudanese people when electing their future leaders, would have been on who was best placed to deliver agreed national priorities. But by framing the peace around war leaders from the start, it became difficult to shift the debate to include the wider society. The clout and leveraged exercised by influential outside is about the only instrument that could re-order peace processes along these lines.

While Liberia and South Sudan now sit at different places on the war-to-peace trajectory – Liberia seemingly on the cusp of transition to stability and South Sudan rotating in violent relapse – two threads connect their experiences. One is the overwhelming focus on building consensus among power elite rather than forging a sense of common destiny between these elite and the larger society. The absence of leadership building albeit in varying degrees defines the transitions in the two countries. The other, which is also far more evident in South Sudan, is that underlying issues that kept populations and their leaders divided remained unresolved in the transitions. The layers of inequalities persist in Liberia even if masked by a relatively stable transition. The conflict relapse in South Sudan might be a moment of opportunity to revisit the deep-seated factors at the root of conflict.

Conclusion

War-to-peace transitions are about leadership building and about building viable and effective institutions that reflect the desired future of the target societies. The challenge in Africa is that the leadership perspective adopted by those framing peace for war-affected societies bears little relevance to the realities of the context. Similarly, the formula for building viable institutions tends to ignore the history and peculiarities of the context. Thus, the recipe for conflict relapse is produced right from transition planning. Transition planning very often offers a picture of transition and the potential for stability. It reveals the nature of the settlement; the extent to which issues that led to war are revisited; the vision of the future constructed and the degree to which this construction of the future represents the collective will of society.

Process-based leadership and a common vision of a future are thus central to successful war-to-peace transitions. There is need for transformation in the way peace planners, frame leadership. Rather than focus on individual leaders as an entry point for building and sustaining peace, a process-based approach, which facilitates the

pursuit of a common destiny among leaders and their society offers a better chance for stable peace in countries with limited histories of nation building. Experience in transitions across Africa reveal a dearth of this approach to leadership; and an absence of a critical interrogation of the trajectory of African states in the process of producing a state building framework that is relevant to the context. The brief narratives of peacebuilding experiences of Liberia and South Sudan presented in this chapter make the point that contexts differ. Every war-affected society has its own state making and nation-building trajectory and will not respond in the same way to a generic template for building peace. The role of leadership building in these contexts is to help society forge a sense of common destiny and nationhood with members who seek to lead.

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