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SUMMARY OF “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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Militants and the Military in Sudan: From Dispute over the Economy to War

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In the chapter “*Crises of war-to-peace transition and civil war recurrences: A focus on Leadership Building and the postcolonial state in Africa*” ‘Funmi Olonisakin explores two key arguments that are interconnected. Olonisakin’s first argument is that a process-based approach to leadership is essential to building and sustaining peace in African conflicts. The second argument is that 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. The chapter argues that war-to-peace transitions are about leadership building and creating effective institutions that can successfully reflect the will of the target society. Furthermore, the history and deep rooted issues within the affected society need to be addressed as they are often overlooked in the process of institution building. The chapter conveys how process-based leadership and a shared vision of the future are key to any war-to-peace transition. Change is needed to the way the planners of peace frame leadership. As with the case of peacebuilding experience in South Sudan and Liberia, the chapter demonstrates how war-affected societies have unique state making and nation-building paths, the role of leadership building can help society build a common destiny and nationhood that seeks to lead.

Olonisakin asserts that numerous armed conflicts in Africa are a result of fragmented state building processes. In the section “*Why the approach to leadership matters in war-to-peace transitions*” Olonisakin affirms that war-to-peace transitions are a product of the peace settlements that precede them and their success is dependent on approaches to the prevailing structural conditions in which the armed conflict began. Further in this section, Olonisakin argues that two central issues make up the core of any state building agenda which are leadership building and attention to the structural roots of conflict. Finally, the section concludes with the assertion that classical peacebuilding discourse and its associated policy and practice seldom tackle leadership outside of the institution-building approach. Furthermore, Olonisakin argues that the absence of deliberate and systematic focus on leadership in the agenda-setting phase of transitions underscores the primacy accorded institution building.

In the following section “*How must we understand and employ the notion of leadership in war-to-peace transitions?*” Olonisakin identifies how the definition of leadership is not universally accepted, popular constructs of leadership focus exclusively on individuals at the top of vertical hierarchies. Olonisakin highlights Keith Grint’s four alternative definitions of leadership as position, leadership, result and process. Here, Olonisakin recognises that popular approaches to leadership focus on the first two

definitions, position and leadership, however it would be more helpful to shift focus on understanding leadership as process 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.

Within the section “*What does process based leadership entail in the context of war-to-peace transition?*” Olonisakin identifies four key factors that underscore process-based leadership, firstly, mutuality, the idea that the situation at hand is mutually experienced, secondly, the interactive nature of process-based leadership. The third factor is influence and the final factor is leadership which reinforces the other three factors. In the section “*What can we learn from leadership dynamics in situations of war-to-peace transitions in Africa?*” Olonisakin identifies four questions we must ask when understanding the approach to leadership in transitional contexts. The first question concerns what the vision that shaped the post-conflict future is. Olonisakin highlights how interventions, settlements and initial post-conflict transitions within conflict situations in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire and Sudan were initiated and managed by external actors. The external conveners changed in some instances but were largely ECOWAS, the African Union and the United Nations. These groups shaped the blueprint for the future on behalf of the post-conflict society. In this regard, rarely are the visions of the post-conflict future shaped by the affected society along with their local leaders. The second question concerns where and how the exchange of influence is occurring in these contexts. Typically, influence is exchanged between the local elite and the international elite. Mutuality is rarely held between the local elite and the broader local populace, therefore the exchange of influence is often narrowly focused on a small section of the population. The third question concerns what the success of the transition is dependent on in such situations. Here, Olonisakin identifies how South Sudan is dealing with its first relapse as a new State, while others are still in various stages of post-conflict transition. Olonisakin explains how the initial stages of post-conflict transitions in the context of negotiated settlements rely on the goodwill of external actors to varying degrees; this generates an initial period of stability in the region. Furthermore, intervening organisations fill the leadership gap in war-affected societies with both positive and negative outcomes. The basis of power for these international organisations is their ability to stop mass violence and the provision of humanitarian aid, for example. Moreover, Olonisakin argues that the credibility of peacemakers is crucial to successful delivery of a plan for sustainable peace.

Olonisakin puts forth that all peace plans have segments that benefit the needs and expectations of the local population, however, the issue is the extent to which they deal with the deep-rooted concerns of the society in a way that prevents a recurrence of armed conflict. The fourth question concerns what ways can the leadership dynamics in these contexts be transformed to increase the chances for stable peace. Olonisakin notes that the conversation rarely focuses on history and the poor state making process that led to war. In this regard, the interveners miss the chance to sustain a process of state making that addresses historical concerns at the foundations of broken nationhood which develop into war.

In the section "*Revisiting the post-colonial state in Africa*" Olonisakin notes that many African states have retained colonial institutions and adapted to changing circumstance and societal needs over time. Furthermore Olonisakin argues that many African states were birthed into a Cold War environment, when the end of the Cold War came, the vulnerabilities of African states were exposed, culminating in armed conflicts erupting in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example. Olonisakin highlights the relevance of Peter Ekeh's *colonialism and the two publics* in relation to the challenge confronting African states affected by armed conflict. Olonisakin affirms that Ekeh's argument of the colonially inherited civic public's disconnection from the private realm and broader society remains relevant today. Furthermore, Olonisakin argues that inter-governmental structures and multilateral institutions maintain a facade of a state, but for the most part, the populations that ought to be the best manifestation of a state's legitimate presence are distant from the state and its institutions.

In the section "*Lessons from two war-to-peace transitions in Africa*" Olonisakin identifies two questions which are explored in relation to war-to-peace transitions in Africa. The first question: 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? The second question: to what extent are leadership perspectives altered from those of person and position, which tend to dominate settlement conversations? Olonisakin argues that within the case of conflict relapse in Central African Republic, South Sudan and Burundi, it has been challenging to forge a sense of shared identity between the governing elite and the broader society. Olonisakin explains how South Sudan's early nationhood has been beset with armed conflict due partly to the failure to deal with

fault lines in South Sudan. Furthermore, there hadn't been an attempt prior to independence to build a common destiny among South Sudan's population. Olonisakin argues that these factors contributed to disunity within the South of Sudan. Olonisakin explains how South Sudan's transition was a product of peace settlements led by external actors. Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) spearheaded negotiations on South Sudan's CPA, with participating states such as Norway, the UK and US also playing significant roles. The United Nations then finalised the implementation of the CPA, Referendum and post-separation state building. However, Olonisakin argues that the history of injustices and social exclusion that gave rise to wars was not a key consideration in Sudan's transitional process. Moreover, Olonisakin highlights how South Sudan's 2010 elections led to a lapse into armed conflict - the CPA, elections, referendum and the UN's state building efforts did not deliver stable peace in South Sudan. The lack of a collective sense of nationhood was overlooked by the CPA, and the CPA failed to plan for the eventuality of a separate state following the referendum. Olonisakin also puts forth that issues of leadership were not treated in the peace agreements in South Sudan. South Sudan's settlement and transition was concerned with individual leaders but this was detrimental for the society. The CPA focused most of their attention on the SPLM leadership who had waged war with the North for decades. Very little attention was paid to the wider society in South Sudan. Olonisakin also argues that the experience of South Sudan conveys how weak leadership and the lack of credible institutions can lead to a violent relapse. Instead, a conscious leadership approach would have turned the focus on building a common vision of the future, not primarily focused on the wartime elite, but the broader society of South Sudan. Olonisakin puts forth the view that early elections in South Sudan were ill advised and placated war leaders. Furthermore, agenda setting debates between South Sudanese leadership and the wider society would have helped with the transition. The constitution, related governance arrangements and a national development plan could have been the subjects of future votes. Olonisakin demonstrates how Liberia and South Sudan are at different stages on the war-to-peace trajectory, Liberia seemingly closing in on a transition to stability and South Sudan moving towards violent relapse. Olonisakin compares how both countries have experienced issues borne from the transition organisers' narrow focus on the elite, overlooking the wider society. Lack of leadership building also disrupted both Liberia and South Sudan's transitions to varying degrees. But far more pertinent to South Sudan, the issues that kept its population divided remained unresolved in the transition

process and this is why deep-seated issues at the root of the conflict need to be addressed.



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