

12 Infrastructures for Peace

A New Layer of Peace and Security Governance?

Darynell Rodríguez Torres

One of the areas that has caught the attention of the peacebuilding community over the past decade is the notion of infrastructures for peace (I4P). Broadly speaking, ‘infrastructures for peace comprise all institutions, mechanisms, resources, and skills that create resilience, address root causes of conflict and support peaceful resolution of conflicts’ (GPPAC 2020).

There are two main approaches to the understanding and development of I4P. The first one stresses their loose and informal character, arguing they should be based on existing informal traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution. The second approach advocates a more formal and systematic development of institutional capacities to support conflict prevention: dialogue, mediation and peacebuilding efforts.

Both perspectives of I4P coincide in the need for ‘local ownership’ and inclusiveness, underscoring the importance of a bottom-up approach that favours the participation of multiple actors in the articulation and usage of such infrastructures. Whether they are built on existing traditional structures, on formal state institutions or on loose arrangements and networks, I4P implies the establishment of a layer of actors and mechanisms that should be taken into consideration for peace and security governance at the local, national, regional, and international levels.

One of the main limitations thus far has been how to elevate these emerging peace infrastructures above national boundaries and better link them to the broader network of regional and international peace and security arrangements. This chapter will argue that a formal and systematic development of I4P is not only more effective in responding to threats but can also contribute to the governance of a state by strengthening the links between the state and its citizens, promoting a collaborative approach to peace and security.

At the same time, the creation of such linkages can be reflected in the international peace and security architecture, improving the existing spaces of participation, consultation, political coordination, and collective action of multilateral institutions. I4P can then contribute to bringing the work of multilateral institutions closer to the people and their needs, making them feel more purposeful, relevant and valuable as actors, better equipped to address complex transnational peace and security challenges.

Informality vs. Institutionalisation. Which I4P Is Better Fit for the Purpose?

There is not one common definition for I4P. The first reference to the term was used by the peacebuilding researcher John Paul Lederach, who suggested that the nature of contemporary conflict required an approach that goes beyond traditional state diplomacy.

Lederach suggested the development of an infrastructure across all levels of society that empowers actors and resources from within that society and leverages the contribution of external actors (Lederach 1997).

The concept of I4P has been defined in various ways. Giessman (2016) describes it as a dynamic network of skills, capacities, resources, tools, and institutions that help to build constructive social and political relationships and enhance sustainable resilience of societies, protecting it against relapse into violence. Meanwhile, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines it as a network of interdependent systems, resources, values, and skills co-owned by government, civil society and community institutions that promote dialogue and consultation, prevent conflict and enable peaceful mediation when violence occurs in a society (UNDP 2013).

Other definitions emphasise the need for institutional development to support peace-building processes. Proponents of this view argue that there is a need to develop institutions specifically mandated to support different parties in the prevention and peaceful resolution of armed conflicts (Hopp-Nishanka 2013). In this sense, I4P is seen as cooperative, promoting problem-solving approaches to conflict within societies that are based on dialogue and non-violence but which also require institutional mechanisms appropriate to each country's culture to promote and manage this approach at the local, district and national levels (van Tongeren 2011).

To enhance their effectiveness, other scholars and peace practitioners stress the importance of a systemic approach to I4P. They argue that the effectiveness of I4P networks is highly reliant on the functional integration and organised interplay between its constitutive parts, each with related skills, capacities, resources, tools, and institutions. Some even make an analogy between peace infrastructures and the system-wide institutions created to support health care, education, and finance (Brand-Jacobsen 2013; Sharma and Suurmond 2013).

The main idea behind the more 'institutional' approach of I4P lies in the belief that networks and networking are necessary, but not sufficient, conditions for the development of peace infrastructures. To limit peace infrastructures to these informal arrangements and platforms would prevent the development of system-wide mechanisms that enable structured interaction among different actors and lead to better results, greater inclusiveness, transparency, accountability, and sustainability.

If I4P implies the need to develop certain frameworks supported by organisations, norms and procedures, the question that arises is what kind of institutional arrangements are required and for what purpose? In other words, what kind of underlying structures are needed to support peacebuilding efforts? To answer this question, we must first consider what we mean by peacebuilding.

The term 'peacebuilding' was first coined by the peace researcher Johan Galtung (1976) in his article 'Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peacemaking, and Peacebuilding'. In this article, Galtung argues that

the mechanisms that peace is based on should be built into the structure and be present as a reservoir for the system itself to draw up. ... More specifically, structures must be found that remove causes of wars and offer alternatives to war in situations where wars might occur.

Galtung seems to suggest the need to embed specific mechanisms that support peace into the fabric of a society, including its economic, social and political structures. Hence, the

development of such mechanisms should not be conceived of as part of a post-war reconstruction effort—to which the idea of peacebuilding is often associated—but rather be in place as part of a country's basic structures, ready to be activated when needed in order to prevent or manage societal conflicts.

For example, the establishment of a common security system between two or more countries can help to remove the potential for war between them. The development of economic interdependence between countries can also create incentives for peaceful cooperation instead of conflict. Additionally, Galtung suggests the creation of alternative dispute-resolution mechanisms, such as mediation and arbitration, which can help to prevent violent conflict and enable the peaceful resolution of disputes. By embedding such mechanisms into the structures of society, Galtung argues that they can serve as a foundation for peace and help prevent the outbreak of violent conflict.

John Paul Lederach also argues that the understanding of peacebuilding should go beyond post-conflict reconstruction. He conceives peacebuilding

as a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships. The term thus involves a wide range of activities that both precede and follow formal peace accords. Metaphorically, peace is seen not merely as a stage in time or a condition. It is a dynamic social construct.

(Lederach 1997)

This 'non-sequential' approach to peacebuilding is echoed by the UN Peacebuilding Support Office, UNPBSO, which refers to peacebuilding as 'the continuum of strategy, processes and activities aimed at sustaining peace over the long-term with a clear focus on reducing chances for the relapse into conflict'. This organisation also highlights that 'it is useful to see peacebuilding as a broader policy framework that strengthens the synergy among the related efforts of conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping, recovery and development, as part of a collective and sustained effort to build lasting peace'.

Other peacebuilding organisations have defined it as 'a long-term process of encouraging people to talk, repairing relationships, and reforming institutions' (Conciliation Resources) or 'dealing with the reasons why people fight in the first place and supporting societies to manage their differences and conflicts without resorting to violence' (International Alert).

At its core, peacebuilding refers to the process of rebuilding relationships of trust that have been broken in a conflict. This implies relationships that were damaged among people across a conflict divide, but also between people and state institutions. To do this, the creation of channels for dialogue, communication and participation at different levels is key to rebuilding such trust. Additionally, mechanisms such as early warning systems can help detect and respond to potential risks before they spiral out of control. These mechanisms can be built into the fabric of society, allowing them to serve as a foundation for peaceful conflict resolution and preventing violent conflict from arising in the first place.

If we accept this understanding of peacebuilding and agree that I4P should essentially be that framework needed to support such a process, then reliance on informal, non-institutionalised mechanisms seems insufficient. They can be useful to support trust-building among people but are clearly insufficient to support trust-building towards state institutions.

This last point suggests a close relationship between the concepts of peacebuilding, statebuilding and democratic governance. It can be argued that any infrastructure that supports peacebuilding would implicitly contribute to the development of well-functioning state institutions that are responsive to citizens, transparent and accountable. This would be in line with Galtung's point about embedding mechanisms that support peace within the fabric of a society, including its social, economic and political institutions.

Peace infrastructures range from official government-led efforts such as Peace Ministries or Peace Departments to informal arrangements of civil society organisations (CSOs). Successful infrastructures involve both government and non-governmental actors, each leveraging their capacities, resources and outreach to develop policies and mechanisms that respond to identified threats and prevent violence.

Actually, I4Ps have proven to be effective channels for enhancing democratic governance, strengthening state institutions, and fostering the participation of civil society in security policies, bringing a bottom-up perspective to security issues and articulating effective collaboration with security actors. In that regard, it can be argued that I4Ps can be useful instruments for operationalising the idea of human security, taking it from its conceptual form to effective practice.

I4Ps involve collaboration between actors, including government and civil society, but there is a risk of co-optation compromising their effectiveness. This requires strong governance structures promoting transparency, accountability, public consultation, oversight, and monitoring, as well as diverse and inclusive participation. Informal I4Ps may find this difficult to implement.

How I4P Can Strengthen State Institutions and Promote Partnership with Civil Society

Some critics claim that institutionalising I4P reinforces the link between peacebuilding and statebuilding, promoting a liberal statebuilding agenda that undermines traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and their 'bottom-up' approach (Verzat and Berghof Foundation 2014). However, experiences in countries such as Ghana and Kenya suggest that I4P can strengthen traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and even give them international projection.

The case of Ghana seems paradigmatic of how the formalisation and institutionalisation of I4P contribute to strengthening state institutions and, at the same time, create possibilities for effective collaboration between state and CSOs, ensuring a bottom-up approach to them. Due to ethnic conflicts in the north of the country from 1994 to 2002, the Northern Regional Peace Advocacy Council (NRPAC) was created by the regional government as a mediation mechanism. The Council was based on the peacebuilding practices of grass-roots CSOs (Odendaal 2010). The Council's success resulted in the creation by the national government of a National Peace Council, linked to ten regional peace councils, each of which was composed of diverse stakeholders and CSOs with peacebuilding expertise. The infrastructure was formalised through Act 818 in 2011. The infrastructure is considered one of the most successful and has helped consolidate the democratic system while reducing violence.

Ghana utilised its peace architecture development to reinforce its democracy, nation-building and institutional capacity to be self-regenerating (Ojielo 2007). As noted by Verzat and the Berghof Foundation (2014), this development has led to the establishment of a managerial administration, including peace councils, officers and support units, whose aim is peacebuilding at all levels of the society.

Critics of the institutionalisation of Ghana's peace infrastructure claim that the ultimate goal was not to promote dialogue or prevent armed conflict but rather to develop a liberal democratic architecture in the country (Verzat and Berghof Foundation 2014). However, others believe that this institutionalisation has been a key factor in its effectiveness. Emmanuel Bombande, a civil society leader involved in creating the infrastructure, argues that legal backing for the National Peace Council, as well as the regional and district peace councils, is crucial to giving them the necessary visibility and leverage that makes them able to function with all communities and state institutions (Bombande 2007, cited in Verzat and Berghof Foundation 2014).

While the approach to the development of Ghana's I4P might seem 'top down', in reality, it has used the state's legitimacy to empower the different actors that contribute to it, giving a central role to civil society. Without a prominent role for civil society, this infrastructure could not have been developed effectively, and without the official endorsement of Ghana's political institutions, civil society actors could not have been as effective in their conflict resolution efforts at the regional, national and even international levels.

Another area in which I4Ps have proven useful for strengthening the capacities of the state, particularly in conflict-affected countries, is security sector reform (SSR). The relationship between the community and security forces is a crucial factor in countries emerging from conflict, as the trust factor is often severely damaged. SSR programmes are integral to the peacebuilding process, encompassing the various functions of the military, the police, intelligence services, financial institutions, and the composition of security forces. Additionally, SSR programmes address civilian control, demining, small arms control, disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration.

According to Ghimire (2016), the literature on peacebuilding identifies two key areas in which SSR contributes: policies and institutions. At the policy level, SSR is expected to promote recovery processes towards democratic peace and work towards democratisation and the development of participatory state institutions. At the institutional level, SSR aims to establish new bodies or restructure existing ones based on such principles as transparency, clarity of roles, merit, and public participation. This not only creates well-designed and affordable security institutions but also supports the disarmament of paramilitary forces and the reintegration of militia members into civilian life (Ghimire 2016).

The social contract between states and citizens establishes that the state has the monopoly of force and provides security in return. I4Ps can contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of SSR programmes, which can help rebuild trust in those institutions. Ghimire's analysis highlights the potential of infrastructure for peace in supporting SSR programmes such as military and police reform, small arms control and disarmament, and demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) (Ghimire 2016).

In terms of defence reform, Ghimire argues for the adoption of a formal and constitutional form of I4P. The reasoning behind this is that state-backed infrastructures would be more effective in supporting defence force reform because of the need for confidentiality in strategic discussions. Formal institutions with a prominent role in civil society would ease concerns about opening up such discussions to non-military personnel and prevent the exclusion of CSO representatives even from non-strategic consultations. Such exclusion cannot be avoided in the case of informal infrastructures (Ghimire 2016).

With regards to police reform, there are various ways in which peace infrastructures can enhance it, such as community security, local mediation, alternative conflict dispute mechanisms, early response bodies, neighbourhood watch, among others. For instance,

these infrastructures were useful in Kenya during the episodes of electoral violence in 2008 and have helped prevent similar outbreaks since then. However, non-state platforms cannot use force or enforce laws. Nevertheless, they can help increase resilience and provide greater legitimacy and proximity to citizens (Ghimire 2016).

The case of Kenya is also a good example of small arms control. An infrastructure composed of civic groups, provincial administration and local police commands was created to respond to transnational smuggling of weapons. Similar infrastructures to respond to that problem have also been developed between Nepal and India and Nepal and China.

In the case of Kenya, the government, CSOs, and other stakeholders established the Kenya National Focal Point on Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons in 2003 to coordinate efforts to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the country. A comprehensive National Action Plan on Small Arms and Light Weapons Control was developed, including a range of measures such as strengthening border controls, campaigns to increase public awareness, programmes for weapon destruction, and enhancing the capacity of security agencies to respond to arms trafficking. As a result of these efforts, Kenya has seen a decrease in the number of small arms circulating within the country, and violent crime and armed conflict have declined in the region (Small Arms Survey 2019).

Similarly, in Nepal, a range of initiatives have been implemented to address small arms and light weapons proliferation. These include the establishment of community-based monitoring mechanisms, the implementation of public awareness campaigns and the development of a database to track the circulation of weapons. In addition, Nepal has worked with neighbouring countries, such as India and China, to prevent the smuggling of weapons across their borders. As a result of these efforts, there has been a decline in the incidence of armed violence in Nepal (Small Arms Survey 2018).

Overall, while the effectiveness of small arms control measures can be difficult to measure, the establishment of infrastructure and coordination mechanisms in Kenya and Nepal has shown some positive results in reducing the incidence of armed conflict and violence in those regions.

A regional approach has not only been useful for controlling arms smuggling. Regional I4Ps have also made important contributions to DDR. For example, the Organisation of American States (OAS) played a significant role in the demobilisation of Contra combatants in Nicaragua (Muggah 2006). Similarly, the OAS has been involved in the verification of peace agreements in Colombia and in brokering a truce between street gangs in Salvador (Muggah and Aguirre 2013).

All the aforementioned examples suggest that a formal infrastructure for peace is necessary to address key complex peacebuilding issues such as SSR. Transnational security challenges require coordinated regional responses that can be more effectively achieved through formal state institutions with delegated authority and structured channels for consultation and joint action with non-governmental actors (Ghimire 2016).

Elevating I4Ps to the Regional Level

The complexity of global security threats and the fact that the drivers and the effects of violence do not pertain to any one country but rather affect entire regions call for regional solutions. The development of regional architectures for peace has been based primarily on the establishment of regional intergovernmental organisations (RIGOs) and their mandate to address peace and security issues. The challenge here is not to make these

infrastructures formal and institutionalised but actually to make them more open to the participation of non-state actors, so they can also articulate a people-centred approach to their work.

The creation of many regional organisations can be traced back to the Cold War era, during which their structures were designed to tackle the security challenges of that time. For example, forums such as the OAS and the League of Arab States were established as spaces for political/ideological unity and cooperation, often linked to regional military alliances. In Africa and Asia, the process of decolonisation led to a new wave of regionalism, giving rise to organisations such as the Organisation of African Unity, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). These organisations were established in the mid-20th century, and each played a vital role in promoting regional stability and cooperation (Rodríguez Torres 2013).

The structures of these organisations and the mechanisms developed to contribute to regional peace and security are still largely based on an analysis of the risks and responses made from the perspective of the state. But I4Ps cannot only be based on informal networks and mechanisms, nor can they preclude the participation of non-state actors if they want to be effective.

The importance of incorporating perspectives beyond the state into these regional infrastructures is particularly relevant in the current context. Most of today's conflicts are not interstate but *intrastate*, and the majority of victims in these new wars are not combatants but civilians (Kaldor 2012). For example, in Latin America, the civil war in Colombia has resulted in over 260,000 deaths and has had a spillover effect on neighbouring countries such as Ecuador and Venezuela, as well as on the wider region (Ruprecht 2019). In Africa, the conflict in South Sudan has displaced over two million people and has led to a humanitarian crisis that affects not only South Sudan but also the neighbouring countries of Uganda and Sudan (UNHCR 2021a). The conflict in Syria has resulted in over 500,000 deaths and has led to a refugee crisis that has spread into neighbouring countries, destabilising the entire region (UNHCR 2021b). These examples illustrate how intrastate conflicts can have a spillover effect, affecting neighbouring states and becoming a factor for regional destabilisation and a risk to regional and sometimes even global security.

The establishment of peace infrastructures at the subregional and continental levels has become crucial in recognising that many conflicts have a regional character. The idea behind developing regional capacities for peacebuilding can be condensed into three key points: first, conflicts rarely remain limited to a single state; second, those located closer to the problem are often better placed to understand and influence the situation; and third, the proximity of regional actors to the conflict ensures a long-term, vested interest in the outcome (de Coning 2015).

Although regional organisations have comparative advantages, their mandates and capacities to address peace and security issues vary considerably. Wallensteen and Björner (2015) have identified at least 29 RIGOs with the potential capability of affecting issues of peace and war, but a comparison of these organisations reveals significant differences. While the European Union ranks high in terms of effectiveness, others such as SAARC, SADC or the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) are generally deemed ineffective. Organisations such as ASEAN or the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) fall somewhere in between, with their effectiveness varying depending on the historical period being analysed (Nathan 2010).

Despite the importance of regional approaches for addressing regional and sub-regional conflict systems, some member states of a RIGO can hinder its effectiveness or even take sides with one of the parties in the conflict. Greater cooperation between regional multilateral organisations and the United Nations can help balance some of these disadvantages since the United Nations often has more resources, experience and distance from the local situation, as well as a strong legal standing (Wallenstein 2015). However, this could also increase the risk of including other factors and interests that do not necessarily address the root causes of the problems. For example, issues such as the ‘global war on terror’ can distort local or regional conflict dynamics (de Coning 2015). Therefore, it is crucial to avoid a top-down approach that overrides the advantages of a regional one.

The international system is making the transition to a more inclusive model involving multiple actors beyond the state. While this is evident in many areas, security issues pose unique challenges due to their traditional control by the state. However, multilateral organisations are increasingly expected to adopt a human security approach, which incorporates the concerns of individuals and communities. Collaboration with CSOs can ensure that regional security policies are responsive to people’s needs and incorporate a bottom-up approach, mutually reinforcing both civil and national security (Rodríguez Torres 2016).

Once again, at the regional level, formalised collaborations seem to be more effective than informal ones. The West African regional peace architecture is an example of best practices, where economic interdependence led to the recognition of a regional approach to promote peace and security in the sub-region. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) recognised the need for a regional approach to promote peace and security due to the porosity of borders and the spillover effect of conflicts. This was a significant decision for an economic community that did not initially prioritise peace and security in its mandate and lacked the capacity to address these issues. Acknowledging these shortcomings, the organisation sought cooperation from CSOs and developed a partnership with the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP). WANEP established a subregional early warning mechanism in 2000, involving community groups and CSOs across the region in monitoring events for the prevention of armed conflicts (Bombande 2016: 121). The partnership with WANEP has been crucial to the success of ECOWAS in conflict prevention (Bombande 2016).

The initial focus of the WANEP-ECOWAS partnership was on early warning; however, now there is more emphasis on response-generation capabilities. Consequently, resources are now dedicated to building stronger response systems and creating national I4Ps. As a result, peacebuilding capacity is evolving from regional to national levels, promoting bottom-up approaches to conflict prevention in conjunction with state and regional levels (Bombande 2016).

The ‘virtuous cycle’ of a grass-roots-to-subregional-level approach has resulted in a regional peace infrastructure. ECOWAS and civil society are now working together to develop national peace infrastructures. West Africa’s success in this approach is unique and has institutionalised a multi-stakeholder approach to regional security, unlike any other experience.

At the continental level, the African Union has developed a strong institutional architecture to promote peace and security. This includes instruments such as the Commission, the Panel of the Wise, the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), the Peace Fund, and the African Standby Force (ASF), a multidisciplinary continental peacekeeping

force that operates under the direction of the African Union. However, engagement with CSOs and other non-state actors is discretionary and limited to CSOs which have close contact with the African Union or which tend to be well-trusted entities led by charismatic figures with political stature, or well-resourced INGOs (international non-governmental organisations) that have a significant footprint.

In the absence of effective formal mechanisms, CSOs have had to pursue innovative approaches to engaging the African Union. An excellent example of this is the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD). This organisation has invested in developing a long-standing relationship with the African Union and helps to organise the African Union's High-Level Retreats, which bring together officials from the African Union, RECs, Special Envoys, and civil society representatives to discuss emerging peace and security challenges. Additionally, it is building an African Peace Centre in Durban as a venue for dialogue and mediation for political leaders. Nevertheless, such engagements remain selective, discretionary and highly dependent on the charisma, influence and entry points of the directors of these organisations, many of whom have certain political stature that enabled this type of access.

Europe and the Pacific have other noteworthy experiences in engaging civil society for conflict prevention and peacebuilding, but they lack a formal regional peace architecture having a multi-stakeholder approach. The European Union partners with the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), a civil society platform, to run the Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN), a forum for dialogue between CSOs and European Union policymakers. The CSDN hosts events on policy issues of concern to the European Union, inviting CSOs to share their expertise on specific topics or geographic crises. Working with a network organisation like the EPLO has proven valuable in organising civil society input and participation, a key to the success of this mechanism.

Regarding the Pacific, the Secretariat of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) has in recent years developed a relatively advanced approach to engaging with CSOs focused on conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The organisation has been holding bi-annual civil society 'dialogues' for security discussions around the meetings of the Forum Regional Security Committee (FRSC) since 2009. Attendees include regional and national CSO representatives, political governance and security staff from PIF, representatives of member states, and other development partners.

The dialogues serve primarily as a platform for sharing information. CSOs are able to submit reports and lobby the Secretariat through the dialogues, which ostensibly provide them with a way to participate in higher-level decision-making processes. For civil society, the dialogues provide an opportunity to engage with government officials at a time when doing so may be difficult in some countries. Although some CSOs have struggled to engage directly with national-level government officials, their participation in this regional platform facilitates interaction and raises their profile. From the perspective of the Secretariat, the dialogues have been useful for information sharing. However, PIFS bureaucrats note that the dialogues are still a work in progress and that, while they are useful, this mechanism is still a long way from becoming a formalised institutional arrangement in the region's peace architecture.

The objective of establishing regional I4P seems to be more challenging in other regions. Despite being criticised for its ineffectiveness, the Arab League unexpectedly became an influential platform since the Arab uprisings in 2010. The league played a crucial role in diplomatic actions in various regions by offering legitimacy to the Western intervention that resulted in the removal of Mu'ammar al-Qaddafi, supporting the Gulf

Cooperation Council's effective efforts to compel Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh to step down, and actively participating in attempts to resolve the Syrian conflict (Maddy-Weitzman 2012). While some member states remain distrustful of civil society, there are individuals within the Secretariats of the League of Arab States (LAS) who support institutional reform. The potential for the Arab League to play a broader role in democratising the region by engaging in election monitoring, responding to humanitarian crises and reforming its human rights protection system has been hotly debated by analysts.

Various initiatives have been proposed during European Union-LAS conferences, such as launching region-wide campaigns to raise awareness about the role of civil society, holding workshops on specific policy issues for CSOs and LAS civil servants and developing mechanisms for CSOs in various fields to present reports to relevant ministerial councils (European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) 2013). However, these ideas have yet to be put into action, and it is uncertain whether the LAS will be able to establish an effective regional peace infrastructure.

In Southeast Asia, ASEAN has taken steps to engage more closely with civil society and create a participatory 'ASEAN Community'. In 2005, the Malaysian government organised the first ASEAN Civil Society Conference (ACSC) alongside the ASEAN Summit, creating opportunities for CSOs to interact with heads of state. In 2008, ASEAN adopted the ASEAN Charter, which emphasises the importance of civil society engagement. In 2009, ASEAN also established its Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR).

Despite these recent developments, the regional infrastructure for peace in Southeast Asia is still in its early stages. The ASEAN Secretariat lacks formal mechanisms for engagement or clear procedures for accrediting CSOs. The ACSC and corresponding ASEAN People's Forums are highly informal and depend on the space that the hosting chair may (or may not) wish to give them during the ASEAN Summit or while holding the rotational chair. While regional networks have emerged, such as the prominent CSO Solidarity for Asia Peoples' Advocacies (SAPA), coordination among CSOs can be poor (Rodríguez Torres 2016).

While ASEAN has limited conflict prevention mechanisms, over the last years, it has still managed to develop some, demonstrating its potential for peacebuilding. For example, in 2011 the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR) was established, primarily for research and policy work, with a potential role in facilitating peace negotiations. Also, the Asian Peace and Reconciliation Council (APRC) promotes quiet diplomacy in the region, drawing on a high-level pool of dignitaries for conflict prevention.

In Latin America, opportunities for developing a regional peace infrastructure with the participation of state and non-state actors are limited. Despite past successes in countries like El Salvador, Nicaragua and Colombia, regional multilateralism is being undermined and discredited by the growing political polarisation.

Political divisions within governments of different countries in Latin America have hindered the ability of regional organisations, such as the OAS, to take effective action for conflict prevention and peacebuilding. For example, the OAS's attempt to apply its democratic charter to defend democracy in Venezuela has been unsuccessful due to the majority rule-based political divisions. In addition, the emergence of new regional forums such as the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) have weakened the position of the OAS. This has led to a dysfunctional regional multilateralism characterised by 'forum shopping' where deliberations of

one organisation are often discredited and taken to one of the other organisations whenever a particular government of a state feels it will be more favourable to its interests.

Furthermore, Latin American RIGOs tend to be state-centric and lack financial and human resources, showing a preference for presidential summits. This makes it difficult to establish formal cooperation agreements and to develop effective capacities to install a regional infrastructure for peace that is credible and accepted by the highly ideologised political regimes of many of the countries in the region (Legler 2010; Serbín 2012).

Conclusion

In many conflict-ridden societies, the development of I4Ps has contributed to bringing together different—and differing—actors to explore collaborative approaches for addressing peace and security challenges. Not only have these infrastructures helped to create greater resilience and provide alternative avenues for collective prevention, management and resolution of violent conflict at the community level, but some of them have also evolved into effective mechanisms at the national level, becoming important spaces in the promotion of the democratic and inclusive governance of always delicate security issues.

Moreover, in contexts of state fragility, I4Ps have proven to be effective in strengthening the legitimacy of the state, reinforcing state institutions and contributing to the re-establishment of the social contract, rebuilding relationships of trust among people and state institutions. This has been done by engaging community leaders of different sectors and providing them with multi-stakeholder platforms that facilitate joint analysis and collective action at different levels when required. These mechanisms give a protagonist role to citizen organisations that no longer act simply as passive ‘receivers’ of government policies, but as active agents, and even key partners, in the development and implementation of such policies.

In that sense, the bottom-up approach of I4Ps remains a key element of their success and makes these structures useful spaces for dialogue, interaction with government officials and citizen advocacy on matters related to peace and security. Hence, the development of I4P can be a useful mechanism to effectively articulate human security principles and strategies in communities and countries affected by violent conflict.

The experience of different countries shows that these infrastructures are more effective when there is a certain degree of formalisation. The case of Ghana is a good example of an I4P based on a legal mandate that gives its participating organisations greater leverage, credibility and visibility in the communities where they are active. While it could seem that such official backing could go against the bottom-up principle of I4P, it strengthens this component and reflects the increasing relevance of the partnership between state bodies and private citizens’ organisations.

These public-private partnerships are of vital importance for the success of I4P. It is the participation of private citizens and CSOs that gives these mechanisms greater influence and outreach, beyond that which governments acting by themselves could provide. At the same time, it is the official character and the legal backing of these forums that provide spaces for participation in which CSOs feel they can be more effective and influential.

Another aspect of valuable complementarity takes place when I4Ps are elevated internationally to the regional level. There is huge potential for RIGOs to become the ‘hub’ of such regional infrastructures. Again, collaboration with CSOs is fundamental in these cases. If, as defined by UNDP, I4Ps are, in essence, networks of interdependent systems, resources, values, and skills co-owned by government, civil society and community

institutions to prevent conflict and enable peaceful mediation, there is a very important regional dimension to the different conflict systems that need to be acknowledged.

Multilateral organisations are networks of states that acknowledge a great degree of interdependence and seek to collectively manage common problems. Multilateral forums need to start transitioning from being closed systems of sovereign states, with little room for open debate and no space for the involvement of citizens, to becoming ‘agoras’, public spaces open to non-state actors, in which issues can be debated and even decided (Klabbers 2005).

The growing involvement of citizens as active agents of their own security is a most promising development but also one of the most difficult to organise. Engaging with established networks and platforms seems like an effective way to overcome this obstacle. The most successful I4Ps have established partnerships with network organisations at national and regional levels. Establishing a division of work with platforms of CSOs and allowing them to decide who are the best people and organisations to participate in a particular discussion could contribute to overcoming the difficult question of who to engage with, preventing common pitfalls that undermine inclusivity. It is not a perfect solution, but it can be helpful to provide ownership and simplify complexity.

The governance of peace and security must strive to incorporate the great variety of actors and interests in order to respond to increasingly complex challenges. The development of I4Ps can provide spaces for multi-actor collaboration, connecting different levels of action: grass roots, community, regional, national, regional international, and global, and putting human security at the centre of peace and security policies.

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