

## *Covid-19 Impact On Multidimensional Security In The Western Hemisphere*

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### **Abstract**

This article aims to analyze the COVID-19 pandemic impact on multidimensional security, a concept from the Declaration on Security of the Americas in 2003, which seeks to analyze the topic of security in a holistic and integral way. The multidimensional security concept seeks to comprehensively address issues involving traditional threats, transnational organized crime, asymmetric threats and social and environmental vulnerabilities (poverty and exclusion, natural and man-made disasters, HIV-AIDS and other diseases). Thus, the work analyzes the impacts of the pandemic in the Western Hemisphere related to social and environmental vulnerabilities (health problems), transnational organized crime (drugs and arms trafficking, corruption and money laundering), asymmetric threats (cybersecurity) and traditional threats (violations to the territory and sovereignty). Therefore, it was possible to observe that the American hemisphere suffered the effects of the pandemic more sharply, mainly due to social inequality and the absence of strong institutions.

### **Resumen**

*Este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar el impacto de la pandemia COVID-19 en la seguridad multidimensional, un concepto de la Declaración de Seguridad de las Américas en 2003, que busca analizar el tema de la seguridad de una manera holística e*

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*integral. El concepto de seguridad multidimensional busca abordar de manera integral los temas que involucran las amenazas tradicionales, el crimen organizado transnacional, las amenazas asimétricas y las vulnerabilidades sociales y ambientales (pobreza y exclusión, desastres naturales y provocados por el hombre, VIH-SIDA y otras enfermedades). Así, el trabajo analiza los impactos de la pandemia en el hemisferio occidental relacionados con las vulnerabilidades sociales y ambientales (problemas de salud), el crimen organizado transnacional (tráfico de drogas y armas, corrupción y lavado de dinero), las amenazas asimétricas (ciberseguridad) y las amenazas tradicionales (violaciones al territorio y a la soberanía). Por lo tanto, se pudo observar que el hemisferio americano sufrió con mayor intensidad los efectos de la pandemia, principalmente por la desigualdad social y la ausencia de instituciones fuertes.*

**Keywords:** COVID-19; multidimensional security; international relations; Western Hemisphere; international security.

**Palabras clave:** COVID-19; seguridad multidimensional; relaciones internacionales; hemisferio occidental; seguridad internacional.

## **1. Introduction**

‘COVID-19 has turned the world upside down. *Everything has been impacted, how we live and interact with others, how we work and communicate, how we move and travel.* Every aspect of our lives has been affected.’ This perspective starts one of the largest compilations ever produced about the topic, under the auspices of the United Nations, it is possible to get the dimension of the problem that the world has faced in recent months (United Nations, 2020, p.4).

When the Declaration on Security of the Americas (DSA) was adopted by the Organization of American States (OAS) in 2003, little was thought about the scenario that is now present in recent years since the COVID-19 pandemic advanced, diagnosed initially in the city of Wuhan, China, in December, 2019.

In a short time, the situation was declared as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern by the World Health Organization - WHO, on January of 2020, and soon after, in March 11, 2020, recognized by the WHO as a pandemic – due to its geographical reach and not because of its critical nature (World Health Organization, 2021). The long-term nature of the pandemic weakens the economic, political, health, and

mobility impacts, and not to mention, it also contributes to higher crime rates in some areas.

Western Hemisphere is the region most affected by COVID-19 since the pandemic started in the earlier 2020. Despite all the disparity between the countries that make up the hemisphere, it was equally hit – from the United States (the world's largest power) to Haiti (the poorest country in the Americas).

According to the preamble, the Declaration on Security in the Americas, recognizes that the states that make up the hemisphere face both common threats and new threats, concerns, and challenges, thus security in the hemisphere must be understood as multidimensional in nature.

From the multidimensional security concept new elements were incorporated into the traditional concepts of security, broadening its scope. We analyze the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to the many aspects of multidimensional security in this paper. Not by chance, the western hemisphere concentrates a large number of cases and deaths, on the other hand, it is characterized by having alarming levels of poverty, social inequality and violence.

Finally, we seek to show the authors' perceptions of the scenario presented, in a cause and consequence analysis of the situation experienced by the hemisphere regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic from a multidimensional security standpoint.

### **2. An approach to the concept of multidimensional security**

As mentioned before, the multidimensional security topic emerged in the Declaration on Security in the Americas, approved in the framework of the OAS on October 28, 2003. According to the document (Organization of American States, 2003):

The new threats, concerns, and other challenges to hemispheric security are cross-sectoral problems that require multiple aspect responses by various national organizations and, in some cases, associations between governments, the private sector, and civil society, all acting appropriately in accordance with democratic norms and principles and the constitutional norms of each state. Many of the new threats, concerns, and other challenges to hemispheric security have a transnational nature and may require appropriate hemispheric cooperation. [...]

The security of states of the Hemisphere is affected, in different ways, by traditional threats and the following new threats, concerns, and other challenges of a diverse nature:

- terrorism, transnational organized crime, the global drug problem, corruption, asset laundering, illicit trafficking in weapons, and the connections among them;
- extreme poverty and social exclusion of broad sectors of the population, which also affect stability and democracy. Extreme poverty erodes social cohesion and undermines the security of states;
- natural and man-made disasters, HIV/AIDS and other diseases, other health risks, and environmental degradation;
- trafficking in persons;
- attacks to cyber security;
- the potential for damage to arise in the event of an accident or incident during the maritime transport of potentially hazardous materials, including petroleum and radioactive materials and toxic waste; and
- the possibility of access, possession, and use of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery by terrorists.

From the document, which guides the actions related to security within OAS, Hamilton tried to systematize the new threats, concerns, and challenges into four quadrants, grouped into traditional threats, transnational organized crime, asymmetric threats, and social environmental vulnerabilities, which can be better visualized in the chart below (Hamilton, 2016, pp. 14-48):

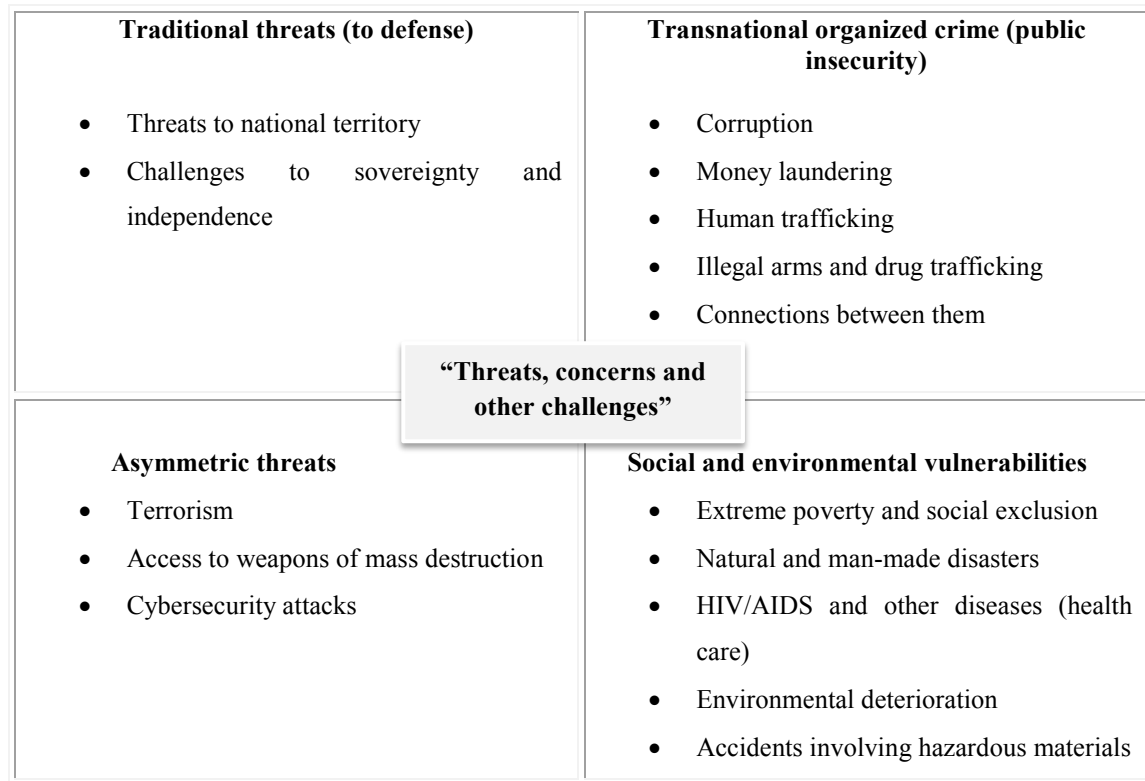


Figure 1: Multidimensional security topics  
Source: own elaboration

What we see from the DSA is a plethora of themes that cover several public security, human, and national areas, etc. without forgetting the focus on human rights, it can be best understood by from the aforementioned table (Hamilton, 2020).

Initially, the human security topics described in the table seek to address social and environmental vulnerabilities, which includes natural and man-made disasters, health care topics such as HIV/AIDS and other diseases, environmental deterioration, and accidents involving hazardous materials.

The vulnerabilities described in the earlier quadrant contribute to the transnational organized crime topic, described on the second quadrant, with a spectrum more focused on the theme of public security, related to corruption, money laundering, human, arms, and drug trafficking, as well as their criminal associates.

With the confluence of these two quadrants, we can point to asymmetric threats, which encompass terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and cybersecurity attacks.

Finally, under the spectrum of traditional threats which are predominantly national security issues, such as threats to national territory, sovereignty, and independence of the country.

Thus, to better understand this holistic view, Hamilton seeks to analyze the different concepts of security in light of the focus on the individual vs the state, as well

as in relation to internal orientation vs external, which can be better shown on the graph below where it can be seen that the concept of multidimensional security pervades the other various concepts of security (Hamilton, 2017).

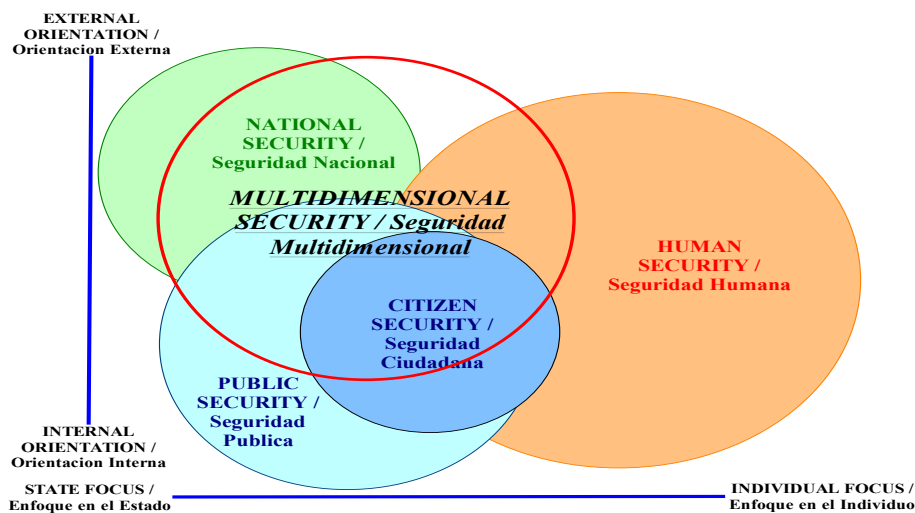


Figure 2: Hamilton's Overlapping Security Concepts  
Source: own elaboration

Although the multinational approach may be criticized, especially for its securitization of issues that are of another nature, such as public health care issues - increasingly reinforcing the use of the armed forces for internal security issues, as reported by Barrachina and Rial (2016, pp.1-21), Hamilton (2020) highlights the importance of the 'multidisciplinary, multifaceted, multinational, and multi-agency' analysis of the complex issue of security today, especially under the auspices of the OAS, where the Secretariat for Multidimensional Security was created, which plays a fundamental role in this scenario.

The current scenario has only reinforced how interconnected and related these concepts are, influencing each other in a way that justifies their analysis together. When we take a look at the Seventh Edition of the United States Global Trends Report (2021) highlights that COVID-19 pandemic has provided a stark example of the weaknesses in international coordination on health crises and the mismatch between existing institutions, funding levels, and future health challenges. Within states and societies, there is likely to be a persistent and growing gap between what people demand and what governments and corporations can deliver. Whole world people are increasingly taking to the streets to express their dissatisfaction with governments' ability to meet a wide range of needs, agendas, and expectations. As a result of these imbalance, the original

institutional establishment are strained and in some cases, eroding. And actors at every level are struggling to agree on new models for how to structure civilization.

The same study points out that increased contestation within communities, states, and the international community encompasses rising tensions, division, and competition in societies, states, and at the international level. Many societies are increasingly divided among identity affiliations and at risk of greater fracturing. Relationships between societies and governments will be under persistent strain as states struggle to meet rising demands from populations. As a result, politics within states are likely to grow more volatile and contentious, and no region, ideology, or governance system seems immune or to have the answers.

So, the pandemic exposed the weaknesses and political cleavages both in international institutions, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations, and called into question countries' ability and willingness to cooperate multilaterally to address common challenges beyond infectious disease, particularly climate change.

The future perspective is a constant insecurity age, marked by deeper multidimensional threats that compromise maintenance of order and the government resilience, in whole world and mainly in development countries, as most of western hemisphere nations.

### **3. Multidimensional (In)Security during COVID-19 times**

When we think about the scenario exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is possible to see that the pandemic has spread its effects in all of the quadrants that make up the broad spectrum of the concept of multidimensional.

Recent data shows that the American continent has exceeded two million COVID-19 deaths. In a proportional analysis, the region, which has 10 per cent of the planet's population concentrates 50 per cent of the number of deaths in the world (John Hopkins University, 2021). Likewise, 12 of the 28 countries with the highest death rates per million inhabitants are on the American continent, according to the report from September 1, 2021 (Our World in data, 2021).

As for the perceptions of corruption and impunity, according to data from Transparency International, in the latest Corruption Perception Index, there is no country from the hemisphere among the ten best positioned in the ranking, with only Canada among the top twenty and Venezuela occupying the fifth worst position (International

Transparency, 2021). Also according to Transparency International, there is a regional perception of increased corruption for 53 per cent of the interviewees and only 16 consider that corruption has decreased in Latin America, 57 consider the region poor in anti-corruption governance, and only 21 of people trust the government (Pring, Coralie, 2019, pp. 9-12).

It is not any coincidence that recent data shows that our hemisphere concentrates 37 per cent of global homicides (UNODC, 2021) and was qualified as the most violent region in the world (Instituto Igarapé, 2021). It seems difficult to dissociate all these elements and their interrelations.

### ***3.1 Social and environmental vulnerabilities***

Here lies the primary impact related to COVID-19. As this is initially a public health care issue, the initial implications are related to social vulnerabilities, especially regarding health care and poverty issues, which have worsened over the past year, mainly due to social isolation, reduced work hours, and reduced and decimation of informal economic activities, many of which are the source of livelihood for a large portion of the Latin American population that were already in vulnerable social conditions even before the pandemic.

Global Multidimensional Poverty index (MPI, 2021)<sup>5</sup> published in 2021 by United Nations Developed Programme shows that countries with high MPI has been less emergency social protection, large percentage of employed people are nonwage workers

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<sup>5</sup> The global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) measures acute multidimensional poverty across more than 100 developing countries. It does so by measuring each person's deprivations across 10 indicators in three equally weighted dimensions: health, education and standard of living (see figure). By identifying both who is poor and how they are poor, the global MPI complements the international \$1.90 a day poverty rate. Launched in 2010 by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative at the University of Oxford and the Human Development Report Office of the United Nations Development Programme, the global MPI is updated annually to incorporate newly released surveys and share fresh analyses. In the global MPI, people are counted as multidimensionally poor if they are deprived in one-third or more of 10 indicators (see figure), where each indicator is equally weighted within its dimension, so the health and education indicators are weighted 1/6 each, and the standard of living indicators are weighted 1/18 each. The MPI is the product of the incidence of multidimensional poverty (proportion of multidimensionally poor people) and the intensity of multidimensional poverty (average share of weighted deprivations, or average deprivation score,<sup>1</sup> among multidimensionally poor people) and is therefore sensitive to changes in both components. The MPI ranges from 0 to 1, and higher values imply higher multidimensional poverty. To ensure transparency, the detailed definition of each indicator is published online, together with country-specific adjustments and the computer code used to calculate the global MPI value for each country. (UNDP. Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2021: Unmasking disparities by ethnicity caste and gender. Available at [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2021\\_mpi\\_report\\_en.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2021_mpi_report_en.pdf). Accessed on October 20, 2021).



and the reduction in formal education activities during the COVID-19 pandemic has been higher in countries with high MPI values (UNDP, 2021, pp. 7-11).

In the last MPI, eight countries in Western Hemisphere are cited as poor index (Guatemala, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Peru, Mexico, Colombia, Paraguay and Costa Rica) (UNDP, 2021). In the same way, Gini coefficient (GINI, 2021) by country in 2021 shows Brazil (7), Colombia (15), Panama (16), Guatemala (18) and Costa Rica (19) in the worst 20 positions in the world (GINI, 2021).

COVID-19 also presented the need for segregation of hospital beds and the establishment of isolation areas in hospitals, causing other care to be stopped or reduced, and the interruption or reduction of continued health care services for patients who required care and use of specific medications, many of them provided by special government programs, such as oncology services and follow-up appointments for immunocompromised patients. Likewise, elective surgeries were suspended in an effort to avoid overwhelming the health care system, increasing the waiting lines for care and, consequently, these factors also led to greater demand for emergency legal services.

Additionally, the diversity, the initial uncertainty, and the dissonance of the actions to fight the pandemic have increased the discussions as to their legality, thus provoking an increase in requests to courts, which, at all levels of jurisdiction, was urged to make emergency decisions to ensure legal security and normative stability to regulate the operation of various sectors besides seeking the harmonization of restrictive conducts and mitigating measures of municipal, state, and federal responsibility.

The dichotomy of the COVID-19 effects to the environment was obvious. The positive impacts on the environment were noticeable in the landscapes of many countries from Europe where the water of the Grand Canal of Venice became clear again and many species returned to the area to the beaches of Rio de Janeiro, the Maldives, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia, where pollution levels improved. Rume and Islam's (Rume and Islam, 2021) study reveals the positive impacts for the environment such as reduced air pollution, greenhouse gas emission levels, water pollution and noise pollution, and the ecological recovery of several natural tourist spots due to the reduction of visitors.

However, the same study highlights the negative impacts of COVID-19 on the environment mainly caused by increased generation of biomedical and hospital waste, increased use of personal protective equipment, such as masks, and disposable gloves by ordinary people, and therefore increased improper disposal of the items used. There has also been a considerable increase in the generation of solid waste in the cities due to the

use of more packaging derived from the increased demand for online shopping and home delivery services. Furthermore, even developed countries like the United States of America (USA) have restricted recycling programs to reduce the physical contact that is inherent in these services in an attempt to contain the spread of COVID-19.

The increase in the use of chemical products for disinfection, applied on access roads and public areas to destroy the virus, was also pointed out by Rume and Islam (2021) as a potential source of ecological imbalance in the future, through the interaction of these chemical compounds that are carried by the rain with other living microorganism species.

The use of computer resources increased considerably during the pandemic, not only for business activities. The legal system was forced to suddenly change their operations to teleworking to meet the increased demand for lawsuits, which was facilitated by the implementation of the electronic process over the last decade. The remote work culture has also made some internal business processes possible to carry out during isolation measures which allowed them to continue to function. In certain sectors, IT has brought financial efficiency and cost reduction to some segments that have changed production processes irreversibly. However, this structural change is associated with the reduction of less qualified jobs and increase in social vulnerability of part of this population, which already had lower salaries and was more susceptible to the impacts of an economic crisis.

COVID-19 also caused an increase in poverty and inequality, resulting from the increasing economic crisis in which Latin American countries found themselves before the pandemic. Ad Bull and Robles Rivera point out, the fortunes of the 73 richest people in Latin America have grown by 17 per cent since the pandemic began. Thus, the pandemic has reinforced the concentration of wealth in the hands of the richest (Bull and Robles, 2020, pp. 77-83).

Therefore, the social vulnerability of the poorest population has been amplified and, consequently, the power of persuasion of illicit activities has been increased, with greater availability of labor in the pursuit of survival, as Reyes Salarichs (2020, pp. 27-28) points out.

The poverty deepening in Latin America can provokes mass migration to countries with politics few better than others against the pandemic, but that already have weak economies, and will face the worst of social environment caused by inserted pressure on the vaccination efforts to avoid the spread of the COVID-19, aiming to

provide vaccines for all people including migrates, and by availability of low cost labor supply that will compete with lowest qualified national professionals, increasing the unemployment and vulnerability.

The increase in social and environmental vulnerabilities as a whole, caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, provides an auspicious scenario for the emergence of new threats and the growth of preexisting ones, especially in the multidimensional context that is common to Latin American nations.

### ***3.2. Asymmetric threats***

Among the multidimensional security issues, under the heading of asymmetric threats, we group the issues of cybersecurity, terrorism, and weapons of mass destruction. We are living in a period of sudden change of activities, due to the restrictions on commuting and face-to-face operations of several activities, which have quickly migrated to the virtual environment - schools, large companies, e-commerce, etc.

In this regard cybersecurity can be pointed out as one of the areas of greatest impact in the COVID-19 scenario. According to the INTERPOL Report, cyber threats have suffered far-reaching impacts as criminal organizations have begun to launch their attacks targeting large companies, governments, and key structures in the fight against the pandemic. On the other hand, the rapid migration to remote work has increased the potential for cybersecurity breaches, thus enabling increased data theft from these companies (INTERPOL, 2020, pp. 4-5).

INTERPOL study mapped the main threats regarding the pandemic as electronic fraud and phishing, through the exploitation of the lack of medical supplies, drugs, vaccines and government aid; malware attacks on infrastructure related to hospitals, medical and research centers; creation of malignant domains regarding the pandemic; and disinformation that led the WHO to warn about the risks of an ‘infodemic’ of disinformation, the dangerous practice of spreading fake news about the severity of the virus, forms of contamination, treatments or even the action of authorities (INTERPOL, 2020, pp. 4-5).

Similar results were pointed out by Microsoft’s 2020 Digital Defense Report that highlights that cybercriminals’ actions to increase their profits from the pandemic impacts, especially with phishing actions and malware developing more sophisticated scams to expand their network of victims (Microsoft, 2021).

It is also important to point out that this scenario was already foreseen by the National Spanish Cryptologic Center, especially regarding cyber-attacks on health-related infrastructures, such as hospitals, labs and pharmaceutical companies, which have become targets in the battle for industrial secrets and industrial espionage (Centro Criptologico Nacional, 2020).

### ***3.3. Transnational Organized Crime***

Like asymmetric threats, the issue of transnational organized crime has several elements that were impacted in the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially corruption for the procurement of medical supplies and vaccines, and illicit trafficking, whether of drugs, weapons, or people.

Although one could initially imagine that the impacts of COVID-19 for organized crime would establish a downward trend, especially due to the decrease in trade, whether legal or illegal, and lockdown initiatives, what was found, as highlighted by Cruz and Fonseca (2021), is that organized crime has taken advantage of the externalities generated by the pandemic, demonstrating a remarkable resilient capacity.

These groups, besides increasing their illicit activities, have advanced in the occupation of spaces where the State has access difficulty, such as the distribution of food and medical supplies in poor regions, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) report on the impact of COVID-19 on organized crime (2021).

The same report establishes a discussion from opportunities and challenges for organized crime. As opportunities, the document highlights infiltrating the legal economy by investing in sectors under pressure or that have become profitable; and helping communities and people in poverty to increase their influence. The challenges, in turn, are observed with the breakdown of supply chains for drug trafficking, as well as variations in demand, suppliers, and prices; the need to adapt routes and their restrictions to movement. The document also highlights the issue of using the state of emergency as a catalyst for corruption, since the barriers to contracting with private parties are reduced - or even non-existent (UNODC, 2021).

Realuyo (2021), in the same path of the authors mentioned above and corroborating the UNODC report, highlights the adaptability capacity of criminal organizations in the midst of the pandemic and that while advancing in local activities and less dependent on the global supply chain - especially on issues of cyber fraud, extortion, and money laundering in the cyber environment, also take advantage of the

need for medical supplies and vaccines to expand their profits, increasing corruption cases, especially from the adoption of policies to simplify public procurement.

In Brazil, for example, several provisions of the Public Procurement Law were waived by laws 13.979 (Brazil, 2020a), 14.035 (Brazil, 2020b) and 14.065 (Brazil, 2020c), which established a special contracting regimen, considerably loosening the rules for contracting with the public administration during the health emergency period, which leaves room for possible acts of corruption and requires greater attention from internal control agencies. The new rules for government procurement, as pointed by Piasentini, Comin and Berti (2021, pp. 20-21), reduced control mechanisms and allow the contracting of unreliable companies, besides the simplified preliminary studies and risk assessment, created openings for irregular or overpriced contracts.

Criminals, as expected, took advantage of this weakening of contracting rules with the government to obtain illicit advantages through corruption. In the best known case, called Placebo Operation, the governor of the State of Rio de Janeiro was removed from his functions by an impeachment process.

As reported by International Transparency the impact of corruption on government responses to COVID-19 shown, in the address of the IT Chair ‘COVID-19 is not just a health and economic crisis. It is a corruption crisis.’ (International Transparency, 2020a). In accord with IT, ‘Countries who perform well on the index invest more in health care, are better able to provide universal health coverage and are less likely to violate democratic norms and institutions or the rule of law’ (International Transparency, 2020b). As an example, ‘Uruguay has the highest CPI score in Latin America (71), invests heavily in health care and has a robust epidemiological surveillance system, which has aided its response to COVID-19 and other infectious diseases, like yellow fever and zika.’ (International Transparency, 2021)

### ***3.4 Traditional Threats***

In the fourth quadrant, the theme of traditional threats pertains to issues of sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity. Here we can see the intensification of the ‘great power competition’ theme,<sup>6</sup> once again emphasizing the competition

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<sup>6</sup> The term “great power competition” gained prominence in the 2017 U.S. National Security Strategy, followed by mentions in the 2018 National Defense Strategy, as well as the 2018 National

between China and the United States. Initially, the global scenario was marked by competition for medical supplies and equipment, with China as the main global supplier.

In the second part, after the discovery of the first vaccines, what we saw was the intensification of the power struggle between China and the United States, with the consolidation of the former as a great world power in the scientific-technological field, which used its influence to seek greater dominance in Latin America. This phenomenon has been called ‘vaccine diplomacy’, leading authors such as Genaro Lozano to call it the new cold war (Lozano, 2021).

While the U.S. adopted a nationalistic policy on vaccination (even declining to participate in the World Health Organization’s COVAX initiative to provide vaccines to developing countries), as Huang points out, China took advantage of the great demand and put its gigantic industrial plant to produce and distribute vaccines to developing countries. As a result, it obtained a return on its investment in the form of soft power (Yanzhong Huang, 2021), understood as the use of a country’s cultural and economic influence to persuade other countries to do something, without the need for coercive military power (Nye, 2004).

In this scenario, Latin America was the battleground of this contest for influence. While the U.S. and other developed countries initially sought to immunize their own populations, China and Russia took the opportunity to expand their influence into developing countries. This rapprochement through Sino-Russian soft power may impact the future of geopolitics of the region, given that the U.S. initially stopped engaging in vaccine distribution to America (Yanzhong Huang, 2021).

On the other hand, the situation may provide an opportunity for rapprochement between the U.S. and Latin America whose countries have suffered severely from COVID effects, provided that the ‘nationalistic politics’ of vaccines gives way to greater attention to the countries of the hemisphere (Carman and Carl, 2021), or else, as Freymann and Stebbing (2021) mention, lose the vaccine race.

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Military Strategy, also from 2018, although neither of these documents defines them (BOROFF, Alexander. What is great power competition, anyway? Modern War Institute, 04.17.20. Available at <https://mwi.usma.edu/great-power-competition-anyway/>. Accessed on September 10, 2021. Although such elusiveness may generate uncertainties as to its real meaning, we can analyze the theme from an empirical perspective in the current framework, less and less unipolar, in which the United States and China seek to consolidate their influence in various field of power, whether political, military, economic, scientific and technological, etc.

Chinese influence in vaccine diplomacy is already reflected in the hemisphere in other technological areas, such as in the issue of the dispute over 5G technology, where Brazil had initially agreed to prohibit the participation of the giant Huawei, which was then revised. Similarly, China has also been pressuring Paraguay and Guyana to review their acknowledgment of Taiwan.

### 4. Future perspectives

The UNDP Human Development Report 2020 highlights that COVID-19 is the tip of an iceberg that marks the shift from the Holocene period to the Anthropocene, where humans are responsible for shaping the future of the planet (UNDP, 2020).

The logic in the report is that we are in the midst of deep imbalances that reinforce each other and amplify the challenges. The report also points out the worst setback in a generation with regard to the human development index - which had shown a positive variation of an average of 0.005 per year since 1991 and abruptly fell to a negative 0.025, indicating that more than 100 million people could be pushed to extreme poverty (UNDP, 2020).

Also, according to a report from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean - ECLAC, the pandemic caused the strongest contraction in GDP since 1990, reaching 6.8 per cent - the highest among developing regions (CEPAL, 2021).

Addressing the issue from an economic perspective, Ocampo (2020, pp. 62-63), makes a deep historical retrospective of the COVID-19 pandemic from an economic perspective, pointing out that Latin America became the world epicenter of the problem due to a sum of characteristics where political issues can be highlighted, whether by inaction or inadequate action, the weakness of health care systems, and the inability to adopt aggressive fiscal policies - characterizing the region as subject to a lost decade, especially after a long period of economic growth worse than the average of other developing regions.

The UN had already warned about these impacts, especially in Latin America, in view of the weakness of the social protection structures, the fragmented health care systems, and sharp inequalities, which tend to worsen with the contraction in the regional GDP of 9.1 per cent in 2020 (Organización de las Naciones Unidas, 2020).

The ECLAC COVID-19 special report also reinforces the topic of impacts for Latin America, with the increase of structural gaps already present in the hemisphere (such as poverty, economic inequality, little investment, and low productivity), proving

exhaustively from economic indicators the recovery difficulty in Latin America (CEPAL, 2021)

Similarly, Reyes Salarichs (2020, pp. 27-28) highlights the decrease in the GDP of countries in the hemisphere and, in turn, calls attention to its impacts on defense and security budgets which may ultimately imply an increase in crime, since security and defense agencies will have considerable impacts on their budgets (Reyes Salarichs, 2020, pp. 27-28).

Thus, it is possible to foresee a vicious cycle between the economy and crime in which the effects continue to feedback on each other in a way that will increase these impacts on the hemisphere over the next few years. Therefore, an increase in tensions can be observed in all quadrants of multidimensional security, requiring a more accurate look at the problems and threats, as well as the implementation of effective responses that can reduce the harmful effects caused by the pandemic.

Another key point that should be pointed out here is the increasing militarization of state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, due to the precarious infrastructure of some countries, and the impacts on civil-military relations, which, according to Isacson, may lead to a situation where states can no longer do without the role played by the armed forces in security matters, with the risk of their use in multiple tasks simultaneously and loss of national defense capability (Isacson, 2020).

Finally, Acemoglu points out that governments once again play a fundamental role in directing public policies focused on resuming economic growth (Acemoglu, 2021, p.7).

## **5. Conclusion**

The COVID-19 pandemic turned the world upside down and its effects were felt most severely on the American continent. The western hemisphere leads the highest number of cases and deaths despite the presence of the U.S., a world power and large vaccine producer in the same hemisphere. And it is no coincidence that the hemisphere also has high rates of violence, social inequality and corruption. In addition to the effects on the economy and health, this article looked at the issue from the perspective of the effects on multidimensional security, a concept that emerged within the OAS since the Declaration on Security in the Americas in 2003.

The multidimensional security concept aims to take a look in a holistic view about security issues. But it's not about security issues: the concept also adds views from the



security perspective to problems related to natural and man-made disasters, poverty and social exclusion. All of these themes need to be analyzed in a comprehensive perspective to achieve better solutions.

It was highlighted, therefore, that the COVID-19 pandemic spread its effects to all quadrants of multidimensional security: traditional threats; transnational organized crime (money laundering, corruption, human, firearms and drug trafficking and their connections); asymmetric threats (terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and cyber threats); and social and environmental vulnerabilities (poverty and exclusion, natural and man-made disasters, HIV-AIDS and other diseases). Whether it is in the areas of social vulnerabilities, which have increased considerably as infections have spread and countries have shut down; the increase in cyber threats due to rapid migration to the virtual environment; corruption in the procurement of medical supplies and vaccines; the downturn in the economy; or even the advance of organized crime and its repositioning to dominate emerging markets.

Lastly, the American continent has established itself as the stage for the hegemonic dispute between China and the U.S., culminating in the diplomacy of vaccines, and has magnified the effects of the pandemic, especially due to the problems of social inequality, lack of institutionalism, and lack of adequate infrastructure to deal with emergencies such as the one presented by COVID-19.

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