Editorial

POLITICAL ANALYSIS AND CORPORATE SECURITY UNIT

ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

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Artificial Intelligence and its application for protection against cyber-attacks: What is the balance of risk?

Since 2023, the world has faced with the critical stay of a global recession that seemed to be in a position to discourage the economic and technological development (FMI, 2023), a variable scarcely foreseen gained media prominence without respite to be obfuscated by any other event: futuristic artificial intelligence became a reality. Maximized its relevance by the free provision of the ChatGPT language model by OpenAI in November 2022 (DW, 2022), the amazing analytical capabilities that this technology service seemed to demonstrate opened up all kinds of discussions about the future arrangements for similar tools and their upgrades (El economista, 2023).

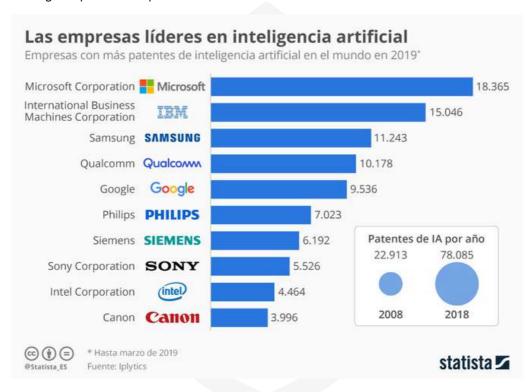
Considering security as an indispensable factor, due to the inherent relevance of an event like this, couldn't be left out, the conversation around AI (artificial intelligence) applications that was quite diversified. (EI Mundo, 2023). Focusing on cybersecurity as the factor most directly adjacent to AI's ability to operate, its key to ask what is the cost-benefit balance for this side of the dilemma that, because of society's operational mimicry with technology, is the most important factor to be considered (Gamboa, 2020), has a global reach.

To begin with, it's important to mention that although the term may seem unprecedentedly innovative, the use of artificial intelligences has been a constant for much of the 20th century, with companies heavily involved in the field of cybersecurity such as Microsoft, IBM and Samsung leading the list of patents for maximizing the development of Als (see **Figure 1**).



Therefore, it's consistently logical to assume that, with respect to the extensive common knowledge about this emerging scenario, the technology corporations can cope with the technological evolution of the field.

Figure 1: Leading companies in AI patents 2008-2019



Note: Retrieved from Las empresas líderes en inteligencia artificial, By Statista, 2019, es.estatista (https://es.statista.com). CC BY 2.0

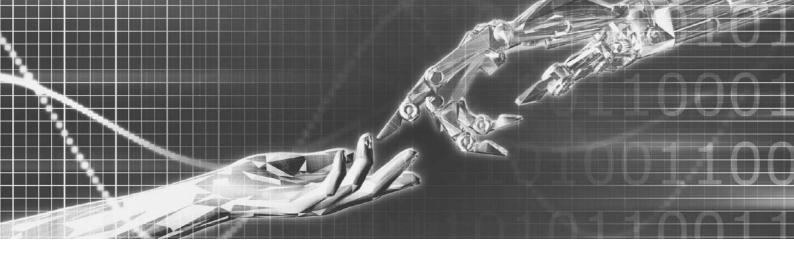
Charlie Bell, executive vice-president of security and management at Microsoft, showed optimism and fascination at the public proliferation of the idea of these new artificial intelligences as part of the technological future for cybersecurity (2023). Emphasizing the ability of AI to restructure the dynamics of response to cyber-attacks, while reiterating how the immediacy of these tools facilitates analysis processes for a timely response, he opted to consider technological evolution as an optimization tool rather than a latent threat (Microsoft News Center Latinoamerica, 2023).



In line with this assessment, the estimate issued by the McKinsey Global institute, which projects a productive profit of 13 trillion dollars a year thanks to the operational capabilities of these technologies, makes it easier their to assume that deep implementation will be pleasant (Contact Hub, 2022). Among different assessments, it's the cybersecurity sector itself that seems to highlight the advantages of AI as a fast processing tool for the improvement of corporate, governmental and citizen welfare (Agrega, s.f.) (Stefanini Group, 2022).

Despite all that has already been mentioned, it's also necessary to expose the limits of these visions which, biased by the convenience of promoting these services, seem to ignore the unmanageable risks involved in the emergence of such complex operating systems (Infobae, 2023). Returning to the narrative with which Bell, Microsoft's executive vice-president of security, covered the subject in a post on the company's Latin American portal, it can be noted that, despite everything, he only based his projections on the current models that, although regulated (Microsoft News Center Latinoamerica, 2023), lack more in-depth studies for the absolute prevention of catastrophic failures involving the non-fulfillment of functions (El País, 2023).

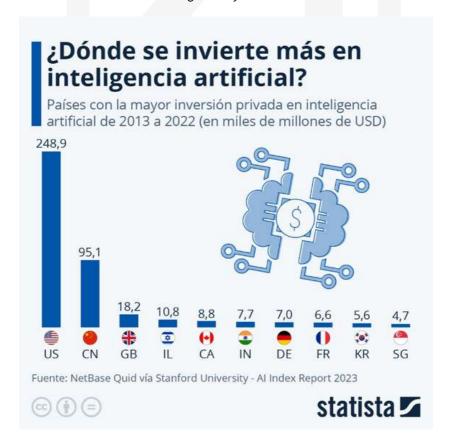
Although it may sound fictionally surreal, experts such as artificial intelligence researcher Eliezer Yudkosky, and historian Yuval Noa Harari, as well as technology eminences such as Elon Musk and Steve Wosniak, demand for the sake of humanity that research with the aim of developing the evolution of current artificial intelligences be halted until there is certainty as to how to prevent their dangers (El confidencial, 2023).



For their part, state-owned companies such as Italy and China have already banned the use of Chat GPT (*Xataka*, 2023), and even the European Union itself is prepared to firmly regulate the advance of these technologies (*Xataka*, 2023).

For the first time, a scenario as unthinkable as a fatality derived from the possible overuse of machines becomes plausible when OpenAl itself, disregarding how moral considerations may or may not impact the analysis of its creations, issued a study entitled Sparks of Artificial General Intelligence: Early experiments with GPT-4, in which it admitted to not knowing with certainty both the deep workings and the limits of its projects under development (Infobae, 2023).

Figure 2: Increased investment in artificial intelligence by nation 2013-2022



Note: Retrived from *Donde se invierte más en inteligencia artificial*, By Mariana Pasquali, 2023, es.estatista (https://es.statista.com). CC BY 2.0



Despite the above, there is also no empirical evidence that this catastrophic idea is beginning to take hold, for as New York University Professor Emeritus Gary Marcus argued, projects such as Chat GPT 4 are still far from being risky intelligences, highlighting the inability to adequately elaborate complex tasks. (*Infobae*, 2023). Indeed, in the short term, issues such as these Als being less accurate than they appear, and thus vulnerable to well-structured cyber-attacks engineered by malicious actors or even other artificial intelligences, are of higher priority early on for cyber security (*El Comercio*, 2022).

In the meantime, the fact that super nations such as the United States or China, as can be seen in **Figure 2**, continue to move steadily towards technological development that can give them a significant advantage for global political prevalence, is a significant factor in their ability to achieve a global political prevalence (*Portafolio*, 2023), could prove to be the key pillar by which artificial intelligences advance unregulated to an indeterminate point at which cybernetic offense and defense become beyond our compressive capabilities. In this possible scenario, it becomes an unknown how global security dynamics, for better or worse, could be profoundly altered.

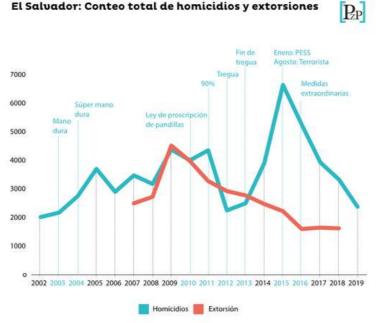
REGIONAL

Could Latin America be affected by the migration of Salvadoran gangs (Maras) after Bukele's state of emergency?

The relatively recent declaration of a state of emergency issued by Salvadoran President Nayik-Bukele has turned out to be one of the most openly hostile measures to combat crime in Latin America in the 20th century (Landeros, 2020), although the region is not lacking in abrupt measures to confront criminal actors, in general and in order to maintain the forms that legitimize its constituent states as democracies based on the rule of law, it has remained cautious not to openly cross the limits of the international stipulation as has happened in El Salvador (Santamaría, 2010).

The war against the Maras gangs led by Bukele has been an effective, albeit radical, initiative to deteriorate the entrenched power of these criminal groups in the national territory, as can be seen in **Figure 3** (Semana, 2023).

Figure 3: Homicide and extortion registry Honduras 2002-2019

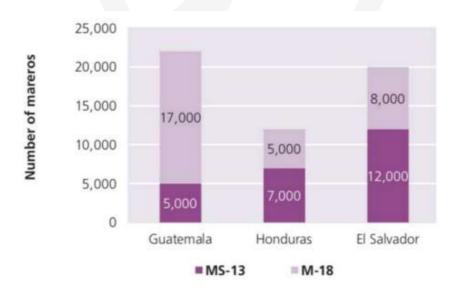




However, it has also become evident that the Salvadoran president's campaign has had many collateral consequences, among which the open violation of the human rights of his citizens is often highlighted with concern (*France 24, 2022*). Although less discussed, the transnational status of the Maras gangs, both the Salvatrucha (MS-13) and the 18, could pose a latent risk to regional security, considering that the repressive regime has provided incentives for these illegal actors to migrate to the rest of the continent (*BBC, 2023*).

Known as the global benchmark for the devastating power that a properly organized criminal grouping of this style can achieve, the two Mara gangs (especially the Mara Salvatrucha) have long been considered the most dangerous gangs on the planet (*Infobae*, 2021). Although it is commonly believed that their origin has the endemic characteristic of having arisen within the territory of El Salvador, in fact, they come originally from the city of Los Angeles in the United States, as a result of the joint criminality of Central American communities, which is why they share a common denomination with the one coined for groups of this style in this city ("mara") (*France 24, 2022*). This foundational circumstance is key to understanding why the Maras gangs are conceived as inherently transnational.

Figure 4. Mara Occupation in the Northern Triangle countries 2012



Note. Retrived from *Membresía de las maras en el Triángulo Norte*, By Law enforcement interviews, 2012, Instituto Español de estudios Estratégicos (https://www.ieee.es/). CC BY 2.0.



The so-called Northern Triangle is a geopolitical determination designated to the composition of the three Central American nations of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, being considered one of the most dangerous areas in the world due to the high incidence of crime caused by the operating groups (Voz de America, 2021). As can be seen in **Figure 4**, these member nations have been the main recipients of the wide expansion of the Maras gangs, a situation that, in terms of security, has always represented a worrying constant risk for the citizens of the region (UNODC, 2017).

In the current situation that has been experienced since the declaration of the State of Emergency in El Salvador, March 2022, the capacity of these gangs to extend their networks of domination over the territory of El Salvador has been diminished, which is why it would be logical that members not detained in prisons such as the recently inaugurated megaprison Centro del Confinamiento del Terrorismo (CECOT), would find it easier to continue their criminal activities in geographically nearby countries (Insight Crime, 2022).

In fact, in the present year 2022, there have been migratory reports that have highlighted the presence of new Maras in Guatemala and Honduras, as well as in Mexican and U.S. territory (BBC, 2023), and even Chilean territory (Infobae, 2023). According to Vanda Felbab-Brown, a political scientist and expert on domestic and international organized crime, transnational criminal actors in Latin America find opportunities to survive by taking advantage of differences in legislation that criminalize crimes in each country, as well as state and institutional corruption (2013).



However, although the possible repercussions could be catastrophic, it's necessary to clarify, even if the risks appear to be undesirable, that the situation could be far from being as catastrophic as it is stipulated. Although the definition of organized crime pre-supposes well-structured chains of command, the fact is that the case of Latin America has turned out to be exceptionally different from other regions, with the concept of "disorganized crime" being used to refer to the unique way in which it operates in the region (*Ruan*, 2021). For the Maras del salvador, this idea is not something alien to their organization, since it is known that, although there is contiguous recognition between the extensions of their gangs in different countries, this recognition is often limited to the superficiality of a formal relationship and is not reflected in an exacerbation of crime (*Proceso Digital*, 2021).

Although recent warnings about the migration of Salvadoran gangs have raised border alarms in Central American countries and the United States itself, the truth is that the legitimate statistical record of a recent invasion of Salvadoran gangs has turned out to be low (less than 50 members in each neighboring country) and ambiguous due to the lack of official statements by immigration authorities (BBC, 2023).

While it is undeniable that the problem could pose a risk to regional security in the future, the short-term records are of little concern, which is why several experts have declared that gang members, rather than seeking criminal continuity on behalf of the Maras, are fleeing for their own protection from the repressive regime (BBC, 2023). Considering that effective eradication of these criminal groups throughout the region requires international cooperative efforts (Landeros, 2020), more worrying could be how Bukele's authoritarianism, which denies international intervention by covenant of its forms, could hinder these necessary processes of transnational coordination.





The security situation in Colombia since the declaration of the bilateral ceasefire: high humanitarian cost?

The radicalization of an armed State response against the armed groups operating in Colombia has undergone a turn of events in the nation's recent history (Lessing, 2020), as a result of the excessive empowerment of guerrilla organizations, paramilitaries, criminal gangs and drug traffickers (a category which, due to the deep-rooted nature of this source of income for the national criminal economy, usually encompasses the aforementioned groups) (Vargas, 2005), new modes of resolution have emerged in the face of the inefficiency of an endless internal war against terrorism.

The recent government of Gustavo Petro has set peace as its most fundamental pillar of action on which to operate, this decantation being the search for a historical vindication of the obfuscated victims of the armed conflict (El Heraldo, 2023). In response to this approach, the ceasefire with the main criminal groups in operation was not long in coming, as this measure was the first step towards the consolidation of a formalized peace, making it a priority to reach an agreement with them (DPPA, 2022). Despite the agile progress made by the government, the drawbacks of this ambitious policy of immediate agreement have become evident in the humanitarian cost derived from the incongruity of these criminal organizations (El Espectador, 2023). Therefore, it is necessary to ask ourselves what the balance of events since the bilateral cease-fire declaration has been stipulated.



On December 31, 2022, a presidential statement was issued as a semblance of the congruence with which government policy was supposedly directed towards its stated objectives, since it spoke of the timely achievement of a bilateral ceasefire with different relevant armed structures such as the ELN, the Gulf Clan, the Second Marquetalia, the Central General Staff and the Self-Defense Forces of the Sierra Nevada (*Infobae*, 2023). Despite the encouraging nature of this approach, between January and March 2023, 210 violations were recorded, according to a report by the Ombudsman's Office, which described murders, harassment, kidnappings, and extortion (*El Tiempo*, 2023).

Figure 5. Distribution of events affecting children and adolescents, January - June 2022



Note. Retrived from Eventos que afectaron niños y niñas adolescentes en contexto del conflicto armado en Colombia / enero-junio 2022, By Coalico, 2022, Coalico.org (https://coalico.org) CC BY 2.0.



Because of the recorded failures, rather than an efficient peace-building policy, the rapid adoption of cease-fire measures has led to the inference that peace initiatives have been weakly shaped, limited by an agenda of grand aspirations incorrectly stipulated (*La Silla Vacía*, 2022). Proof of this is the existence of the false bilateral ceasefire with the ELN, denied by the group itself at the beginning of the year, which, due to its risky implication for the security of citizens, has highlighted the existence of ineffective communication with the armed actors (*El Espectador*, 2023).

On the other hand, the serious breaches of terms by the Gulf Clan (El Tiempo, 2023), and more recently the Estado Mayor Central, have forced the government to desist from maintaining a zero offensive exchange with these large criminal groups in afflicted areas such as Meta, Caquetá, Putumayo and Guaviare (CNN, 2023). The latter group has been highlighted by both the government itself and its opposition sectors, as a result of the painful violation of international humanitarian law, with the murder of four indigenous children (Portafolio, 2023), Despite being one of the most important population groups to be protected by the different entities promoting human rights, it has been, as can be seen in Figure 5, constantly afflicted in the recent national panorama.

Considering all of the above seems to give a definitive indication that the ceasefire has been a strategic instrument on the part of the active criminal groups rather than a solid advance towards peace, it is necessary to consider several balancing factors. In the first place, although it is undeniable that the current condition of the country comes from a detriment of the security panorama, this wasn't the result of a series of negligence of the current president's administration, but rather, of a criminal strengthening coming from the Covid-19 pandemic during the year 2021, which proved intractable for the administration of Iván Duque in the year 2022 (SWI, 2022).



Figura 6. Comparison, massacre victims 2021, 2022 and 2023



Note. Elaboración propia, adaptado Masacres en Colombia durante los años 2020, 2021, 2022 y 2023, Por Observatorio de DDHH, conflictividades y paz, 2023, Indepaz (https://indepaz.org.co) CC BY 2.0

One of the indicators on which we can base our understanding of the balance of the national armed conflict is the number of massacres, which is strongly linked to the violent activity of the insurgent groups (Suárez, 2008). As can be seen in Figure 6, the total number of victims of this scourge for 2023, in a comparative analysis from January to May, showed a reduction of 12.68% which, although insufficient to demonstrate a commitment of the armed actors to peace derived from an efficient reduction of perpetrations, tells us that this situation of bilateral ceasefires is not an aggravating factor of the violence that has already occurred.

Considering the social needs of the Colombian citizenry, the search for an execution of the perpetrators of violence is insufficient to achieve sustainable peacekeeping on its own. (Villegas, 2011). To this purpose, ceasefire efforts are indispensable for peace building, however, although the government's current political agenda is on the right track in terms of principles, it is dangerously ambitious in seeking to cover transitions with high resource requirements in record time (La Silla Vacía, 2022), which could prove dangerous for Colombia's security landscape as it appears ineffective in consistently curbing the strengthening of the various active armed groups.

Note. The investigative work and analysis contained in this report is exclusive to 3+ Security Colombia. Therefore, it is recommended not to disclose the document in question. 3+Security Colombia Ltda., reserves the right to interpretation that may arise by the reader in the review and visualization of the information presented".

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