

DÍAZ GALÁN, Elena C., *La contribución de la Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA) a la seguridad hemisférica*, Dykinson, Madrid, 2023.

In her book, Professor Elena C. Díaz Galán offers a well-structured study on the role of the Organization of American States (OAS) in shaping hemispheric security from a legal perspective. Her work is not merely a normative exposition, but rather an easy-to-follow combination of descriptive content and analytical insight that contributes to the study of regional international law in the Americas, with a focus on security.

Indeed, perhaps the main strength of this work lies in the author's ability to present a comprehensive view of the multifaceted issue of security in the Americas, which has its particular features when compared to its counterpart at the universal level. Throughout the book, Díaz Galán links each legal and political dimension to the broader goal of achieving comprehensive and multidimensional security, in line with the evolution of the inter-American system from its pan-American roots to the present.

The book is structured in four chapters. The first chapter traces the origins of regional security from the early days of pan-Americanism up to the Second World War, highlighting the region's enduring concern with security. The author thoroughly examines the role played by the Inter-American Conferences as precursors of the OAS and as key venues for affirming fundamental regional principles such as the peaceful settlement of disputes, the prohibition of the use of force, and non-intervention. The reader can appreciate how the author highlights the milestones that have influenced the notion of security in the Americas, identifying the principles that underpin regional security. It is noteworthy how some criteria that were relatively important in the early stages have since been marginalised.

The second chapter focuses on the development of a hemispheric legal framework for security led by the OAS, which the author describes as “the privileged ally” for integration in this field. We may conclude, based on the author's research, that there has not been a clear and linear pathway; rather, shifting national interests have shaped positions and outcomes in the negotiation processes on regional security. Here, the 2003 Declaration on Security in the Americas, also known as the Mexico Declaration, is presented as a “foundational document” marking the transition towards a modern and multidimensional concept of security. Despite its political nature, Díaz Galán rightly identifies its value as a normative reference point for more effective cooperation among Member States. She concludes that this “new” concept of security must be based not only on respect for international legal principles but also, crucially, on democratic values: “*Lo primero que se dice es que el concepto de seguridad en el hemisferio se basa en valores democráticos*” – a particular feature when compared to the universal level.

The third chapter addresses the principal areas of hemispheric cooperation on security. The book thoroughly examines both traditional concerns, namely collective security, disarmament, and arms control, as well as confidence-building measures; and more recent challenges, such as the fight against terrorism and transnational organised

crime. The author emphasises the need for a common yet flexible approach that considers national and subregional particularities while advancing regional standards and coordination mechanisms.

The fourth and final chapter deals with the institutional framework of hemispheric security. This section makes a particularly meaningful contribution by underscoring that legal norms and principles alone are insufficient. Without a robust institutional architecture capable of implementing and coordinating agreed directives, the system remains incomplete. The author examines existing institutional options, including the strengthening of OAS bodies or the creation of new mechanisms. Particular attention is paid to the Inter-American Defense Board, the Committee on Hemispheric Security, and the Conference of Defence Ministers of the Americas. The underlying message is clear: institutional coordination is essential for effective regional security.

Arguably, one of the book's most valuable contributions lies in its treatment of the relationship between security, democracy, and human rights; elements which, as the author shows, are increasingly present in OAS discourse and practice. She highlights how the fight against threats such as terrorism or human trafficking must be grounded in fundamental rights and the rule of law. This approach reinforces the idea that regional security cannot be built separately from democratic values if stability and legitimacy are to be achieved.

In addition to the above, the book stands out for its accessible and engaging style. Its relevance is evident in the context of today's rapidly evolving security threats. The book does not attempt to construct a multifaceted theoretical definition of security in the Americas. Instead, the author deliberately sets aside theoretical elaboration and succeeds in her mission to define the legal framework and institutional architecture of security in the region, offering a valuable historical overview.

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