

Maduro-Petro: A Binational Project

By Fernando Mora¹

The recent announcement of a “*Zone of Peace, Union, and Binational Development*” between Colombia and Venezuela has triggered a wave of concern among observers and critics alike. Although presented as a step toward integration, the project raises serious questions about sovereignty, regional security, and the growing entanglement of both governments with transnational criminal networks.

The Public Narrative

Colombian President Gustavo Petro defends the initiative as a cooperative project aimed at improving the living conditions of border communities. He insists that it does not compromise national sovereignty but rather seeks to restore state presence in historically neglected territories. Petro describes the binational zone as a vehicle for “legal prosperity,” free from illegal armed groups and criminal economies.

In parallel, Venezuelan dictator Nicolás Maduro frames the agreement as a platform for “peace and comprehensive development,” claiming it will replace illicit economies with agricultural and industrial investment. His proposed zone includes Venezuela’s Táchira and Zulia states, and Colombia’s Norte de Santander, Cesar, and La Guajira departments—regions long plagued by violence and lawlessness.

The five-year, automatically renewable memorandum of understanding outlines cooperation in sectors including trade, infrastructure, health, education, tourism, and security. It also proposes joint police and military operations to combat armed groups along the border.

The Reality: Criminal Control

Despite the rhetoric, the Colombia-Venezuela border remains under the *de facto* control of criminal structures. On the Venezuelan side, this includes the Cartel de los Soles and the Bolivarian Army, both operating with Maduro’s full backing.

These groups collaborate with a range of illegal armed actors, including ELN, FARC dissidents, El Tren de Aragua, Second Marquetalia Hezbollah, Hamas, and other transnational criminal organizations. In Colombia, Petro’s *Total Peace* policy has led to a power-sharing arrangement with these *same* groups.

The Maduro-Petro alliance deliberately labels these groups as “paramilitaries” to obscure their deep ideological and operational ties with them. These groups function as tools of control and repression, directly undermining Colombian sovereignty and the rule of law.

Together, Maduro and Petro have enabled the creation of a criminal corridor across the border—one that facilitates arms and drug trafficking, human smuggling, illegal mining, kidnapping, and other illicit activities.

A History of Alliance

The Petro-Maduro relationship is longstanding and well-documented. It began with Hugo Chávez’s 1994 visit to Colombia, organized by Petro himself, and grew stronger as Chávez gained power—allegedly with financial backing from FARC. As president, Chávez openly endorsed Petro and claimed to have supported him *financially* since his time with the M-19 guerrilla group. Nicolás Maduro later confirmed this support.

Chávez’s *Bolivarian Revolution*, launched in 1999, laid the foundation for an increasingly authoritarian regime. His successor, Maduro, won a widely discredited third term in 2024, amid widespread fraud and international condemnation. Yet, Petro continues to legitimize Maduro’s rule—sending a Colombian ambassador to attend his illegal inauguration in 2025.

Ideological and Operational Convergence

Petro shares Maduro’s far-left ideological agenda. His *Total Peace* initiative has granted political legitimacy and territorial control to criminal groups aligned with Venezuela’s regime. These

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actors, including Hezbollah and Hamas, now have a foothold in Colombia under the guise of “peace.”

Petro's ties with foreign powers such as Iran, Türkiye, Russia, and China—all allies of Maduro—have raised alarm over potential interference in Colombian internal affairs. Critics argue that his government uses peace agreements as political cover to empower criminal groups and suppress dissent.

Reports suggest that as much as *75% of Colombia's territory* is under the influence of these armed actors, many of whom are Petro's political allies. This has severely compromised national security and weakened state institutions.

Digital Warfare and Political Destabilization

Since 2019, Venezuela has become a *hub* for digital propaganda and disinformation campaigns aimed at destabilizing Colombia. During the 2021 protests, fewer than 1% of users—mostly bots based in Venezuela—generated nearly 30% of online protest content. These campaigns involved fake accounts, SMS instructions for coordinated violence, and fabricated stories of military abuses—all to advance Petro's political agenda.

Petro's political coalition—*Colombia Humana*, *Alianza Verde*, and others—has reportedly maintained operations in Caracas under Maduro's digital propaganda apparatus. Former Bogotá, Medellín and Cali mayors have been accused of misusing public resources to support these activities, including alleged funding of violent protest groups such as *Primera Línea*.

Unaccounted Funds and Suspicious Travel

Petro's administration has been marred by scandal. One case involves *Laura Sarabia*, his former Chief of Staff, who allegedly mishandled over \$7,000 during a Caracas trip. Suspicion lingers that larger, undocumented cash transfers may have occurred. Additional controversy surrounds over *900 undocumented trips* to Cuba and Venezuela by Colombian officials, often lacking clear budgets or stated objectives.

These undisclosed trips, combined with political delegations praising Maduro, suggest deeper

political and financial entanglement between Petro's government and Venezuela's regime.

Repression and Fear

Today, Petro's administration is described as the most corrupt and violent in Colombia's modern history. Journalists, civil servants, judges, women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and union members increasingly report being targets of surveillance, intimidation, and persecution. Petro's political coalition, *Pacto Histórico*, is accused of using threats and violence as tools to suppress opposition and delay the 2026 elections.

Maduro's so-called “bot army” plays a critical role in shaping public perception, drowning out dissent, and amplifying government narratives—while Petro and Vice President Francia Márquez frequently echo Maduro's language and ideology.

The True Objective

Beneath the façade of “peace and development,” the *Maduro-Petro binational zone* serves a more cynical purpose: to consolidate power, secure continued funding from criminal organizations, and legitimize illegal armed groups. Backed by foreign regimes, these actors now exert control over both nations' borderlands.

This is not an integration project—it is an entrenchment of a transnational criminal and authoritarian alliance, masked as diplomacy. The consequences for regional stability, democratic integrity, and human rights are profound.

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