

## Colombia's Descent into Authoritarianism—and Sweden's Dangerous Gamble <sup>1</sup>

by Fernando Mora<sup>2</sup>

President Gustavo Petro has made history—not for upholding Colombia's democracy, but for dismantling it. He is the only president bold enough to liken himself to Pablo Escobar, and disturbingly, his actions reflect that comparison. Backed by his radical coalition, *Pacto Histórico*, and closely aligned with Venezuela's authoritarian leader Nicolás Maduro, Petro has forged alliances with illegal armed groups and embedded organized crime into the fabric of the Colombian state. Together, they are dismantling institutions, empowering violent actors, and driving the country into its deepest crisis in decades.

Despite this alarming collapse, Swedish defense company Saab—maker of the Gripen fighter jet—is reportedly considering the sale of advanced military aircraft to the Petro [Maduro] regime. This is not just a misguided business decision; it is a geopolitical and moral failure. Such a deal would legitimize two leaders directly implicated in political repression, human rights abuses, and the militarization of their own populations.

If Saab proceeds, Sweden risks complicity in the arming of authoritarian regimes that do not aim to defend their people, but to dominate them. These jets will not promote peace or regional stability—they will bolster governments that work hand-in-hand with cartels, shelter terrorists, and persecute anyone who dares to dissent.

Colombia is no longer facing a crisis of governance—it is engulfed in a multifront internal war. Under Petro's so-called “Total

Peace” policy, the Colombian state has surrendered vast territories to drug cartels, guerrilla factions, and radical militias. These groups now exercise de facto control in all 32 departments, ruling through violence, fear, and impunity. Rather than confronting this criminal power, the Petro administration has negotiated behind closed doors, bypassing Congress and shredding constitutional order. What the government calls “peace” is in fact a strategic surrender of sovereignty.

This war is not confined to remote jungles. It has reached city streets, universities, and digital spaces. Urban paramilitary groups like *Primera Línea*, aligned with Petro's political base, have turned schools and institutions into ideological battlegrounds. In rural regions such as Arauca, Putumayo, and Chocó, narco-militias—with foreign support—wield unchecked power, brutalizing civilians, especially women and children.

Simultaneously, the Petro government has deepened ties with authoritarian regimes like Venezuela and Iran, embedding Colombia into global networks of extremism, surveillance, and repression. The country is rapidly transitioning from a fragile democracy to a criminalized state governed by authoritarian design.

The collapse of democratic norms is accelerating. Opposition figures are under attack—Senator Paloma Valencia faces ongoing threats, and the assassination of Miguel Uribe marks a dark milestone in Colombia's political violence. Institutions are being defunded, politicized, and weaponized for state propaganda. Petro is not simply complicit—he is engineering a new order

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<sup>1</sup> Summary of the letter sent to the UNSC, UNSG, UN Member States, EU institutions, EU Foreign Affairs Committee, the Prime Minister of Sweden, Swedish Parliament and political parties, other European parliaments, and NATO.

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advised heads of state, senior policymakers, and major institutions such as the UN, UNDP, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, and the International Crisis Group. He has also collaborated with the ICRC, OECD, WHO, and various governments. Recognized for his sharp analysis and intercultural understanding, Fernando provides clear and effective guidance in complex political and humanitarian contexts.

where criminal empires and government authority are indistinguishable.

Sweden must act responsibly. Supplying weapons to this regime is not neutrality—it is endorsement. It is time for democratic nations to choose sides. Colombia's journalists, students, indigenous leaders, women, and children—those on the front lines of this crisis—need solidarity, not silence. They need allies, not arms deal that empower their oppressors.

The international community must respond with urgency. This includes:

- Conditioning foreign aid on human rights and democratic benchmarks.
- Launching independent investigations into the Petro government's ties with armed groups.
- Providing unwavering support for Colombia's democratic opposition.

The war in Colombia is real. The threat is global. And the time to act is now.