

Total Peace, Total Control: How a Parallel State Took Hold in Colombia

by Fernando Mora¹

Colombia is undergoing an unprecedented crisis, marked by profound political, social, and economic instability. The country is facing the challenge of *opaque* leadership, where an environment of disinformation, political violence as state policy—for the first time in over 65 years—and institutional weakening has taken hold. The situation is worsened by systematic attacks on the high courts, the political opposition, the media, and civil society sectors that dissent, further deepening polarization and undermining democracy.

One of the main consequences of this crisis is the increased presence of illegal armed groups and organized crime networks across vast regions of the country. This situation, exacerbated by the “Total Peace” policy promoted by Gustavo Petro, has severely compromised the country’s security, governance, and sovereignty. In addition, corruption scandals in the current government are the most severe in the past 50 years, contributing to a deep crisis of trust in institutions.

Fundamental freedoms such as freedom of expression, the right to information, and freedom of movement are under constant threat. Advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence, have been used as tools to control the citizenry and create a narrative aligned with authoritarian regimes in the region, such as Maduro’s in Venezuela.

This alignment with governments like those of Cuba and Nicaragua raises serious questions about Colombia’s political and geopolitical direction. In this context, the ties between Petro’s government and the Maduro regime are particularly concerning.

Through multiple visits to Caracas and meetings with Chavista officials, Petro has strengthened a relationship that goes beyond diplomacy, openly endorsing the Venezuelan electoral system, despite numerous international allegations of fraud and political persecution. This stance

reflects an ideological alignment with Chavismo and, de facto, a recognition of Maduro’s legitimacy.

The situation along the Colombia-Venezuela border is another source of concern. There, armed groups and criminal networks linked to Maduro’s regime, together with actors associated with Petro’s Total Peace policy, control the illicit trafficking of cocaine, weapons, people, and natural resources, while Colombian authorities have relinquished effective control of the area. This abandonment not only strengthens illegality but also endangers the country’s territorial sovereignty.

To divert attention from his collaboration with Maduro along the northeastern border, Petro, without acknowledging his negligence regarding the Amazon region and the port of Leticia, has initiated a dispute with Peru over the territory of Santa Rosa.

Meanwhile, both Maduro’s bot army and Petro’s media operatives spread the narrative that the Peruvian president is responsible for the conflict, portraying Petro as a victim.

The official rhetoric of Total Peace, which began in 2018 after Petro’s electoral defeat, has failed to achieve its goals and has instead led to increased political polarization. Radical mobilization and systematic confrontation—including alliances with illegal armed structures and criminal organizations—have created a climate of political instability that has deeply affected the country.

Throughout this process, various reports have documented Petro’s ties with groups such as the FARC dissidents, the ELN, and the Gulf Clan, raising concerns about the legitimacy of his government and its alliances.

In 2021, the social unrest revealed the use of protest as a political pressure tool, and, along with the so-called “La Picota Pact,” uncovered the existence of secret agreements between sectors of Petro’s movement and criminal actors.

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This pact, far from being a novelty, confirmed a pre-existing political alliance in which impunity, “business as usual,” and territorial control were exchanged for logistical support in the 2022 elections—and now, looking ahead to 2026.

Under Petro’s leadership, Total Peace has fostered an unprecedented power alliance uniting armed actors, criminal groups, and elements of the ruling coalition. Recent reports suggest links to international organizations such as Hezbollah and Hamas, posing a risk to national security and further complicating Colombia’s geopolitical situation.

Petro’s consolidation of power appears not to be limited to his time in office. His political project aims to establish structural control of the state, regardless of who holds the presidency in future elections. This control, fueled by vast financial resources, territorial influence, and an increasingly sophisticated digital propaganda machine, allows Petro to build a narrative favorable to his administration and its allies—at the expense of truth and transparency.

Colombia’s security situation is further deteriorating since it remains the world’s largest producer of cocaine—a reality that, far from being resolved by Total Peace, has worsened under Petro’s policy. This not only threatens internal stability but also has international consequences, affecting Colombia’s relations with other countries and undermining its role in the fight against drug trafficking.

The consequences of this phenomenon are deep and far-reaching:

Systematic environmental degradation: The expansion of illicit crops is directly tied to massive deforestation, especially in regions like Catatumbo, the Pacific, and the Colombian Amazon. Criminal organizations—many of which have been included in the so-called “Total Peace” dialogues—destroy ecosystems through indiscriminate logging and the use of highly polluting chemicals such as unregulated glyphosate.

Overproduction and domestic drug markets: The oversupply of cocaine has significantly reduced its price in the domestic market, leading to an alarming increase in consumption among youth and children, particularly in urban and vulnerable areas—worsening social problems, public health issues, and violence.

Strengthening of criminal structures: Illegal armed groups—some officially recognized as political interlocutors by the current government—have amassed vast economic resources from drug trafficking. These funds have enabled them to expand their territorial and military power, challenging the state’s sovereignty. It is especially troubling that members of these groups appear at political events alongside President Petro, sending a confusing message about their legitimacy.

Foreign influence and expansion of criminal networks: Collaboration between Colombian and foreign criminal networks—particularly the Cartel of the Suns in Venezuela and the group known as Tren de Aragua—has facilitated the spread of transnational crime. These organizations operate with impunity in border and urban areas, extending their control over illegal activities like extortion, human trafficking, illegal mining, and drug trafficking.

Denial of the problem in official discourse: President Petro has publicly downplayed or denied the existence of criminal structures like Tren de Aragua and the Cartel of the Suns, aligning with the narrative of Maduro’s Venezuelan regime. This position contrasts with numerous intelligence reports, journalistic investigations, and citizen complaints confirming these groups’ active presence in Colombia.

Ideological narratives that distract from reality: By attributing the existence of criminal networks to “poverty caused by the United States,” Petro trivializes a real threat to national security and misleads the public. This narrative evades state responsibility and obscures the debate on how to effectively combat organized crime.

In addition, one of the goals of the current government has been to weaken institutions responsible for protecting children, adolescents, and women—particularly vulnerable populations in Colombia—by appointing individuals lacking the professional qualifications necessary to guarantee their rights or provide adequate care.

Meanwhile, in the regions, allies of the “Total Peace” project subject minors to forced marriages before Catholic Church altars, perpetuating forms of submission and abuse.

Petro’s and his coalition’s—Historical Pact—disdain for vulnerable and poor sectors of the country is evident both in government decisions and public rhetoric. An example is the use of the term “maid,” a hate-filled expression toward women working in private homes. This is compounded by serious incidents such as the detention and interrogation of two female workers in the Presidential Palace’s

basement, aiming to coerce them into covering up irregularities.

Yet, such is the Colombian reality—Petro does what he wants, as he controls the state apparatus and tramples on the nation with his main political partner, Nicolás Maduro, both supported by organized crime and illegal groups gathered in Caracas under the Cartel of the Suns led by Maduro, and in Colombia, under Petro's Total Peace.

Petro has once again demonstrated his contempt for the political opposition and for fundamental principles of justice, systematically attacking his critics, their families, and victims of political violence in Colombia—a level of violence unseen in the last 65 years.

His recent mockery of attacks suffered by opposition figures, especially those targeted by armed groups associated with his “Total Peace” project, is just one example of the shamelessness with which he operates.

In an unprecedented abuse of power, Petro interfered in the investigations surrounding the attack on Senator and presidential candidate Miguel Uribe Turbay, which occurred on June 7 and led to his death on August 11, 2025.

Not only did Petro downplay the attack, but he appointed two of his closest allies and former M-19 members to the team at the Attorney General's Office in charge of the investigation.

This move—unheard of in Colombia's legal history—is not only deeply questionable but also violates the victim's right to an impartial investigation in line with international human rights standards.

Worst of all is how Petro has managed information about this political assassination. Rather than allow the investigation to proceed independently and transparently, he has issued contradictory and irresponsible statements, pointing fingers at various international actors—such as criminal groups in Albania or Serbia—without presenting any evidence.

This behavior undermines the investigation's credibility and sows confusion and

misinformation, distorting the truth. Although the Attorney General eventually removed Petro's friends from the investigation team, the damage had already been done.

Now, as the investigation points to the possibility that the attack was ordered by Iván Márquez's Segunda Marquetalia (a FARC-EP dissident group) from Venezuela, with logistical support in Caquetá (in southeastern Colombia) and Bogotá, Petro has launched a media defense of the perpetrators, attempting to excuse the inexcusable.

In a political manipulation effort, he has downplayed the gravity of the events by calling it a matter of “militiamen,” minimizing the death and involvement of armed actors still operating with tacit support from his administration. To make matters worse, the Attorney General—Petro's ally—has assumed the role of a victim, instead of fulfilling her institutional duty to ensure justice.

This behavior reflects an authoritarian and manipulative attitude, where Petro not only attacks his critics but also uses his power to distort justice, weaken institutions, and favor those who, far from contributing to peace, perpetuate the cycle of violence and hatred in Colombia.

The situation in the country is not only unsustainable but also a profound insult to citizens who still believe in a fair and corruption-free future. The nation stands on the brink of collapse, and what's most troubling is the total lack of accountability from those in power.

However, the fear and oppression dominating the country prevent many from demanding justice. The alliance between Petro and Maduro, together with the organizations supporting them—reflected in the “Total Peace” strategy—in collusion with structures like the Cartel of the Suns, has placed Colombia in a state of vulnerability and manipulation.

Meanwhile, the international community continues to support Petro—not Colombia—who has irresponsibly and selfishly used resources intended for the well-being of the Colombian people. Millions of dollars in international aid have been used not only to fund personal trips and luxuries for Petro and his entourage—over \$70

million across at least 67 international trips (not including the vice president's)-as of July 2025, but also to promote a distorted narrative of "peace."

With these funds, a media campaign has been built to portray former FARC-EP members and "Total Peace" allies as movie-like heroes, giving them visibility in documentaries, books, and films-while the victims of these criminals are reduced to secondary characters in their own story, stripped of dignity.

Portraying the perpetrators as saviors of the nation is not only false but a deep wound for the victims, who, instead of finding justice, see their suffering minimized and exploited to justify more violence and more impunity. This perverse use of resources, aimed at building a favorable narrative for criminals, is just one of many facets of the crisis the country is facing.

On top of this are the exorbitant expenses stemming from over three years of political campaigning by Petro's government-funded with public money-and which has allowed his officials and congress members to make at least 900 trips to Cuba and Venezuela, plunging the country into wasteful spending that benefits no one in need.

Colombia can no longer remain subject to private interests or a one-sided narrative promoted by Gustavo Petro and his coalition, the Historical Pact.

The country deserves strong institutions, transparent justice, and responsible management of public resources. Excessive and uncontrolled spending does not strengthen democracy-it erodes it.

The so-called "Total Peace," as implemented, represents a troubling alliance between the government, illegal armed actors, and organized crime-raising legitimate doubts about its true scope and sustainability, especially considering possible links with Nicolás Maduro's regime and criminal structures like the Cartel of the Suns.

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