



**Instituto de Ciencia Política**  
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Revista  
**Perspectiva**

**A vivid example**

**Lessons of a war that never was**

**Crisis between Colombia, Ecuador and  
Venezuela**



## Death of Raúl Reyes

### Incursion of the Colombian military into Ecuador



Crisis between Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela began after the incursion of the [Colombian military](#) into [Ecuadorian](#) territory across the [Putumayo River](#) during the early hours of [March 1, 2008](#), which resulted in the death of [Raúl Reyes](#) and 16 other members of the [Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia](#) (FARC). This resulted in increased tensions between Colombia and Ecuador, as well as the movement of [Venezuelan](#) and Ecuadorian troops to their respective borders.



## Reaction of Ecuador and Venezuela

Rafael Correa



Farc commander  
Raúl Reyes

Hugo Chávez



- ¿How to understand the struggle of Colombia in its war with a terrorist organization like FARC?
- ¿Why did Ecuadorean president [Rafael Correa](#) drastically change his initial prudent position towards the Colombian action to a much more aggressive one?
- ¿Why Venezuelan president [Hugo Chávez](#) called the attack "a cowardly murder" and reacted by moving troops near the border with Colombia, saying that doing something similar inside Venezuela would be a "cause for war"?
- ¿If Uribe committed the crime of overstepping geographical limits, did Correa overstepped the limits of diplomacy and politics?
- ¿Can it be said that the origin of this plan was not in Quito, but rather in Caracas and, additionally, almost certainly, in la Havana?



## Lessons of a war that never was

- Violation of Ecuador's sovereignty
  - A problem not only to be seen under a **juridical** perspective
  - A problem that needs to be analyzed under a **political and military** perspective
    - Military perspective:
      - Colombia has lived almost 40 years of war with FARC – military logic over a juridical logic
      - As any other terrorist organization its structure is highly centralized, so killing one of its heads was crucial in order to weaken its structure.



## What took us for surprise?

- Over dimensioned reaction of President Correa
- No real understanding of Colombian's fight against FARC
- No support on considering them as a terrorist organization (OAS Resolution)

## The right considerations

- The Colombian incursion was never intended to put in danger Ecuador's internal security or the life of any Ecuadorian
- FARC is a real threat to any sovereign territory and to the political stability of the Ecuadorian nation.
- **Its possible that Quito wasn't the headquarter of the plan but Caracas and, why not, La Habana.**





## ¿How is it possible that the President of a nation had no idea that terrorist groups were settled in its territory?

- Either he knew
- Highly inefficient military administration
- The truth:
  - Chavez decided to expel the Colombian Ambassador in Caracas and send troops to the border
  - Correa instead of putting some distance he became even more aggressive against Uribe
  - Soon after President Ortega from Nicaragua also decides to join the group by putting to an end its diplomatic relations with Colombia

From one day to the next, Colombia awoke fenced in



## The reality

- The country with the best military and political cards in this game was Colombia
- From the military perspective Colombia's power in the area is much higher in quantitative terms, but above all, in qualitative terms relative to the three ALBA countries (Bolivarian Alternative for our American Nations).
- Colombia would have received direct aid from the US
- President Uribe's greatest strength lies in the internal political front, with more than 80% of Colombians supporting his war against FARC, and if necessary, against their possible external allies.



## Other realities

- Uribe's Antagonists:
  - Rafael Correa at the peak of his popularity
  - Hugo Chavez's government is in a miserable political situation.
  - The Nicaraguan government is also in a speedy decline.

In such fashion that in an external conflict; the political winner would have been the Uribe Government



## Raul Reyes died the way he lived

- All wars are dirty, wars against terrorist groups are even dirtier.
- One of the goals of terrorist commandos is that of discrediting the enemy to the point of making it unrepresentable.
  - Spain with ETA
  - Israel with HAMAS
  - Colombia with FARC



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## From the international perspective

- Uribe is respected by the European Governments
- He has ample support of the US
- Brazil is only interested in Venezuela as a trading partner and
- For the Southern Cone countries Chavez causes more problems than they would like to have

Both the national as well as the international correlation of forces for the most part, favors the Uribe Government. And Chavez realized this on time and decided to put the brake on at the very edge of the cliff.

The main enemy of the Uribe Government, that of Chavez, is **MOMENTARILY** politically neutralized



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What would have happened if Uribe had let himself be lead off track by false pride and by the emotions that young President Correa put on display?

Thanks to the fact that there is a President in Colombia who thinks politically, that is to say, someone who is a politician by profession (and vocation), the tragic fact that many lives would have been uselessly lost has been avoided.



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**Thank you very much**