The Ecuador Situation

Facing the Summit of the Americas and Other Foreign Policy Issues

By Camila Lanusse
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The Ecuador situation – March 2012

“These summits are full of clichés, commonplace phrases, praise for democracy and its formalities: voting from time to time instead of a real democracy that involves justice, the freedom of expression understood as the freedom of companies [...] but these events do not look at fundamental, inescapable and urgent problems of our America.” Such was the way in which the Ecuadorean President Rafael Correa protested the exclusion of Cuba from the Sixth Summit of the Americas, to be held on April 14-15 in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia.

President Correa began voicing his criticism of the Summit on February 15th, during the Fifth Summit of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), where he called for regional group members to boycott the presidential meeting in Cartagena in response to Cuba’s unfair exclusion.

On March 15th, during an official visit to Turkey, President Correa urged Turkish officials not to participate in the Summit, even though Correa’s own absence has still not been confirmed by the Ecuadorian Foreign Ministry. He clarified that the “US boycott of Cuba’s participation” is the reason why he is unwilling to attend the presidential meeting. At the same time, he criticized the limitations of the Summit as a forum to discuss issues facing Latin American countries, including the embargo that the US still maintains against Cuba.

Weeks earlier, the Colombian Foreign Ministry announced in response to President Correa’s threat of boycott that it would work to advance Ecuador’s point of view in a more concerted way; meanwhile, the US confirmed its position that Cuba should not be invited as it did not yet comply with democracy norms of the OAS. President Juan Manuel Santos traveled to Cuba to meet with Presidents Castro and Chávez in search of a solution, where they apparently agreed that Cuba would not participate this time, but that its future participation would be discussed at the Summit. This compromise was not sufficient for President Correa, however.

Participation in the “boycott” proposed by President Correa has not been popular among the presidents of ALBA countries. For his part, President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela has issued public statements regarding the existence of “almost” a consensus among the ALBA countries to attend the Summit of the Americas. Daniel Ortega confirmed his participation as did the Bolivian President Evo Morales, who mentioned wanting to discuss Cuba at the event.
While Ecuador has maintained its decision not to participate, other countries such as Argentina and Brazil — whose governments maintain close relationships with their peers in ALBA — have confirmed that they will bring up in Cartagena the need to include Cuba in the future, hoping that this will be the last Summit that will take place without the island. Thus, although Ecuador failed to convince others to join in “boycotting the Summit,” its declarations succeeded in bringing attention to the nature of the Summit and the exclusion of Cuba.

President Correa’s proposal to include Cuba comes at a time in which the President’s stance on human rights — such as the freedom of expression — has been strongly criticised by international organisations like the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR) and the United Nations Special Rapporteur for the Freedom of Expression, as well as by international human rights NGOs and media around the world. The President’s reaction has been to denounce such scrutiny and link them to alleged interests of Northern countries, including the US.

However, the questions raised internationally have thus far failed to generate any significant doubts in the conscience of Ecuadorian citizens. With half a year before the official start of his re-election campaign, public opinion favours President Correa’s management — approval that is reflected in his high level of popularity and the acceptance of his messages, which often question the role of international organisations or supranational bodies.

As will be described in the pages that follow, the foreign policy of the last five years under President Correa reveals a government that challenges and questions the traditional bodies, forums and regional blocs of the international system, integration based on trade, and institutions associated with liberal democracy. At the same time, it encourages participation in alternative forums or regional political blocs, in which it seeks to propose its own stances on issues such as human rights, the freedom of expression, integration and trade relations.

In the following paragraphs, there will be a brief description of the management of current Ecuadorian foreign policy and Ecuador’s position on the inter-American system. Interviews with academics and diplomats, in addition to various news sources, have been used in the writing of this report.

The conduct of foreign policy by the Ecuadorian government

Traditionally, the agenda of Ecuadorian government had been dominated by bilateral relationships with the US, the European Union (EU), Colombia and Peru. This situation began to change in 2007, under the first term of the Citizen Revolution led by President Correa. Rafael Correa came into power with the support of the traditional and more ideological Left, coupled with his nationalist discourse, questioning and challenging the existing political order and the way in
which Ecuador had established its foreign relations, especially with the US and Europe.

**Strong push for a “sovereign” conception of foreign policy**

Under a discourse of strengthening the participation of Ecuador in South-South relations, Latin American integration, multilateralism and the diversification of markets and economic relations, Ecuadorian diplomacy under the current administration began to incorporate new actors into its partnerships. It has maintained its relationship with traditional partners, with tensions at times (with the US, Europe and Colombia), in addition to opening doors to new partners like China, Central American states, Turkey and other more questionable ones, like Iran.

Foreign policy has been described as a policy with a strong dose of ideology, and with a greater emphasis on achieving policy objectives rather than commercial and economic benefits. It is also characterized as a policy that – according to diplomats and internal analysts – diverges from the usual script of foreign policy and replaces it with an ideological position of demands for justice, similar to that which is present in domestic politics.

The government’s vision on Ecuador’s relations with the rest of the world has been marked by a discourse that has as its foundation the idea of “sovereignty,” understood primarily as the non-interference of other states, international agencies or organisations in the way that the country manages its affairs, both internally and in terms of its relationship with external actors. In facing external challenges, the term “sovereignty” has been used as a position that usually takes precedence over the interests of the country, while being used as an excuse to “defend” these interests.

The discourse on sovereignty has been accompanied by anti-imperialist rhetoric, marked by confrontations and challenges to those who have been traditional partners of Ecuadorian diplomacy (the US, the EU, and multilateral organisations, among others) and in favour of countries or rulers with whom Ecuador did not have a concrete relationship or has only started to build one.

An example can be seen in the messages in support for Syria and Libya issued by the Ecuadorian government in favour of respect for their “sovereignty.” Recently, Ecuador abstained from voting on the UN Human Rights Council when the Council put forth the resolution that condemned human rights violations by Syrian authorities. Ecuador has no commercial or economic relationship with either of the two states mentioned. Another example is when Ecuador hosted the Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in January 2012 and emphasised expanding relations with this country despite the fact that Iran is not an important
market for Ecuadorian export products, nor a major financier of Ecuadorian plans for public works, as is the case with China.

**A definition of politics focused on the President**

In a form of government with a strong presidential system, such as the one in Ecuador, politics is driven by the President. The President’s statements and decisions always take precedence and influence the actions of ministers.

Analysts speak of two different ways that the government can conceive of international relations. On one hand, as a pragmatic actor, it can be interested in strengthening trade relations with traditional partners as well as new markets. On the other hand, there may exist another front where ideological positions prevail. Ultimately, it is the President who decides which side and in which moment to tip the scale. Past experience has shown evidence of both trends. Recent tensions with the EU – which arose because it criticised the status of the freedom of expression in Ecuador, winning the Union the accusation of “neo-colonialist” – delayed the advancement of trade negotiations with one of the major Ecuadorian markets. A few days later, the government took a 180-degree turn and Foreign Minister Ricardo Patiño travelled to Brussels to continue negotiations with the EU. However, the Ecuadorian government insists on its draft of a “Trade Agreement for Development.” It is still to be seen whether the EU will agree to negotiate under conditions imposed by Ecuador or if the President will relax his stance. Both seem unlikely.

However, despite the discourse, the Ecuadorian government has shown that after having declared its position publicly, it is willing to “sit” at the negotiation table, especially if doing so represents access to important resources to finance investment and public spending. Various examples can be cited, with the most telling being the way in which it has handled matters with China in order to obtain debt resources.

The government has maintained its position of not negotiating loans with international organisations like the World Bank, which is now present only to offer technical assistance. After the Andean Development Corporation (CAF) and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the main financier of Ecuador’s foreign debt is China – which, despite issuing credit with a high cost, does not impose the series of conditions that international organisations do. However, relations with China have had their moments of tension; in the past the government has said publicly that it would not agree to carry out agreements under the conditions imposed by the Chinese government. At the end of the day, after lowering the profile of the issue in the press, the agreements were carried out. Once it was in the negotiation process, the government maintained its defiant discourse –
despite lowering levels of confrontation – and, skilfully managed the situation to successfully win the favour of public opinion.

The Ecuadorian Government and the Inter-American System

Under the government of President Correa, there has been a change in the way that Ecuador presents itself to the inter-American system. The Ecuadorian state has been critical of the functioning of the system’s main institutions – including the Organisation of American States (OAS) – and has maintained a belligerent position. While these criticisms are seen as necessary in the current international situation, the country has failed to be proactive.

It has presented a favourable position towards the strengthening of regional forums, formed mainly by Latin American countries and/or South American ones, with more equal conditions for its members, and excluding the US and Canada – countries from which Ecuador seeks more autonomy. The Ecuadorian government has been critical of the strong influence of both countries in the decision-making process within the OAS, although relations between Ecuador and the US still work with some normalcy.

However, Ecuador has not had a proactive strategy to promote changes in existing inter-American institutions. In general, there has not been a search for mechanisms that would allow the promotion of change and secure the support of other states. The only case – which was to take the Yasuní ITT¹ to the United Nations forum – did not receive the support expected. By contrast, the government’s management of the issues that have generated tension in its foreign relations has been influenced by ideological positions, marked by anti-imperialist rhetoric and questioning of the actions and decisions of these institutions.

The Ecuadorian government has also supported the existence and privileged participation of new regional blocs such as UNASUR, CELAC, and ALBA – organisations that it has recognised as legitimate spaces to deal with regional issues like integration.

In these spaces, the Ecuadorian government, in accordance with its discourse, hopes that no state will be excluded and that there will be equal treatment for all states. This means that a State would have the right to participate simply for

¹ The Yasuní ITT initiative would leave the oil reserves of Ishpingo, Tambococha and Tiputini underground and untouched on the condition that the international community contributes to Ecuador at least 50% of the resources that the country would have received from the exploitation of these fields, located in one of the most biodiverse areas on the planet.
being a state and not because its regime or political system has complied with certain conditions. However, in practice, the government’s positions have proven to be exclusive of those who do not share its views.

**Participation in new regional blocs**

Thus far, these new blocs have positioned themselves merely as political spaces and, in some cases such as UNASUR, also as organizations that were developing new institutions with the capacity to mediate tensions between countries and bring together their leaders around common themes. But they have not been instances for articulating and promoting the implementation of changes to existing inter-American institutions. Ecuador’s participation in these forums has been mainly to search for support for its positions.

ALBA has been characterised as a primarily political structure that provides a space for rhetoric not generally in agreement with the foreign policy of the rest of the countries in the region. Through its summits, the current ideological divisions that exist across Latin America have been demonstrated. ALBA is viewed by its critics as a “club” formed by the less democratic governments in the region, a perception associated with its positions favouring the exercise of sovereign political power over institutional obligations. It is undeniable that ALBA has had the ability to place issues at the centre of the debate.

In the specific case of Ecuador, belonging to this bloc has aligned it with a set of countries emphasizing participatory mechanisms over the separation of powers. In economic terms, it has not generated greater profits, except the possibility of expediting payments to Ecuadorian exporters through the Unified System for Regional Compensation. Figures for trade and investment with ALBA countries have not changed significantly; even flagship projects of Ecuador’s foreign policy – such as the Yasuní ITT – have not had the financial backing of any of the member countries, while it has been supported by Colombia and Chile through the provision of financial resources.

As previously mentioned, ultimately Ecuador failed to win the support required within the bloc for its proposal to include Cuba in the Summit of the Americas. Bolivia and Venezuela – which have also publicly questioned the absence of Cuba in Cartagena – have confirmed their presence at the Summit. For its part, Bolivia asked Colombia to find a way to include Cuba in the event, while Hugo Chávez joined Brazil and Argentina’s proposal to bring up the issue in Colombia so that this would be the last summit without the attendance of the island. It must be taken into account that Bolivia is interested in the success of the next OAS General Assembly in Cochabamba. Furthermore, the debate on the war on drugs
in the region is a topic of interest for Bolivia, a country that has been one of its main protagonists.

UNASUR is also a South American integration project that depends on political will and the consensus of member states in order to function. It has been characterised as being a space for political decision, not only to address temporary situations but also to promote and articulate policies for regional challenges in the field of health, education and defence. It has also served as a forum for forming political alliances and defining common positions on political situations that affect all member countries.

According to one of the people interviewed for this study, UNASUR’s management capacity depends very much on who serves as its president; the Secretary General’s role is small and has been reduced to the development of social, health, and education. UNASUR is perceived as a valid alternative at a moment in which other regional organisations – such as the Andean Community and MERCOSUR – are experiencing a crisis.

Ecuador maintained a very active pro tempore presidency during the first year of UNASUR’s operation (August 2009-2010). It received the ratification of at least nine countries – the minimum number stipulated by statute that created UNASUR. After the events of September 30, 2010 (the police uprising in Quito), Ecuador was able to persuade the forum to adopt a stance favourable to the government on the topic of coup d’état. UNASUR condemned the incidents that took place in Quito. This time the Ecuadorian government also received the backing of the OAS and ALBA. The Secretary General of the OAS, José Miguel Insulza, congratulated President Rafael Correa for his leadership in resolving the conflict and declared his rejection of the coup. The OAS Permanent Council passed a resolution condemning the events and expressing its solidarity with the President. The representative of Ecuador to the organisation expressed his appreciation to the OAS “for confirming their commitment to democracy in the region.”

As mentioned previously, UNASUR also serves as a place to find support for the Ecuadorian government’s positions. During the 2012 UNASUR Summit in Guyana, President Correa urged other leaders of UNASUR to promote laws that regulate the excesses of the press. The Ecuadorian president has maintained this position in favour of regulating the exercise of private media. However, the incident between the President and the newspaper El Universo has not been brought up in the regional forum; this would depend on other foreign ministers of member countries and their willingness to present this topic to the General Secretariat.

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2 http://www.oas.org/es/centro_noticias/comunicado_prensa.asp?sCodigo=C-360/10
There is broad consensus around the benefits of UNASUR for Ecuador. As a space where all members have equal weight, it allows members to increase their bargaining power as well as their ability to have a regional role. Infrastructure and energy projects would be of great benefit to Ecuador.

The newly formed CELAC also seeks to be a space for finding common positions. Ecuador has expressed its support for exclusively strengthening this Latin American forum. The Ecuadorian government has also presented on the issues of the freedoms of speech and of the press in this forum. In late 2011, President Correa spoke about his disagreement with the idea that private media provides a public good by presenting information to society. At that time, he also questioned the independence of the OAS from the interests of North American countries and stressed the need for Latin America to have its own inter-American system.

In recent months, Ecuador’s criticism of the institutionalisation of the inter-American system has increased. Tensions between the government and the IACHR over the lawsuit that Rafael Correa brought against the newspaper El Universo have caused Ecuador to strongly criticize the Commission.

The Absence of Ecuador at the Summit of the Americas

The Ecuadorian President’s proposal regarding the absence of Cuba at the Summit, according to analysts who were interviewed, reflects Ecuador’s need to treat all states equally, independently of its interests in the island. Ecuador has taken a position in an ideological debate that does not bring about greater benefits for the country. Ecuador does not benefit from a business relationship with Cuba or from cooperation that would be considered important.

While it is seen as positive that Correa backed the participation of Cuba in the Summit, the Ecuadorian President’s absence is perceived as limiting the country’s ability to express its point of view, not only with regards to Cuba but also with respect to other national interests that will be discussed at the Summit. Making Ecuador’s own participation conditional on the participation of another country – in this case Cuba – means making Ecuador’s foreign policy conditional on the interests of the other state.

The desire to avoid criticism for the incident with El Universo – as well as the controversy caused by the Colombian press’ reproduction of El Universo’s editorial – could be an additional reason for the President’s absence at the Summit. However, this is not seen as the main cause.

By not attending, Ecuador would lose the opportunity to have a leadership role in this initiative. A successful strategy would have been to lead a consensus within
ALBA for the issue to be addressed in Cartagena and isolate the US position. In addition, the topics to be discussed at the Sixth Summit of the Americas should be a priority for Ecuador: technology for access to health and education, disaster prevention, physical integration and energy networks, public safety, poverty and inequality.

The Bolivian president, Evo Morales, has already confirmed his attendance. For Bolivia, it could be of great importance to discuss Colombia’s proposal to debate different approaches to the continental struggle against drugs.

Other missed chances include the ability to hold bilateral meetings with other presidents such as Brazil’s Dilma Roussef, with whom Correa has yet to hold an official meeting despite the growth of Brazilian investments in Ecuador and the increasingly important role of Brazil in the South American context.

At the end of the day, Correa’s absence in Cartagena will not create a rupture or new tensions in Ecuador and Colombia’s relationship. However, this situation indicates the lack of support for a government with which it was difficult to normalise relations after they were broken in 2008. Colombia has given special importance to the Summit.

**Relations with Iran**

Last January, the celebration of the five-year rule of Alianza País, the ruling party, coincided with the visit of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The Iranian president’s visit was seen as Iran’s attempt to seek support from Western countries at a time when the country could face economic and diplomatic sanctions as a result of its suspected nuclear plans. At the same time, the visit generated criticism from the business sector of Ecuador, which was concerned about how the relationship between Ecuador and Iran could affect the former’s trade relations with the US and the EU.

The Ecuadorian government has insisted on keeping technological cooperation agreements with Iran for the construction of hydroelectric projects and refineries. President Correa emphasised the potential of the relationship between the two countries and the willingness of the Persian country to strengthen commercial ties with Ecuador. Despite a warning from the US that it is “not the moment to deepen ties” with Iran, the Ecuadorian government insisted on its sovereign decision and through its Foreign Minister said that Quito does not receive “state instructions from the US.”

The US has also expressed concern about Ecuador’s relations with Iran in the financial sector. The Central bank of Ecuador and the Export Development Bank of Iran have had a cooperation agreement since 2008. However, in 2010, the President of the Central Bank of Ecuador had to clarify that the bank had no deposits in Iranian bank accounts under UN scrutiny. This year, Ecuador was
included in the Financial Action Task Force’s list of countries with weak measures against anti-money laundering and terrorist financing – an incident which caused Ecuador to take action internally and externally in an attempt to be taken off the list.

So far in Ecuador there has not been significant controversy over Iran’s potential use of the Ecuadorian financial system to sidestep the sanctions against it. According to those interviewed, this situation would only apply to the Central Bank, but not to other national banks.

**Ecuadorian public opinion on issues of foreign policy**

In general, Ecuadorian public opinion is moderately aware of the events that have marked the country’s recent foreign policy. The government, for its part, has been using each foreign incident as a banner of political struggle.

According to the study “Ecuador, the Americas and the World 2010,” the Ecuadorian public favours the processes of economic liberalisation, but – like their government – is considerably nationalist in terms of politics.

A majority of the public agrees with the official discourse, interpreting sovereignty as the rejection of limitations imposed by international organisations or other states. While public opinion recognises the processes of commercial integration, they do not seem to understand international relations or the nature of participating in multilateral or supranational institutions, which carry certain limitations on the exercise of sovereignty in exchange for other benefits.

The Ecuadorian government’s aspirations for strengthening relations with Latin American countries and increasing Ecuador’s participation in new regional blocs coincide with the idea of international insertion that Ecuadorians have in mind.

Q. How should the membership of inter-American organisations be?

- With the participation of the US and Canada
- Only with Latin American and Caribbean countries
According to the study mentioned, UNASUR has a significant level of acceptance among Ecuadorians (62/100), followed by the OAS (60/100). Meanwhile, ALBA ranks last among respondents. Ecuador’s participation in ALBA is not perceived as beneficial, which could be related to how little the public knows about Ecuador’s achievements in the forum or to the lack of sympathy that Ecuadorians feel toward President Hugo Chávez.

Q. Do you think that Ecuador’s participation in ALBA has been beneficial to the country?

Recent survey data shows that the nationalist, anti-imperialist direction of the country and the accompanying discourse on sovereignty have gained support.
from an important part of the citizenry. However, four out of ten citizens also reject them, which is also important to mention.

Half of the public believes that President Correa was right to condition his participation in the Summit of the Americas on Cuba’s presence. As for the President’s speech in the case of *El Universo*, there are divided opinions among Ecuadorians. While the position of President Correa in the trial has received majority support, the strong media campaign in favour of *El Universo* and the increase of international messages in local media also have the potential to influence these opinions.

Q. Did Correa make the right decision to condition his participation in the Summit of the Americas on Cuba’s invitation to attend?

- **Yes**
- **No**

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The pie chart shows the distribution of responses across different cities and levels of education.
Q. Are organisations like the Inter-American Court of Human Rights against sovereignty and manipulated by powerful groups and the US?


Yes 48%
No 43%
Does not know/No opinion 9%


Support for the official position is seen repeatedly with regards to other recent foreign policy incidents, such as President Correa’s statement against the EU for questioning the status of the freedom of expression in Ecuador.

Q. Do you agree that the EU’s concern about the trial against El Universo is an “unacceptable interference”?

Yes 56%
No 40%
Sin opinión 4%
No opinion
Another foreign policy issue: the scandal of narco-suitcase

In recent months, Ecuador has made headlines for various reasons – mostly because of the tensions between the media and President Correa. Another news story has been the discovery by the Italian police of 40 kilos of cocaine packed into promotional material inside of the suitcase of an Ecuadorian diplomat.

The government has been forced to explain how 40 kilos of drugs travelled through the formal channels of Ecuadorian Foreign Service. Thus far the response does not seem to have been the best, as it once again highlights the government’s confrontation with the media. Rather than offering to clarify the facts, the government has accused the media of publishing misleading information and has named the Chilean courier company TNT as a possible perpetrator.

In the National Assembly, the opposition has tried to push for an impeachment of the Foreign Minister Ricardo Patiño for his involvement in this incident. However, the proposal did not manage to pass in the Assembly, a body dominated by members of the ruling party. The government has yet to clarify the facts. While it considered unlikely that the Foreign Minister had something to do with it, his political responsibility as the highest authority in the Foreign Service is undeniable.

This event has not had much impact on public opinion; however, it has served as a warning about the risks to the country and Ecuadorian Foreign Service’s image. There have been various comments as to the weakening of the Ecuadorian Foreign Service, where there is increasing political costs and career officials have been relegated to the background.

Conclusion

The management of Ecuador’s relations with the rest of the world takes place in a context of a government that questions the existing international order and favours new and alternatives forums where developed countries will be absent.

This position emphasises its interest in finding support for its views on the issue of foreign policy, integration, cooperation, and the human rights system, as well as its views on the functioning of the democratic political system. These visions evoke a more prominent role (formal or informal) for the State in different spheres of civil society, and the concentration of power to make policy decisions under the executive, and especially under the President.
For many analysts, Ecuador currently lacks a clearly articulated foreign policy agenda. While the government has expressed its positions and its interest in changing the international system, it has not been able to create concrete mechanisms that will allow it to promote and gain support for these changes. On the contrary, its role in the international arena has been characterised by the issuing of challenges and being confrontational, seeking support in places where it is not easily questioned.

The external agenda seems diffuse as the government aims to gain support for its demands and often anti-imperialist speech. The attempts to search for new partners and markets around the world have been accompanied by a neglect of the relationships with those who have been Ecuador’s traditional main partners.

The results of foreign policy during the past five years under the Correa government are not yet apparent. Relationships with its main markets – the US and the EU – depend on preferential trade agreements that are set to expire soon and are unlikely to be replaced by the “Trade Agreements for Development” pushed by Ecuador. These agreements would couple trade issues with immigration and development and political cooperation. The opening of new markets in places such as Turkey, Iran and Central American countries has not yet shown great benefits for Ecuador in terms of trade. It has strengthened its relations with China because of the latter’s financial support for public spending and participation in public works investment.

Politically, the government has prioritised regional spaces such as UNASUR, ALBA and CELAC. In these forums, it has sought out support for its positions in various areas: the human rights system, the freedom of expression, involvement in the private media, the state of democracy in Ecuador and the defence of other countries/governments’ interests – seen in the case of Cuba, but previously also the defence of Manual Zelaya, the ex-president of Honduras. Ecuador has won support from its peers on the issues of domestic policy, such as for the official version of the September 30, 2011 events. However, in other issues the Ecuadorian government has not yet managed to bring together significant support for its proposals. Its discourse of “sovereignty” and “anti-imperialism” has generated sympathy, but no concrete actions by other states to strengthen the position.

The government itself has made progress in policy that favours migrants, by making changes such as extending the social security system beyond its borders. Its unconditional support for UNASUR has also been seen as a wise decision that will encourage the organisation to promote various development proposals.

Within days of the Sixth Summit of the Americas, Ecuador would seem to be alone in its call for a boycott of the presidential meeting in Cartagena. The President’s proposal reflects a position of principle rather than of interests,
reflecting the president’s position that all nations should be treated equally. Ecuador remains in the middle of an ideological debate between Cuba and the US. The presence of Hugo Chávez and Evo Morales in Cartagena has left Rafael Correa isolated in his position and weakened in the inter-American system, especially since the government has found itself making headlines for its disrespect of the freedom of expression and its concentration of power.

By not attending the Summit, Ecuador loses an opportunity to discuss issues of interest to the country, strengthen relations with other governments and, above all, legitimate its position on the inclusion of Cuba in the international community. The absence of Ecuador at the presidential meeting will surely go down in history as a mere anecdote and not as the event that produced a decision to include Cuba. The opportunity to play a prominent role will be taken up by other states.

Sources:

- Interview with Francisco Carrion, ex-Foreign Minister, ex-Ambassador of Ecuador to the UN, March 15, 2012.
- Interview with Michel Levi, Coordinator of the Andean Centre for International Studies of the Simon Bolivar Andean University, March 9, 2012.
• Interview with Vicente Albornoz, Executive Director of CORDES, March 26, 2012.
• Ecuador Weekly Report (Analytica Securities)
• Quantum – Habitus survey, February and March 2012.
• Foreign Affairs Ministry. www.mmrree.gob.ec
• El ciudadano.gob.ec
• ANDES news agency
• El Tiempo newspaper
• El Telégrafo newspaper
• El Universo newspaper
• El Comercio newspaper
• Hoy newspaper
• Radio Caracol (Colombia)
• Infolatam

Specific articles:

• “The US is anti-democratic for excluding Cuba from the Summit of the Americas: Evo Morales”
• “Ecuador: Correa will receive Ahmadinejad in the midst of criticism from the business sector”
• “The international community will mobilise to defend democracy in Ecuador”
  http://www.mmrree.gob.ec/ecuador_actual/bol010.asp
• “Correa: the freedom of expression has been reduced to the freedom of private companies” (video)