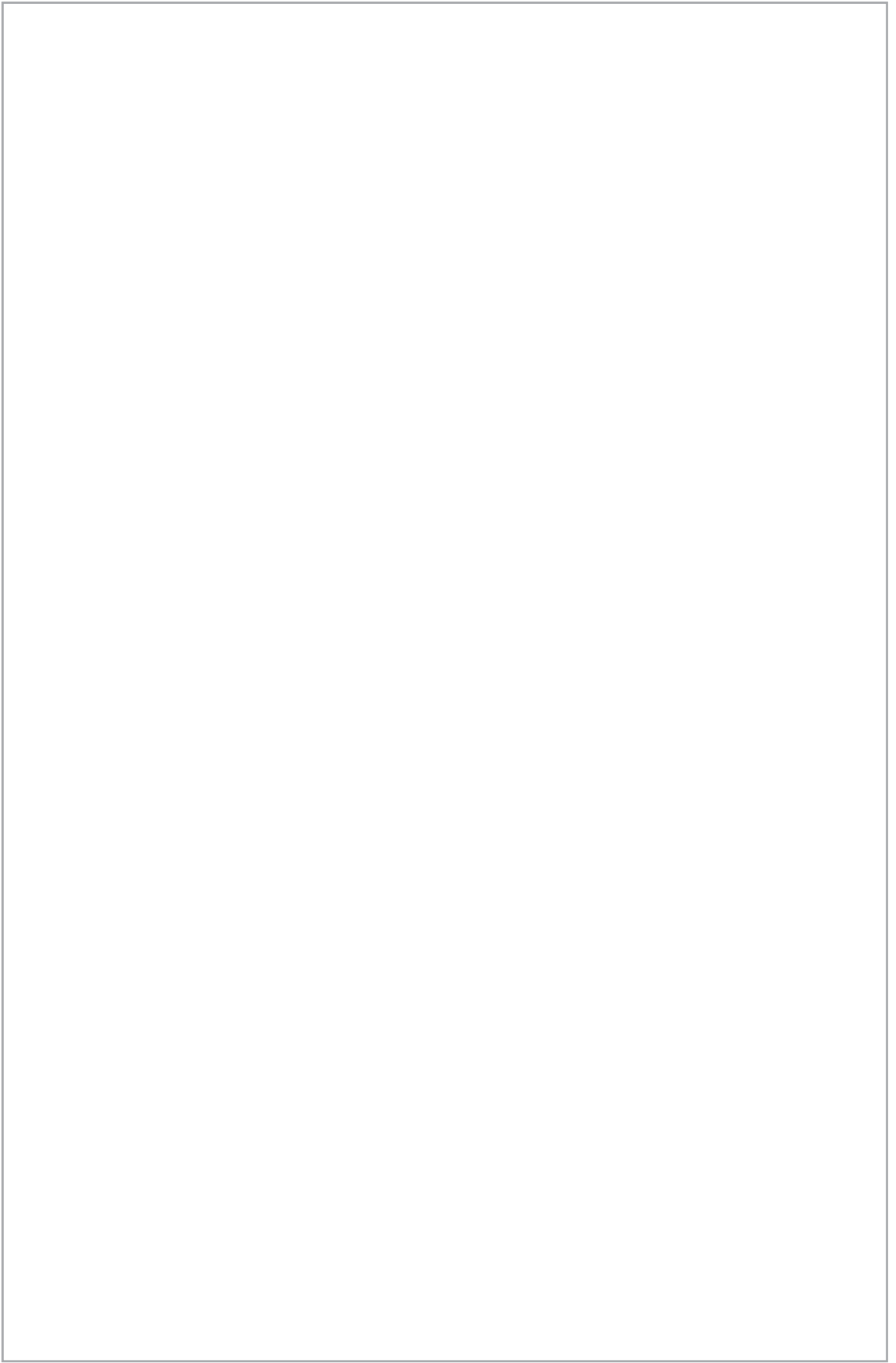


COMMON SENSE

LATIN AMERICA: NEITHER NEOLIBERALISM NOR STATISM;
NEITHER RIGHT NOR LEFT



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By Álvaro Uribe Vélez

A vision that categorizes governments as either left or right is a simplistic perspective that produces a polarized environment. It unleashes irreconcilable emotions and sensitivities that do not coincide with the actions taking place inside governments, and that threaten the unity of our countries.

It was valid when there were dictatorships on the continent, and leftist positions were assumed – well fed by European humanism, especially the post-war humanism of Norberto Bobbio and others – to combat those dictatorships.

It is a simplistic classification because the problem goes much deeper than the boundaries generally drawn up for defining this apparent division. It is an obsolete vision, because if its foundations were valid during the era of military dictatorships, they are no longer valid for the current democratic conditions.

When we say that on this continent the classification of democracies as either left or right should be left behind, it is because in the end such a classification has no consequence or effect on social and economic performance. In contrast, it does produce political polarization.

I have tried to think about what would be the dividing elements we could use to classify left and right governments in Latin America.

1. Globalization: I think that this is more a euphemism, a desire born of ideological artifices, than a reality. When you sell everything you produce without the need for market agreements, you can protest globalization. But when you produce only things that need market agreements in order to have access to more consumers, you have to more clearly understand globalization.

I do not think that today we can use globalization to say that those in favor of globalization are on the right, and those who are against it are on the left.

2. Security: It is rightist, bad, and militaristic...as long as you have no need for developing security programs. As long as you don't have to deal with kidnapping. As long as drug trafficking and terrorist groups do not keep the state in a checkmate. But, when those phenomena appear, governments can either exercise their authority, or sink their people into anarchy.

The priority of security, then, cannot be used as an ideological dividing factor. Security will have greater or less priority, depending on the times in each country.

3. Social cohesion: No democracy, no policy can be sustained long term without seeking social cohesion to back it.

I do not believe that any of these three elements will allow us to classify some democracies as leftist or to discredit others as rightist. We propose that, in place of that, we should use five elements for a scientific evaluation of modern Latin American democracies, according to whether or not they have:

- Security with democratic scope
- Effective protection of civil liberties
- Transparency as a factor of trust
- Social cohesion as the basis for democratic sustainability
- Independent democratic institutions.

With these parameters we can determine whether a democracy is institutional or is based on personal power. Whether it is ruled by the legal system or by personal whims. Whether it is a progressive or repressive democracy, and whether it is inclusive or exclusive.

Democratic Security does not exist, as did the national security doctrine, to suppress freedoms, to sustain dictatorships, or to eliminate dissension. On the contrary, Democratic Security allows us to defend freedoms, or to rescue them when they have been lost due to terrorist action (not by the state when it is democratic).

Our security, four years ago, was all talk. Today it is a reality. We have now had three elections in which Colombians, who were dominated in some regions by the paramilitary movement and in others by guerrilla groups, have been recovering those freedoms, thanks to security advances.

Democratic Security is for providing equal protection for business associations, union leaders, spokesman in favor of the government, and opposition leaders. It is security with effectiveness and with adherence to human rights, as is necessary to provide long-term stability.

If there is something that concerns me in the Latin American debate, it is that there has been no criticism of the regressive trend toward eliminating the independence of institutions. A democracy where the state is not made up of independent institutions, institutions that have a relative degree of independence, is simply a dictatorship with votes. Latin America must give its full attention to this issue.

As far as social cohesion, if we are to advance in that area, a clear concept of state must be developed, as well as of the conditions for investment, growth, and distribution. A concept must be developed for globalization and the internal management of the economy.

Our countries' struggle should be toward integration, toward the construction of a pluralistic democracy, with constant debate, and with fraternity to overcome antagonism. We need a democracy with solidarity, in which we connect the internal economy to the external one, in order to attain universal inclusion.

NEOLIBERALISM

How mistaken are those people who wish to use a now obsolete concept and divide our countries into neoliberals and social democrats. Who want to keep us tied to Adam Smith or to bureaucracy. What we have to look at is the degree of solidarity that we can attain between the public, private, and social sectors.

There are very important cases, such as that of public services. The private and social sectors can come together in providing those services, respecting solidarity.

Solidarity must define not whether the entity is public, private, mixed, or social, but whether the resources really do reach the public to guarantee that solidarity.

Our goal should be to constantly seek agreements that produce solidarity with the public sector when the private or social sectors come together to provide public services. Now ... the public sector should always be the arbitrator to build understanding between the private service provider and the users that receive those services in the community.

Latin America has experienced both complete nationalization and also the dismantling of the state. The first, in the name of social democracy, ended up in social bureaucracy and failure. The second, in the name of neoliberalism, ended up by abandoning the social clause.

We are not dismantling the state. We do not agree with neoliberal criteria or with bureaucratic nationalism that distorts the ambitions of social democracy.

The state must remain and it must improve so that it can intervene when there are market failures and take service to remote regions, etc.

Two processes, apparently antagonistic, are the same, given that they lead to the same result. The neoliberal processes – to demolish the state – failed on the social side. The social processes – bureaucratic – toward complete nationalism – failed on the social side.

Our road is different. Here the state is not at the service of political games, and not at the service of union privileges. It is an efficient state at the service of the community.

Colombia needs a state that will guarantee social benefits so that the country can overcome social exclusion. But it also needs a state that, instead of being a threat to the private sector, can provide opportunities for private investment.

We need social inclusion. And for there to be social inclusion, we need to include investment. That is why Colombia has been building great investor confidence.

In the sixties, the concept of *development* ruled. Its point of reference was Brazil. There it was taught that the economy should be allowed to grow, and the rest would come by itself. Brazil had years in which it grew at a rate of 14%, but in which nobody worried about social policies. While the economy grew at 14 percent, poverty also grew.

Later other countries experimented with pure nationalization, with disdain for investment and growth. The social discourse was that of *sharing the wealth*. Since they were left without investments, they were left without growth, and in the end the only thing they could share was poverty.

There are great lessons in a comparison of Allende's discourse and the transformations in China. Social ideas must generate

collective well being and collective wealth. A people can do nothing if its ambition is to share poverty.

We see private investment not as an end, but as a means for solving the country's social problems. We do not believe that the social theory of overcoming poverty and building equality, and the economic theory that the country should attract investment are mutually exclusive.

Growth in investment, which we are achieving by making sure private investment has a social function – as defined by the Colombian Constitution of 1936 – is an essential element for helping the country defeat poverty and build social justice.

And this is what drives our concept of state.

Lenin was careful to keep the small businessmen in place – despite being the great theoretician of the proletarian state, the great theoretician of the evolution to substitute the capitalist state. He preached holding on to the agricultural entrepreneurs. Stalin, with the idea of nationalizing everything, finished them off. When Perestroika came and Russia wanted to give the land back to agricultural entrepreneurs, those entrepreneurs no longer existed.

The only thing those processes did was to leave the Soviet Union without agricultural production. And the entire industrial infrastructure the state built, when it scared away private investment, ended up on the scrap heap.

That is why we need a state that can guarantee social benefits and private investment. That can help us to meet our social goals.

We understand globalization as a process that has to be driven by some regions, and resources must be used to take infrastructure and well being to the other regions that have been left behind. We understand investment as a social function, connected to

our social goals and results. We understand social cohesion as being connected to security. Without security there is no investment, and without investment there is no other road left us than to share poverty.

We believe that peace is born out of security.

LAW OF JUSTICE AND OF PEACE

Many guerrilla groups in Latin America have lived off of donations made by Western European foundations full of democratic ideals. Those same groups in Colombia feed off of kidnapping, drug trafficking, and the destruction of the environment and of new generations. That is why they are terrorists.

When you look at the jurisprudence of English Common Law, the German codes, or Spanish legislation, you will be surprised to find definitions of terrorism such as this: *terrorism is the use of or simple threat to use force for ideological, political, or religious reasons.*

The deepening of democracy in Colombia gives us the moral authority to not permit the use of force against the state, to discredit any legitimacy of those groups, and to characterize them as terrorist groups.

However, we will not deny ourselves any progress that can be made in peace processes. We are applying a Law of Justice and Peace that is different from laws and peace processes around the world and from prior ones in Colombia. Our law is a law of peace without impunity, a law of peace with truth, a law of peace with reparation to victims. Today this law is being fully applied under the supervision of the OAS.

And there is a great debate in the country because the truth is coming to light. What we are hearing now in the courts is what was only heard before in private conversations, as a consequence

of the state having lost its true sovereignty, of many regions of people having had to submit to the guerrilla or paramilitary groups.

The government is stimulating this truth, because we must have reconciliation. Reconciliation is not born from a lack of truth or from lies. Peace without truth is an ephemeral peace. It is like a healing that is only skin deep.

The truth is necessary for the country to reflect, for the country to know what we went through and how we have to work toward a future without guerrillas, without paramilitaries, without drug trafficking, without corruption. A future of democratic institutions.

We have to look for the complete truth. We have to untangle the truth about para-politics and we have to untangle the truth about the guerrillas and politics. A search for the full truth is not to foment hate. It is the road to a sincere reconciliation, which will arise out of these clashes.

We must move ahead in this process with great courage. The search for truth cannot lead us to being severe toward political adversaries and indulgent toward political friends. We must be totally objective in this, and exercise the least subjectivity possible.

I think that the severity of this process to prevent impunity is setting a great precedent. It is going to create a framework that will also be applied to processes with the guerrilla when they occur in the future.

Colombia had been pointed out internationally as a paradise for impunity. The rigorous observance of this process will make the world respect Colombia, and throw away that designation.