

# Measures for good governance

DR. MD AYUBUR RAHMAN

PEOPLE of this country for the last twelve years have been watching the same act of proposal and refusal of dialogue between the major political parties for evolving some effective measures towards establishing at least a semblance of good governance in the country. The call for such a dialogue is in its peak now following the worst tragedy of August 21 — a mindless barbarity ever happened in the history of any nation in the world. Government and opposition in spite of their political divergence and difference of ideology can and should work in harmony so far as the country's welfare and progress are concerned. Ensuring a good governance is the basic responsibility of the government but nevertheless the opposition should cooperate the government to achieve it which has never happened for obvious reasons and one is getting increasingly convinced that such a dialogue is perhaps unlikely to take place and even if it does, it may hardly bring any result against for 'obvious' reasons.

That the proposal of dialogue did not outline or identify any theme of discussion and bomb attack is tacking place here and there for the last ten years or more and even on holy shrine and foreign dignitary (British High Commissioner) and the latest targeting the former prime minister and present leader of opposition, people are gradually getting scared and losing hope. Immediately after every incident we heard the determined promises of the highest law enforcing authority to reveal the cause of event before the public and bring the culprit to books. But no outcome as yet. The nation has the right now to know

from both the government and the opposition if they do not want to reveal it or are not capable of doing it.

The state of affairs of the country is getting worse day in and day out. Some points of dialogue suggested below are put for the distinguished politicians, administrators, professionals, intelligentsia, teachers, students and all the people of different strata of the society to form a consensus to establish rule of law in the country.

Fairly elected government: An administrative mechanism or device

self sufficiency in food are definitely not accounted for corruption. People responsible for corruption are involved in national wealth management and administration. If somebody wants to identify those responsible without fear and favour, this can be done easily with some modification in the existing law extending him protection.

Wage-index price index parity: Salary, wage, honorarium, remuneration etc. for public servants of the republic should be fixed in such a way that any one working can lead

for corruption, nepotism and favour.

Students to be kept free from party politics: All educational institutions should be free from national party politics. Students and teachers must be banned by legislation from taking part in party politics. We have come to a stage when our children believe that they can achieve anything including the position of a Minister at the age of thirty by becoming a student leader or an activist of a political party than to be a good student for a good job which provides no comparative

good job which may be strengthen. Why in politics?

Reducing the size of government: We have set up a ridiculously big size government. We do not need more than 12 ministers and 15 secretaries. Fifty percent of the existing directorate and other organisations can be reduced easily. There is no need of any four-tier administration as there is hardly any work at the levels of deputy, joint and additional secretaries. Most of the issues come to the ministry after being screened and examined by the technical directorate headed by officers of the rank of additional secretary. Similarly after an issue is cleared by the Minister, the file should go to Prime Minister for final decision. Except the personal staff of the Prime Minister, there is no need of any person like Director, DG, Addl. Secretary etc. in the Prime Minister's Secretariat. In fact there is no need of such separate secretariat. The single most important factor to the obstruction of development is the too much up and down moment of the file. I am saying so after practical experience and studying the system of government of many developed and developing countries.

Total removal of partisan attitude: A culture has been developed now to carry out and nourish our sense of belonging to some particular political party even in our service career and with patronising the party in power politicisation is getting stronger everyday. Failure of administration is now largely accounted for due to this partisan feeling.

Dr. Md. Ayubur Rahman, is a retired Govt. high official and former President, Krishibeed Institution, Bangladesh.

**That the proposal of dialogue did not outline or identify any theme of discussion and bomb attack is tacking place here and there for the last ten years or more and even on holy shrine and foreign dignitary (British High Commissioner) and the latest targeting the former prime minister and present leader of opposition, people are gradually getting scared and losing hope.**

should be evolved to ensure election of Member of Parliament (M.P.) free from the influence of money and muscle. Many believe that at least taka one crore is required to contest in the national election. I think everybody understands who can afford such an amount and consequent effect of this huge investment in the election! This must be checked. Besides, legal provision has to be evolved so that elected Members of Parliament must attend its session to discharge their responsibilities and shall have no scope to remain absent.

Checking corruption: We have made ourselves famous in the world with ranking of the name of Bangladesh as number one corrupt country. Our poor farmers and villagers who are working so hard to earn a

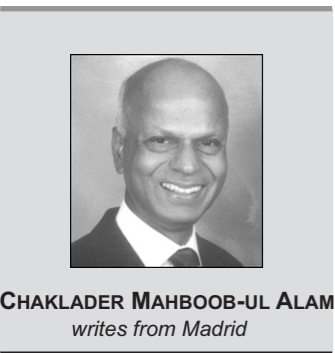
modest life with at least a four-member family. Wage index always should be at par with price index. We had several pay commissions in the past and those always ignored the price index and suggested a pay scale which hardly could meet 15' days expenditure in the month. A large section of employees become corrupt under compulsion. Give them only that much so that they can survive corresponding to their status.

According to many reports at least forty percent of our resources are spent on invisible head (bribe). Let us stop it and a part of it be given toward increasing salary. System of accountability should be introduced on the basis of income, expenditure and asset accumulated. Capital punishment should be introduced

modern amenities of life. We realised since 1948 that we were under the occupation of Pakistanis and therefore it was the students who as youth had greater scope to initiate political activities for liberation of our homeland. But we are now an independent nation and our students being the future of the country we want them to build themselves up with proper education to stand in competition with other nations.

Religion to be kept out of politics: Ninety percent of our population is Muslim and our religion is Islam. We are practicing Islam in our everyday life. Is any political party in the name of our religion still then required? We may have organisation to motivate the people how best we can practice Islam in our daily life. I believe that Tablig Jamat is doing a

# Deconstructing the myth of a deep Spanish-American friendship



CHAKLADER MAHBOOB-UL ALAM writes from Madrid

THE recent decision of the newly -elected Socialist government of Spain to withdraw its troops from Iraq, who were serving there as part of the US -led occupation forces, has brought the Spanish- American relations into sharp international focus. The current prime minister, Jose Luis Rodriguez-Zapatero, has been severely criticised by both the defeated conservative elements of Spanish society and the all powerful neo-conservatives of American politics for allegedly destroying the deep-rooted friendship between Spain and the United States. Is this true? How deep is the Spanish - American friendship? What is the historical background to Spanish- American relations? What are the current Spanish perspectives on the US?

After the discovery of America by Columbus under Spanish flag in 1492, which started the process of European colonial expansion all over the world, Spain built a vast overseas empire in the conquered territories of North and South America. As a result of these colonial possessions and its military prowess, Spain in the sixteenth century and the early part of the seventeenth century became the most powerful country in Europe and perhaps the world. Needless to say that its supremacy was challenged by other European powers like England and France. Spain, France and England often formed temporary alliances between two to fight the third. As a result, Europe remained engulfed in continuous warfare for centuries, which also affected the American colonies. Actually this centuries-old "struggle for political and economic hegemony over the New World" defined the relationship between Britain and Spain until the American independence and later between the United States and Spain.

The history of the relations between the United States and Spain can be divided into four distinct periods; first, from 1776 to 1783; second, from 1783 to 1898 third, from 1898 to 1953 and fourth from 1953 to 2004.

Although the Seven Years' War ( 1756-1763), ended in a clear victory for Britain over France and Spain, ( France's ally in this war under a treaty called Family Compact ), Britain found itself in serious financial difficulties because of the long war. The British government felt that the English settlers in America, who had benefited so much from the war and the subsequent peace treaty which had granted unlimited access to vast tracts of land east of Mississippi, should help ease the financial burden of the British government by paying more taxes. This led to the gradual deterioration of relations between Britain and its colonies during the next decade and eventually to the Declaration of Independence in 1776.

The Spanish government did not have much sympathy for the rebels. It was particularly concerned about the ideological impact, the activities of the rebels will have on the Spanish settlers in the Caribbean and the rest of the Spanish empire. But the pain of the recent defeat at the hands of the British in the Seven years' War was still too fresh and the temptation to take revenge on the British too great. So the Spanish government started making substantial contributions of money and materials to the rebels in a discreet manner and continued to do so until the final victory. Although in comparison with the French

former Spanish colonies, people spoke Spanish and acknowledged a cultural link with Spain, they recognised the United States as the dominant power in the Americas. Thus the vast empire was reduced to only Cuba, Puerto Rico ( the Caribbean area) and the Philippines, which became the centre of Spanish- American rivalry during the last phase of this long conflict.

The US- Mexican War ( 1846-48), in which Mexico lost vast territories to the United States , merely confirmed Spanish fears that the Caribbean ( Cuba and Puerto Rico ) was going to be the next target of the American

writers, poets and intellectuals of the 20s, who admired American dynamism and creativity and did so much to foment cultural relations between the two countries. Needless to say, the liberal elements of the Spanish society, who expected help from the United States in their civil war felt abandoned by the United States. That bitterness still persists in some quarters.

The Civil war left Spain completely devastated. During the second World War, although Franco's sympathies lay with Hitler and Mussolini, officially at least, he maintained a position of

member of the American-dominated Western alliance.

There is nothing called a general Spanish perspective on the United States. It varies from person to person depending on his or her political affiliation, religious inclination ( whether a practising Catholic or a non-practising one), level of education, which side the family fought in the Spanish civil war and economic background. Since both the countries now belong to the same Western alliance, at the official level, the relationship between the governments is cordial. However, the Conservative governments have so far been more pro-American , while the Socialist governments have been critical of certain aspects of American foreign policy.

As far as the general public are concerned, they have learnt to speak English, send their children to American universities, see US movies, eat at fast food restaurants, wear American T-shirts and listen to Jazz . But a large section of them, although not openly hostile to the US, remains suspicious of America's arrogant unilateralism , its jingoistic with-us -or-against-us rhetoric, bible thumping Protestant fundamentalism, coarse patriotism and hegemony in world affairs. It is curious that the same conservative elements of the Spanish society who in earlier years despised the US as a bastion of simple-minded fundamentalist Protestants have now become the most fervent supporters of President Bush's foreign policy, because they think that this slavish attitude would somehow help them to put Spain back on the map. They seem to have forgotten that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century , it was the United States which literally wiped Spain off the map as a world power. But the majority of Spaniards do not subscribe to this slavish attitude. The results of March general elections bear out this point. The Conservatives, who supported American invasion of Iraq suffered an ignominious defeat in these elections.

9/11 produced a groundswell of sympathy for the United States in Spain. But it seems Bush has forfeited that goodwill by attacking Iraq under false pretences. Millions of Spaniards demonstrated against the invasion of Iraq. More than 80% of the people opposed sending Spanish troops to Iraq. Bush's insistence on launching pre-emptive wars, rejecting jurisdiction over Americans for the International Criminal Court, not authorising American soldiers to serve under United Nations command , denying any funds to organisations involved in abortion , applying a hypocritical policy in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and not signing the Kyoto Protocol have alienated many Spaniards, who have a negative view of America's superpower status. They feel that Bush has created a climate of impunity and fear. No wonder, many Spaniards now consider the United States as a danger to world peace. The results of the November presidential election will have a great impact on future Spanish perspectives on the United States.

Franco died in 1975. Spain soon became a fully democratic country under a constitutional monarchy. In 1986, Spain joined the NATO. It thus became a fully qualified

## LETTER FROM EUROPE

**9/11 produced a groundswell of sympathy for the United States in Spain. But it seems Bush has forfeited that goodwill by attacking Iraq under false pretences. Millions of Spaniards demonstrated against the invasion of Iraq. More than 80% of the people opposed sending Spanish troops to Iraq. No wonder, many Spaniards now consider the United States as a danger to world peace.**

contribution to the rebel cause, it was not very significant, there is a consensus of opinion that Spain helped the Americans with money and material at a crucial moment of their history. American War Of Independence brought Spain and the Americans in direct contact with each other which experience moulded their relationship for the next century.

Even though the Americans accepted help from Spain in their war efforts, they were convinced that Spain was not really interested in their independence and that it simply exploited the issue to its own advantage. On the other hand, Spain was convinced that as soon as the Americans gained their independence, they would simply replace the British in their much larger struggle for the control of the Americas. Thus we see that even at the moment of maximum co-operation, Spain and the US looked at each other with suspicion. At the end of the War of Independence, both sides prepared themselves for a long and bitter struggle. For the next one hundred years or so ( 1783-1898) animosity was the most important feature that characterised Spanish- American relations, while Spain fought a losing war against the United States which culminated in the Treaty of Paris in 1899.

During this period, the United States, convinced of its manifest destiny and using all the means at its disposal, not only gained possession of Louisiana and Florida but also vast tracts of land in the South (Texas), South West ( New Mexico and Arizona) and West ( Oregon and California), all of which once belonged to or claimed by Spain. At the end of the process, Spain was virtually expelled from the North American continent. Mexico declared independence from Spain in 1821 and revolutionary wars soon engulfed the Spanish colonies in Central and South America, which further increased Spanish bitterness and deteriorated relations with the US because of its stand on this issue. The Monroe Doctrine (1823) , which claimed the whole of Latin America as US backyard infuriated Spain even more. But Spain failed to appreciate the growing political, military and economic influence of the United States in Central and South America. Although in these

expansionist policy. Emboldened by the victory in the Mexican War, President James Polk decided that for geopolitical and economic reasons it was the most natural thing for the US to gain control of Cuba. He first tried to purchase Cuba from Spain. But when Spain refused to comply, he reached the conclusion that sooner or later the US will have to seize it by force. And that was precisely what happened. Taking advantage of the Cuban independence movement, in 1898 ,the United States fought a brief war against Spain, at the end of which the US took control of Cuba, Puerto Rico , the Philippines and an island of the Marianas in the Pacific. The control of the Caribbean made the United States the undisputed master of the New World.

The Spanish- American War of 1898, not only destroyed what was left of the Spanish empire but also struck at the very roots of "Spanishness" or Spanish identity, which led to intense soul-searching and national self-examination. Cultural and commercial relations between Spain and the United States improved because of the absence of territorial rivalry. This ( 1899-1936) is one of the rare periods of Spanish- American relations during which the two nations tried to understand each other and made gestures of reconciliation and friendship .

At the beginning of the Spanish Civil War ( 1936-39), the legally constituted government of Spain expected help from the US because of its professed policy to support democratically elected governments. But throughout the conflict United States maintained a neutral position, which created much frustration and bitterness on the Spanish Republican side. When the civil war ended with the victory of the nationalists over the republicans, Washington quickly recognised Franco's regime in order to be able to influence him in future European events. But the US was slow to realise that by maintaining a neutral position in the Spanish civil war, it had allowed a group of right-wing elements to take over Spain, who considered the US as a bastion of simple-minded fundamentalist protestants and the country primarily responsible for the loss of their vast empire. In short, these people had nothing in common with the Spanish

neutrality. Throughout the conflict, Spanish- American relations remained cool, if not openly unfriendly. After the end of the war, Franco approached the United States for financial aid to reconstruct his war-ravaged country. But the new American president, Harry Truman, who was a Baptist, hated the religious intolerance in Franco's Spain. He wanted nothing less than the destruction of his dictatorial regime. So it did not come as a surprise to anyone , when in 1946, following a United Nations resolution calling all its members to sever diplomatic relations with Spain, the US withdrew its ambassador to Spain, which was thus virtually cut off from the rest of the Western world..

But in the wake of the cold war, the US government reassessed the situation. The Soviet Union had become the new enemy of the Western world. The US realised that in its global strategy to fight communism, it would have to count on Spain, whose dictator Franco, was vehemently anticommunist. In May 1949, the United Nations authorised its members to send ambassadors back to Madrid. In 1953, the Pact of Madrid was signed between Madrid and Washington, which allowed the Americans to open and maintain several bases on Spanish territory. In exchange, United States agreed to give generous financial aid and military assistance to Spain. In 1955, with the support of US, Spain was readmitted to the United Nations. Spain was thus reincorporated into world affairs. It also brought the governments of US and Spain closer to each other than ever before. For the sake of realpolitik , the US sacrificed its principles and accepted a dictator as an important strategic ally. But a section of the Spanish public felt that it was an affront to their national dignity to station American troops on Spanish soil. But over the years, the Spaniards have come to accept the bases, which were used by the US in the first Gulf War and more recently in the invasion of Iraq.

Franco died in 1975. Spain soon became a fully democratic country under a constitutional monarchy. In 1986, Spain joined the NATO. It thus became a fully qualified