

# EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

## PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION

TEL: 880-2-883-7150-4

FAX: 880-2-9881677, 9885688

E-MAIL: [DhakaPA@state.gov](mailto:DhakaPA@state.gov)

WEBSITE: <http://dhaka.usembassy.gov>



## **Speech by Ambassador Moriarty “Democracy, Development, and Denial of Space to Terrorism”**

**Bangladesh Political Science Association  
Saturday, May 31 2008**

Dr. Ataur Rahman, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen: It is an honor for me to address such a distinguished group of scholars. What I would like to do this morning is to share some thoughts that I hope will provoke a lively and thoughtful discussion on an important issue: democracy. I see this as the beginning of a dialogue that we will hopefully continue over the coming months and years. If you find my remarks today provocative, that will mean that I have achieved my desired goal.

I had been asked to talk today about the linkages between democracy, development, and denial of space to terrorism. During my Senate confirmation hearing, and in my public remarks since arriving in Bangladesh, I have repeatedly spoken about the “Three D’s.” Simply put, I view democracy, development, and denial of space to terrorism as three intertwined issues which serve as the pillars of our bilateral relationship. Today, I would like to focus on the first “D,” democracy, and talk about the importance of promoting democracy. Just as importantly, however, I will make the case that these three D’s cannot really be separated.

Promoting democracy, or as it is sometimes called “the Freedom Agenda,” is a central component of U.S. foreign policy; President Bush explained why in his second inaugural address. He said, “the best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world. America’s vital interests and our deepest beliefs are now one.” As the United States confronts the greatest challenge of our era, defeating terrorism, Americans realize that, over the long run, we must diminish the underlying conditions in society that terrorists seek to exploit. We believe that this can be achieved only by advancing, effective functioning democracy.

It is our belief that the spread of liberal democracy is an essential component of a long-term strategy for preventing danger to America and other democracies from materializing. As

the world's oldest democracy, the United States has a moral and practical responsibility to help those striving for the freedoms which are universally recognized as inherent rights of all people.

Today, U.S. values and interests are more closely linked than ever before. As President Bush said in his 2007 State of the Union Address "What every terrorist fears most is human freedom...Free people are not drawn to violent and malignant ideologies...So we advance our own security interests by helping moderates and reformers and brave voices for democracy." As a practical matter, experience has shown that over time the American people will not support, and the U.S. Government cannot sustain, policies that contradict democratic principles.

Americans are not alone in seeking the expansion of democracy. Indeed, all around the world, people are pressing for their rights to be respected and their governments to be responsive, for their voices to be heard and their votes to count, for just laws and justice for all. People around the world increasingly recognize that the democratic form of government can best meet their demands for dignity, liberty, and equality.

Why is this so? Why is democracy, as Winston Churchill said, "the worst form of government save all others?" Democratic governments must by definition repeatedly obtain the mandate of their people. That core fact produces a number of virtuous effects: Democracies honor and uphold basic human rights, including freedom of religion, conscience, speech, assembly, association, and press. Democracies protect individual rights of all people, including ethnic, racial, religious or other minority groups, by ensuring government is responsive to the people's needs.

Democracies provide the most open environment – free of heavy government engagement – for free trade, economic development, and market forces. Democracies promote security and stability over the long term. Democracies are less likely to sponsor terrorism. Democracy promotes responsible behavior in international arena. Democracies tend to engage most constructively and in accordance with international law.

Some have said that the United States mistakenly believes elections alone are sufficient to establish democracy. Here in Bangladesh, some have criticized the United States and the international community for focusing too much on the need for elections to be held before the end of the year. The United States does indeed believe that elections should be held by the end of this year. We have welcomed the assurances of the Chief Adviser and others that they will take place in December.

At the same time, there should be no doubt that the United States also recognizes that a sustainable democracy requires democratic practices and institutions. A sustainable democracy requires a societal consensus on certain fundamentals, such as diversity, tolerance, and the peaceful transfer of political power. Elections are a vitally important, visible element of democracy, but are ultimately only part of the equation.

Being elected in a free and fair election does not mean that a government will necessarily rule in a democratic manner; holding free and fair elections does not mean that a society and government are in fact democratic in their daily activities.

I believe there are three essential components to democracy: first, freedoms and rights; second, good governance; and third, a vibrant civil society

- Freedoms and Rights are the first essential component: Sustainable democracies must not only have free and fair elections, but must also protect freedom of speech, assembly, press, and religious belief.
- The second essential component of a sustainable democracy is Good Governance and Accountability: In a sustainable democracy, government operates responsible, effectively, transparently, and accountably; Government operates fully within the boundaries of the rule of law. This includes a functioning parliament that exercises lawmaking and oversight responsibilities, an accountable executive, an impartial judicial system, a separation of powers, constraints on the power of any branch of government, and the peaceful transition of power based on the will of the people.
- The third requirement for a sustainable democracy is a vibrant Civil Society, including an active non-governmental organization community, a free media, and an engaged citizenry.

These three components are as essential to democracy in Bangladesh as to democracies elsewhere. Success in restoring democracy in Bangladesh will require close attention to each of these essential components.

The Caretaker Government has introduced reforms necessary to strengthen democracy in Bangladesh. Future governments will need to honor, consolidate, and then expand those reforms.

No one type of democratic system fits all countries and societies. Some successful democracies have a presidential form of government, others a parliamentary form. In some

countries, elections are held on a first-past the post system; elsewhere they are proportional. But successful democracies will have similar essential components. By democracy's very definition, however, a system that is imposed cannot be democratic.

To be successful, Bangladesh's democracy, too, will need to contain the essential components of democracy, reflect Bangladesh's history and culture, and reflect a consensus among Bangladesh's citizens and political parties.

Democratization is not a linear process, nor is success guaranteed, at least in the short term. There will be successes and failures; some great and some small. Democracy is not easy, smooth, or pain free. The history of both the United States and Bangladesh speaks to that, and our systems are both still works in progress.

As James Madison, one of the Founding Fathers of the United States wrote in the Federalist Papers "Experience has instructed us that no skill in the science of government has yet been able to discriminate and define, with sufficient certainty, its three great provinces the legislative, executive, and judiciary; or even the privileges and powers of the different legislative branches. Questions daily occur in the course of practice, which prove the obscurity which reigns in these subjects, and which puzzle the greatest adepts in political science."

The process of building democracy in Bangladesh will not end when the polls are held in December. For this reason, it is important that the ongoing dialogue between the Government and political parties also includes discussion of what will take place after the elections, since I hope that Bangladesh's political parties will take some of the steps necessary to strengthen democracy here, including by forming a responsible opposition if they do not succeed at the ballot box. Strong democratic parties, both in the majority and in opposition, are essential to a viable democracy.

Some have questioned the right of the United States to promote democracy, given flaws within our own system. We promote democracy because it is the right thing to do, not because we have a perfect record. Since the founding of our country until today, there have been examples (slavery, internment of Japanese Americans, denial of voting rights, Abu Ghraib) of the United States not living up to its own ideals. It was, however, our democratic system that has helped us recognize and right these wrongs.

The United States has not sought to silence those who seek to point out our shortcomings. In fact, almost all revelations of human rights problems in the U.S. first come from Americans

themselves, and almost never is the commentary, debate and criticism over real or perceived U.S. shortcomings in protecting democracy more sophisticated or intense abroad than it is at home in our own country.

Rather than denying our mistakes, I hope that others will learn from them. America's imperfections do not relieve us of the right or responsibility to help others build their democratic systems.

The United States provides hundreds of millions of dollars in assistance to promote democracy and human rights globally, including here in Bangladesh. Much of this money around the world goes to non-governmental organizations that monitor elections, train judges and constitutional drafting committees, support free media and civil society, raise awareness about human rights standards, and assist human rights defenders who are under pressure from their governments.

Through the Millennium Challenge Account the United States provides billions of dollars to countries that are committed to governing justly, investing their own resources in their people, and encouraging economic freedom.

Promoting democracy is not easy; advances in democracy always are hard won. But, in closing, let me ask: What is your vision of the future of democracy in Bangladesh? Is it more of the same? For my part, I can envision a Bangladesh where the many good laws on the books are enforced, where political parties play a constructive role in politics whether they are in or out of government, where a vibrant civil society helps to ensure clean and effective government. I can envision a Bangladesh where hard work and compromise, good leadership and a good system have made the country an example of democracy that others will want to emulate.

And, most of all, I can envision a Bangladesh where effective, sustainable democracy has made both poverty and terrorism things of the past.

Thank you again for inviting me to speak with you today. You can count on my support, and that of the United States Government, as you work together to promote democracy, advance development, and deny space to terrorists here in Bangladesh.

=====

*\* As prepared for delivery*

**GR/ 2008**