

U.S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION RESULT-
A MANDATE FOR ANOTHER FOUR YEARS
OF BLOODSHED

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By Professor Khurshid Ahmad

The U.S. presidential elections that were held on 2nd November 2004 are unique in many respects in the entire American history of more than 200 years. These elections were apparently held in the United States of America and were participated by American voters, but, in fact for all practical reasons, all the conscious and informed people throughout the world, who keep an eye on world politics, were also involved and participating in their own ways. They were, and still are, up in struggle to spare America and the whole world of Bush's war-mongering and dangerous policies. With every major city, TV channel, newspaper office, and political platform looking like a polling station, it was being felt as if the people of the whole world were in the search of their own future in the electoral battle between George Bush and John Kerry. Nothing like this had ever happened before.

As for the world outside America, every newspaper analysis and every opinion poll was showing John Kerry far ahead of George Bush. Not just in the Arab, Muslim or Third World, but throughout Europe and Latin America, people in all countries were aspiring for Bush defeat – including Britain, whose government though had chosen to be a Bush ally but whose people in an overwhelming majority (70-80 percent according to some survey polls) desired a defeat for Bush. But Kerry's admission of defeat even before the final count dashed all their hopes. Though, in a close race, George W. Bush emerged as a winner by obtaining 51 percent (58.4 million) votes against John Kerry's 48.5 percent (54.8 million) votes, and getting Electoral College's 270 votes against Kerry's 252 votes to become president for second four-year term.

But, with a discerning eye and deep analysis of the situation, it would be safe to say that the decision of the majority of American voters, which neglected international opinion and ground realities in America, was more a defeat for Kerry than a victory for Bush, because they and their election strategy could not get rid of Bush whose popular approval rating had dropped from 90 percent in 2001 to only 49 percent in the days just before the elections (Time, November 15, 2004; p 27). It was because of the American-style democracy, media power, effective lobbying, and Americans' distorted vision of moral values and principles that George Bush managed to become president despite the destruction of four years and poor record of performance. He will now plunge America and other nations of the world in new problems, after taking oath on 20th January 2005. In his typical way he has claimed that America has given a decision and his policy has got a public mandate.

But this claim needs second thoughts, because America stands bitterly divided and the gulf between the designs and avowals of the U.S. leadership and the views, feelings and expectations of the people of America as well as of the rest of the world has widened so much that the dreams of peace and tranquility, rule of law, and existence of a just and peaceful world have almost been

shattered. In every part of the world – including America – the shadows of anxiety, unrest and uncertainty are becoming long. Bush could win these elections only by creating an atmosphere of fear. This fear is now enveloping the whole world. If there is any sigh of relief, it is: These are the last four Bush years, according to the U.S. Constitution! Another unusual feature of these elections was that all the important newspapers broke away from their long-held tradition (of not supporting any of the candidates in their editorial comments, while running features and articles on all political shades of opinion) when they urged American voters to prefer (admitting all his weaknesses) John Kerry.

New York Times, Washington Post and Economist all had one voice in this regard. Knowing the popular sentiment, they were in fact trying to spare America and the rest of the world from further problems and conflicts. When the election results showed Bush as winner, Germany's widely circulated weekly Der Spiegel complained about Americans' "eyes wide shut" by showing the Statue of Liberty blindfolded with the American flag. Daily Mirror, London, cried out "How can 59,054,087 be so DUMB?" Pravda, Moscow, had this to write: The Christian fundamentalists of America are the mirror image of the Taliban, both of which insult and deny their God. (The Economist, Special Report, American Values, 13th November 2004, p 29) Similar are the views and feelings in America's neighboring countries.

Bush visited two countries after the election. Chile was one, where Asia Pacific Economic Forum's summit meeting was held soon after the election. Thousands of people demonstrated against President Bush. The banners they were carrying read: You have blood on your hands. We do not want you here. Among the 20 heads of states and governments, and more than 500 delegates of big corporations, only Bush was received with black flags. Such was the public response on the occasion of Bush's first foreign visit! Then, on 30th November 2004, he went to Canada. He met the response from thousands of peoples in Ottawa and Halifax who were raising slogans against him. A large number of people from the legal community presented a memorandum to the Canadian premier Paul Martin that was, in fact, a charge sheet against Bush for his and the U.S.'s crimes against humanity. It gave a list of crimes of Bush and the U.S. under his leadership during his first four years. They asked their government not to receive Bush but to try him for war crimes like the Nuremberg trial of the German political leadership after the Second World War. Electoral victory cannot cover up the facts and propaganda cannot stand public sentiments and feelings. The U.S. leadership and its cronies should better understand the mood of the time.

It is indeed a right of the people of a country to elect whomever they think deserves their leadership, but one of the features of globalization is that leadership and policies of the countries with a global role should be influenced by the people and leaderships of those countries who are affected by their policies. This is why it is important for our people and concerned circles to deeply analyze the factors and forces behind these elections, their results, and implications on world politics. What were the factors that produced this result? The first thing to note in this regard is

that America is not a country but a continent. Though 118 million people cast their votes, all the objective and neutral studies bear witness to the fact that international issues and foreign policy has never been a subject of interest for the American people. Their real interest is in internal issues. Americans' knowledge about other countries and nations are also nominal. Then, America has been the sole superpower for quite some time now, with its military presence not only in Iraq, Afghanistan and Korea, but it has deployed some 300,000 troops in more than 80 countries of the world. It employs all means to maintain its domination of the world: military, economic and propaganda. It is, therefore, necessary for those who make policies in different parts of the world to understand the true nature and makeup of the U.S. leadership and its policies.

It is unfortunate that leadership and media in Pakistan have not fulfilled their responsibilities in this regard. In the absence of collective, consultative and institutionalized policy-making system, it has become a one-man show. An individual has concentrated all powers in his hands, does whatever he wants, and members of the official party and media take it as their religious duty to glorify and eulogize each and every act and utterance that comes from him. Here lies our real weakness. It is necessary to have a true understanding of the makeup and working of the American society, its political system and its present condition, policy-making process, and different forces behind the scene and actors on the stage. It is necessary for Pakistan, Muslim world, and other countries of the world so that they could formulate correct policies in the light of their political, economic, civilizational and ideological objectives, aspirations and interests, and could present an alternative strategy.

While research on these elections would continue, the most important of what can safely be said even now is that it was neither some positive target nor performance that was decisive in these elections, but it was the sense of fear that Bush and his campaign strategists exploited deftly and quite successfully that proved to be decisive. One of the defining characteristics of America is its material prosperity and sense of security among the people. Not a single war has been fought on the American land during the last 200 years. The theatre of war during both the World Wars was in Europe, Asia and Africa. Though America joined the war, but it was not fought on its territory. Americans, therefore, had not had the experience of destructions of war.

Attack on Pearl Harbor was the first such incident on the U.S. territory. Then, the 9/11 attacks, which resulted in total destruction of the Twin Towers and death of 2,752 people of 40 countries of the world, was the second incident that gave rise to a sense of insecurity among the Americans. The Bush administration, then, made this sense of insecurity the central point of its so-called war against terrorism. It also organized the whole election campaign on war-psychosis. John Kerry fell in this trap when he used the same language with regard to military action against Iraq and terrorism. He even tried to out-do Bush. Feeling it superficial, American voter preferred 'war president' for the continuation of this war. This was the card that Bush played quite cleverly. Yet, war in Iraq and terrorism were third in the list of decisive factors in the eye of the American voter

with 19 percent, preceded by economic and employment issues (20 percent) and moral values and safeguarding the family system (22 percent).

It is interesting to note that Bush and his political team presented Iraq war and terrorism (at the international and national levels) and Kerry's Liberal views on family system and moral values (homosexuality, abortion, and free sex) as two aspects of the fear syndrome. It is this negative factor that Bush used to exploit religious sentiments of the American people and, especially, to win the support of the fundamentalists. Brazilian President Lula de Silva explained this situation in clear words when he said: The exploitation of fear is a highly developed and refined science, but Brazil is not convinced by this culture that triumphed in American elections. What concerns us in Latin America is that in the name of defending its security, the United States will escalate the wars it has begun. (International Herald Tribune, 1st December 2004) The reverberations of these views can be heard from France to Malaysia in the writings of all important writers and analysts. It is for this reason that not just America but the entire world has become far more unsafe since it was before 11th September 2001 and is suffering from acute sense of insecurity. Bush has fully reaped the political harvest of this situation.

The second important aspect in American politics and collective life is about the role of religion, especially the role played by Christian fundamentalists and extremists. In other countries, America champions the cause of secularism and liberalism, wants to purge Muslim countries of religious elements, and wants legislation in this regard, has made Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran its targets, is doling out dollars for reshaping the system of religious education in secular molds, and, for realizing these objectives, is cajoling local leaderships through official channels as well as NGOs. While it calls for the separation of religion and politics, what is its own record? And especially that of the small, well-organized and extremely powerful group that is known as the neo-cons? It provides for a revealing study. The Constitution does prescribe for the separation of Church and State, but according to the latest surveys, 80 percent of the population believes in God, 60 percent say religion play real and functional role in their life. In a recent PEW survey (March-May 2004), Religion is important in political thinking, the break-up of different religious shades was:

- Evangelical Protestants Traditionalists: **81 percent**
- Centrists: **41 percent**
- Modernists: **21 percent**
- Mainline Protestants Traditionalists: **56 percent**
- Centrists: **29 percent**
- Modernists: **15 percent**
- Latin Protestants: **51 percent**
- Black Protestants: **57 percent**
- Catholics Traditionalists: **50 percent**
- Centrists: **22 percent**
- Modernists: **12 percent** (The Economist, American Values, 13th November 2004)

Almost similar is the situation with respect to Israel's support and indifference to the plight of, or even hostility toward, the Palestinians. This is proved by a Gallup survey that also shows that more than 50 percent Americans feel that Church should play a more effective role in politics. George Bush exploited this religious sentiment quite adeptly in his political campaign. He projected himself as a new-born Christian and claimed that what he was doing was for God's sake. Karl Rove, the brain behind the election campaign, had chalked out this strategy; and would play instrumental role in future policy-making. Consolidation of the role of religion in America and its elimination in the Muslim world present a strange contradiction. Extremism is embraced there, but a war is waged against what is labeled as extremism here! Here, "enlightened moderation" is being preaching of – rather, imposed with all might and use of force. This is the duplicity and double standards that Iqbal exposes in his poetry.

The third important feature of the U.S. presidential election was its negative approach. Bush and his media team made the person of John Kerry a target of their attack: private life, war medals, voting record – all were subjected to ruthless attacks. The election campaign cost \$4 billion, with \$1.45 billion spent on TV ads; and dozens of books were published on the theme that Kerry was unfit for the war against terrorism (for example "Unfit for Command" by John E.O. Neil and Jerome Corsi) This is the position of the most developed democracy in the world! Kerry's mental superiority and grasp on policy issues was admitted by all but dirty tricks and smear campaign on media washed it all away! Now Bush claims that election results show confidence in his international policies, he, therefore, would pursue these policies with even greater zeal and fervor. These are:

1. Make an attempt to sort out all issues of the world unilaterally, and use all might and force for this purpose.
2. Render international institutions ineffectual, or to force them into submission; marginalize the United Nations, in particular, and blackmail its Secretary General and use him for achieving the targets given to international institutions.
3. Prevent the emergence of any potential power.
4. Take military action under the excuse of pre-emptive strike on the basis of any self-created threat perception.
5. Attempt regime change in countries whose people are not happy with their leadership, after declaring it a threat for its people and for the peace of the world.
6. Prevent forcefully any other country in the world from achieving nuclear capability, in any form and at any level.
7. Support and aid change in other countries of the world, in the name of nation-building and democracy.
8. Gain control on the sources of oil and control world markets for its own products, and continue with import restrictions and subsidies for own economy.
9. Continue supporting Israel unconditionally and make other countries a meadow for it. Develop strategic partnership with India on these lines.

This is the outline of the agenda that Bush wants to pursue during his second term. His cronies have minced no words in making such claims and the measures taken just after the results of elections clearly show which way the wind is blowing. For example:

- Getting rid of Colin Powell and appointment in his place as the new Secretary of State of Condoleezza Rice, a staunch neo-con and author of the notions of pre-emptive strike and regime change.
- Retain the Secretary Defense Donald Rumsfeld and his right-hand Paul Wolfowitz, though everyone is asking for their resignations since the Abu Gharib prison abuse case.
- When the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan expressly termed the U.S.-led war in Iraq as illegitimate, and showed reluctance in meeting the U.S. demands, it started threatening him with no-confidence moves against him and started talking about corruption in the UN. It relented a bit only in the face of strong protest of the Third World.
- Resorting to brutal use of force, it tried to make an example of Fallujah for offering resistance to its occupation. Since the elections, about 200 U.S. troops have been killed in Fallujah, while there is no record of civilian deaths there – though thousands have been killed and brutally murdered. A tragic event of the Fallujah episode was the unpardonable crime of the U.S. forces of occupying a hospital in Baqubah so that the world could not know the number of the dead or the injured. Strategists of Bush's inner circle – who pave the way for action – are now talking about making Syria, North Korea, Iran and Saudi Arabia their next targets. Even in Pakistan's case, its president is praised but almost every discourse ends by urging that more pressure should be exerted on Pakistan to do more in the campaign against terrorism, wage a war against its own people, secularize its religious education institutions, try to discredit religious political forces and bring to fore the liberal and secular elements instead, change Hudood and blasphemy laws, do away with the column of religion in the passport, and open up its market for foreign products.

Pressure is being increased from all sides to achieve these goals, and General Pervez Musharraf is being projected as an important ally in this campaign. In spite of all claims for democracy, his retaining the army post and refusal to doff off the uniform is being termed as necessary for bringing this campaign to its logical end. The General has also visited the U.S. four times in the year to be embraced by Bush. While we avoid giving references for want of space here, but want to give an excerpt to help understand the views and mentality of Bush's close circle. It shows where the U.S. rulers want to drag the world, and to what extent Muslim rulers are ready to be used as its puppets. In his latest article "Democracy by Conquest", France's renowned scholar Patrick Seale examines the mental landscape of the United States

in these words: Change, neo-conservatives argue, must be imposed on the Arabs from outside, if necessary by force. Military pre-emption must remain an option. Arab and Muslim frustration over the Arab-Israeli conflict can be safely ignored. Anti-Americanism is pure “hot air” which will dissipate once America’s enemies are crushed. Douglas Feith and William Kristol are two leading neocons who, in their different ways, exemplify the thinking of the whole group. Feith is Under Secretary for Policy at the Defense Department, number two in the Pentagon hierarchy, just below his friend Paul Wolfowitz. He is widely credited with having fabricated and manipulated the intelligence which led America into war. Yet, astonishingly, he remains in office and seems likely to keep his job in Bush’s second term. In an exclusive interview with *The Jerusalem Post* on December 12, Feith, described as “a staunch friend of Israel,” suggested that military action against Iran’s nuclear sites could not be ruled out, if Iran did not follow Libya in abandoning its nuclear program. “I don’t think that anybody should be ruling in or ruling out anything,” he said. He predicted that democratic reform in the Arab world – including in such US allies as Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan – would be the linchpin of Bush’s foreign policy in the next four years. Not being in government, William Kristol can afford to be blunter still. He is the “Osama Bin Laden” of the American press, forever calling for an American jihad against the Arab world and Iran. He does not believe in dialogue, diplomacy or half-measures: his technique is blatant incitement to violence.

As editor of *The Weekly Standard*, the strident organ of the neocons, he campaigned relentlessly for Saddam Hussein’s overthrow. He is now urging the US to attack other countries in the region, and Syria in particular. In an article due to be published on December 20, but already available on the Internet, Kristol thunders: “Syria is a hostile regime. We have tried sweet talk and tough talk. Talk has failed. We now need to take action to punish and deter Assad’s regime.” To justify such radical action he accuses Syria of “permitting and encouraging activities that are killing not just our Iraqi friends but also, and quite directly, American troops.” What does Kristol recommend? “We could bomb Syrian military facilities; we could go across the border in force to stop infiltration; we could occupy the town of Abu Kamal in eastern Syria, which seems to be the planning and organizing center for Syrian activities in Iraq; we could covertly help or overtly support the Syrian opposition.

He concludes his article on a robust note: “It’s time to get serious about dealing with Syria as part of winning in Iraq, and in the broader Middle East.” (*Daily Star*, London, 19th December 2004) In the *Inter-Press News Service*, Jim Lobe exposes the intentions of Bush’s close associates: The media campaign was launched last week, when three analysts associated with the Foundation for the Defence of Democracies (FDD), a neo-conservative group that generally backs position of Israel’s right wing Likud Party, published an article in the *Washington Times* titled ‘Syria’s

Murderous Role: Assad Aides (sic) Iraq's Terrorist Insurgency'. Then William Kristol, the influential chairman of the Project for New American Century (PNAC) and editor of the Rupert Murdoch owned Weekly Standard, devoted his lead editorial, 'Getting Serious About Syria', to the same subject, concluding that, despite the stresses on the US military in Iraq, "real options exist (for dealing with Damascus)". On Wednesday, the Wall Street Journal followed up in its lead editorial – always a reliable indicator of neo-con opinion on the Middle East – charging, "Syria is providing material support to terrorist groups killing American soldiers in Iraq while openly calling on Iraqis to join the 'resistance'. The editorial, 'Serious About Syria?' accused the Bush administration of responding to these provocations with "mixed political signals and weak gestures", and urged it to at least threaten military action, much as Turkey "mobilized for war against Syria" in 1998 over Damascus' support for Kurdish rebels. This all is in spite of Syria's full cooperation with the United States! There is neither any reason for hope nor any room for misjudgment about the intentions of the present U.S. leadership. But the important issue is: how to meet its challenge? It is necessary to know two facts in this regard. First, America today is bitterly divided from top to bottom. Bush and his associates want to drag the country to a particular direction. It is the religious extremist, Zionist elements and capitalist forces – or Military-Industrial Complex – that enjoys a decisive role in this game.

But it is also a fact that intellectual, liberal circles, and large number of people is dismayed for the present situation and is in search of some way out. George Bush did get 51 percent votes, but after employing all tactics and political gimmicks. The remaining half of the voters who did not vote for him, and the 49 percent of Kerry votes are, nevertheless, an important political force today and can be decisive tomorrow. Therefore, America should not be considered a political monolith, and in any dialogue with it, it is necessary to gain access to its intellectual and other political forces in addition to the government. An important development to note is that hatred and disappointment with America and its leadership had never been so high as is the case today.

Once America used to be regarded as a champion of freedom, prosperity, international peace, democracy, equality of mankind and equal opportunities to all. Americans from Abraham Lincoln and Woodrow Wilson to John Kennedy and Jimmy Carter used to give a positive message, in spite of its all negative points and weaknesses. But the face that has been revealed during Bush senior and Bush Junior's times is different. It has created a gulf and disenchantment with America among the people, and many governments, in the world. This is, however, a positive development with respect to the struggle for the establishment of peace and justice in the world. No analysis can afford to overlook or neglect this aspect.

Moreover, the U.S. economy is faced with pressures because of which it cannot support for long the political setup that Bush and neo-cons want to establish. Even today, America is the most indebted country in the world, sucking up 80 percent of world's savings - \$1.2 billion a day! Its budget and trade deficits are like a dragon with open mouth to gulp everything. This situation

cannot go for long. There is a continuous pressure on the dollar and euro is emerging as the alternative global currency. Disappointment with America and trend for independent political and economic policies is growing in Europe. China and Japan are emerging, in their own ways, as the new centers of global power. Latin America is struggling to free itself from the clasp of North America and Leftist trend is again on the rise there. Russia is upset and frustrated with American high-handedness and is in search of new options and paths. For many countries in the world, America is not the only option. Politics is to move in the direction of multi-polarity once again in the not-so-distant future.

The question for Pakistan and the Muslim world is that they should not tie themselves again with America, to keep their option open, and to create independent space for their foreign policy. The fact that people of the world are a big force that cannot be ignored for long should also be kept in view. It is not just governments that have to be dealt with, but people too have to be taken into account. No policy can be pursued for long if it ignores the public mood and force. This aspect, therefore, needs to be incorporated in foreign policy making process. In these circumstances, and especially in the light of the U.S. presidential election results, there is a dire need of restructuring Pakistan's foreign policy. Along with our relations with America, Europe, China, Russia and other countries of Asia and Africa, it is important to strive for Muslim world's political and economic unity and realize a scheme of joint defense, in one shape or the other is imperative for our existence, independence, and civilizational identity. This needs to be discussed openly at all levels. The way General Pervez Musharraf and his team have put Pakistan – conveniently and wrongly – at the America's disposal, and the way Pakistan's foreign policy has been tied with American goals, are in conflict with the country's own interests as well as a deviation and an aberration from the flow of history. It is time to discuss all these issues openly, policy-making is done with meaningful consultation with all political forces, Parliament plays its full role and no individual are allowed to concentrate all powers in his own hands.

A major reason behind our weakness is Parliament's helplessness and absence of institutionalized and collective policy-making exercise. This has to be changed; there is no other way out. It entails complete restoration of Constitution, Parliament's supremacy, and joint struggle of all democratic, political and religious forces for the protection of the country's ideological, political and civilizational role and for progress and development according to the real objectives of the Pakistan movement. This is the way that will lead to dignity and real freedom. We need to be extremely careful and conscious of the critical nature of the present times. Even a small slip at this moment can result in dire consequences. We hope that all democratic forces would strive together for this cause.
