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USA

# America Goddam

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**To understand what happened at the US presidential elections of November 2, 2004, you have to think of the United States as a kind of Christian Iran, only with actual and not hypothetical nuclear weapons.**

[<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/36203.jpg>]

That's somewhat of a caricature, obviously, but let me briefly pursue the parallel. The government of the Islamic Republic brought its people to virtual ruin in the Iran-Iraq Gulf War of the 1980s, and has run the Iranian economy about as far into the ground as is possible for a country with such oil wealth; yet the regime has survived and maintained a powerful social base, even though much of the population loathes and despises it.

The Republican right wing in the United States dragged the country into a war that was based on lies and, it's now clear, that cannot be won. Its fiscal subsidize-the-rich and military spending policies have produced budget deficits that pose the real danger of full financial meltdown in the next economic downturn.

On top of that have come the torture photos from Abu Ghraib, the Halliburton war profiteering, the collapse of Enron, the health care crisis and the taunts of Osama ("I'm back") bin Laden.

The Democrats and, it must be admitted, much of the Left that might have known better, assumed that John Kerry had this election in the bag, requiring only a large turnout from the African American community and other sectors alienated by the Bush gang and furious over the stolen 2000 election.

The conventional pollsters, we were assured, had it all wrong when they showed an extremely tight race with a slight edge for Bush. They were missing the youth vote, the kids with cell phones who weren't in the phone book. And this time, the Democrats were mobilizing their base and their legal apparatus to check the harassment and "suppress the vote" tactics of the right. Kerry would win and it wouldn't even be that close.

The calculation was half right. The Black vote, above all, was there. The antiwar vote, taken for granted by the Democrats with their pro-war candidate, was there. (Ralph Nader and Peter Camejo, the independent antiwar campaign, got 390,000 votes nationwide - about one-seventh of Ralph's vote in 2000, and not even what he received when he ran a barely visible frayed-shoestring campaign in 1996. As for David Cobb, the Green Party candidate, his vote of slightly over 75,000 is too sad even to laugh at.)

Labor poured tens of millions into anti-Bush ads, voter turnout and lawsuits to keep Nader/Camejo off the ballot in many states. The problem was that something else was there, too, which the pollsters saw but the left didn't - the mobilization of the rightwing religious vote. There's the America-as-Iran factor.

Kerry could have won, ironically despite losing the nationwide popular vote by a three million margin, if he had taken Ohio, which he might have done had the gay-marriage ban not been on the state ballot. Make no mistake, however: Such an outcome would have been a fluke. The actual result reflects the reality - the mainly white religious conservative vote has made the Republicans the governing party in the United States.

[<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/36204.jpg>]

### **A sad day**

It's important neither to disrespect the folks who vote this way on "moral values", nor to pander to them. The

Democratic Party does both, while the Republicans mobilize them, and in essence there goes the election.

The bulk of this religious conservative vote is made up of white people, either working class or middle class of very modest incomes. For a complex set of reasons, they are voting for the party that is most aggressively dedicated to screwing them. Their jobs are disappearing into the global marketplace, their social security (the U.S. term for old age pensions) are at risk of being privatized, their health is increasingly uninsured, their kids are one war away from getting the draft notices, and in the new capitalist order their lives are dominated by permanent indebtedness and insecurity.

Without even knowing it, these folks are among the first victims of the ultra-reactionary U.S. political order their votes have put in place. Why do they do it? That's a desperately complicated question: For the moment, let's just say that the right wing knows how to expertly manipulate their fears and their moral concerns, while the Democratic leadership - no matter how far to the right they move - haven't a clue how to talk to them. When Kerry runs on about "colossal errors in judgment over Iraq" without even mentioning the morality of Abu Ghraib, well, you get the idea...

Ralph Nader was entirely correct on election night when he stated that ordinary people in America will not permanently put up with what the two corporate parties offer. The big unanswered question today, however, is how long that will take, and the stakes riding on that conundrum are incredibly high.

In this writer's opinion, the Republicans are in a position to dominate all levels of U.S. politics until they seriously screw up. In the violently unstable world that U.S. imperialism has created, and the prospects for a financial meltdown from the astonishing deficits that military spending and tax giveaways to the rich, the debacle may come sooner than later.

The question then will be whether there's a democratic, populist or socialist left with anything meaningful to say. The first step is to unchain the antiwar movement from a decaying Democratic Party and begin to mobilize again.