

Voice of Shakthi Thursday 16 November 2000

The results of the US Presidential election, held on 07 November still hangs in the balance. While the two protagonists trade charges, the battleground has now shifted to the law courts. The controversial election result in the world's greatest democracy has unleashed extraordinary charges levelled against both sides.

A superpower which continue to regularly interfere in the internal affairs of other countries - under the guise of protecting democracy, human rights and freedom of individuals – is suffering the sniggers and jibes of the outside world over the conduct of this election. Tarnishing its image further, charges of election malpractices and disappearing ballot boxes are bandied about by Republicans and Democrats alike these days. Voters in the crucial Palm Beach area of Florida are raising howls of protest over alleged attempts to mislead them in casting their vote for the candidate of their choice.

Election officials in a country which prides itself on its technological expertise are painfully going through each ballot card to check whether they are perforated or not. [Al Gore](#) argues for recounts while Republican George Bush's supporters scream how unfair all this is. In a blatant show of partisanship, Atlanta's Secretary of State, a Republican, takes it upon herself to call a halt to the re-counting and declares Bush the winner. Her behaviour, according to Vice-President Gore's Media Manager, is reminiscent of a commissar of the old Soviet regime!

While the election antics provide more and more fodder for talk-show hosts and stand-up comedians, the US' international standing is taking a battering on a number of other fronts these days.

Its unconscionable opposition to the lifting of the economic embargo imposed on Cuba is the most recent of its arrogant attitude towards the rest of the world. With its ever-faithful ally, Israel, it continues to defy world [opinion](#) on this issue. Apparently, its adherence to democratic norms in bowing to the will of the majority does not apply in the case of Cuba.

However, it seems has had enough of such arrogance. The US' continued aggression against Iraq, the imposition of a no-fly zone and the continued bombing of Iraq has come in for severe criticism by the Soviet Union. Jordan and [Egypt](#) have defied the UN embargo against Iraq to resume air services to that country.

And the United States stance on UN peacekeeping operations has come in for close scrutiny too. Despite its self-proclaimed role as the world's policeman, it has made sure that US troops are not

placed in jeopardy when it comes to peacekeeping exercises. After the debacle in Somalia, successive UN administrations have been careful indeed in making sure that no US soldier is exposed to dangerous situations.

Ignoring the UN request for a participation rate of at least five per cent from member countries for this vital role, the US continues to back away from active involvement. Instead, it funds the soldiers of poorer countries to take on this role. Countries such as Bangladesh, Nigeria, India and Jordan are among the major contributors of manpower for UN peacekeeping exercises these days.

With poor command structures, advanced weaponry but without the [training](#) to use them, the soldiers of these countries are paying the ultimate price in lands utterly foreign to them. And the US continues to [strut](#) the world stage, holding forth to the rest of the world on democracy, human rights and any other subject which takes their fancy at various times.