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'Re-election of Bush should not be over-dramatised'

By Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, NOV. 26. Mary King, Professor at the University of Peace, Costa Rica, today suggested that the re-election of the U.S. President, George W. Bush, should not be over-dramatised and that there could be hope for a reassertion of a truly conservative point of view from the President, one that is not so adventurist but preservationist.

Speaking on the "Implications of the Bush Presidency for Conflict Resolution and Peace" at the Institute of Social Sciences here today, Prof. King said the U.S. elections three weeks ago were the first in which foreign policy emerged as a major issue. Though President Bush won the second term in the White House, she said "don't over-dramatise the Bush victory. The turnout was high. Some 60 million voted for Mr. Bush, amounting to more than 51 per cent. But it also means that 48 per cent voted against him. We should not lose sight of this."

Prof King felt the Democrats lost the election for want of 70,000 ballots in Ohio, and the Republican base turned out over the issue of gay marriages and not the President's foreign policy, which was one of the major national electoral issues. Secondly, she said there was the need to engage the U.S. administration to strengthen the pragmatism in it. In this context, she viewed the appointment of Ms. Condoleezza Rice as Secretary of State as the appointment of a pragmatist trained by Brent Scowcroft, former National Security Advisor and a moderate realist.

Prof Mary King has had the unique opportunity to work with Martin Luther King Jr. in the civil rights movement. Her celebrated work 'Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. The power of Nonviolence Action' was published by UNESCO. She received the Jamnalal Bajaj Award in 2003.

Sharing her perceptions of the U.S. worldview and the impact of recent elections on world peace and conflict resolution scenarios, Prof. King focused on the distinction between the doctrine of exceptionalism and exemptionalism. "There is an upsurge of both along with that of isolationism and unilateralism in America. Although the U.S. is a child of the enlightenment and exemplifies a liberal democratic system, it is not a liberal society. The U.S. exempts itself at all levels. Other states also exempt themselves, like Saudi Arabia, from international treaties. However, what makes the U.S.

an unusual exception is that it practices exemptionalism from its own foundational values."

"The matter of double standards is an ever-present theme in the U.S. We might even say that the notion of a war on terrorism is a triple standard, because terror is a means of war—how can one make war on a means of war? The power of the U.S. allows it to write the rules," Prof King said.

According to Prof. King, there prevails a kind of 'Rights Sufficiency' in the United States. Some of its citizens believe that they need nothing more than the constitution and bill of rights. So, the attitude in the U.S. tends to be that "we have nothing to learn from the rest of the world." The results is that many times, the U.S. has ended up denying the legitimacy of the international laws and treaties, which is at variance with the U.S. sole in establishment of the UN and concern for multilateral cooperation.