

★ AMERICA VOTES 2004 ★

National: Iraq centerpiece of night

Local: Debates change some views

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South Korea in talks with North Korea to defuse the crisis. Kerry advocated bilateral talks between the United States and North Korea to find a solution.

Kerry voiced concerns about conditions in Russia, saying that crack-downs initiated by Vladimir Putin go beyond what's necessary to combat terror.

Bush said he had a good personal relationship with Putin that "enables me to better comment to him and the better to discuss with him some of the decisions he makes." Bush said Russia was a country in transition and that would remind Putin "of the great benefits of democracy."

The two men clashed time and again over Iraq and the broader war on terror.

Kerry said he had a four-part plan to battle terrorists, and said Bush's could be summed up in four words — "More of the same."

"You cannot lead the war on terror if you keep changing positions on the war on terror," retorted the president.

Kerry appeared to taunt the commander in chief at one point during the debate when he said his father, former President George H. W. Bush, had stopped troops from advancing on Baghdad after they had liberated Kuwait during the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

Now, he said, the son ordered an invasion of Iraq anyway, without an exit strategy, and under conditions that mean the United States has incurred "90 percent of the casualties and 90 percent of the cost."

In response, Bush ridiculed his opponent, saying he denigrated U.S.

allies in the war, voted against an \$87 billion measure to aid Afghanistan and Iraq and sent mixed signals.

"What's his message going to be? Please join us in Iraq for a grand diversion?" Bush said to Kerry's contention that he could summon broader international support for the war. "They're not going to follow someone whose core convictions keep changing because of politics."

In response to one question, Kerry said Bush had misled the country on the war by pledging to plan carefully, giving diplomacy every chance to prevail and more. He said bin Laden, the al-Qaida leader responsible for the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, had used the invasion as a recruiting tool for terrorists.

Bush said that was an "amazing claim," and said the United States, not bin Laden, should decide America's strategy in the war on terror.

Again, he said Kerry had changed his mind on the war, but this time, Kerry insisted that he had held one consistent position.

"The only thing consistent about my opponent's position is he's been inconsistent," said Bush.

Given the stakes, it was not surprising that the two campaigns negotiated what amounted to a 32-page contract that covered debate details. They ranged from the choice of moderator (Jim Lehrer of PBS) to the distance between the candidate lecterns (10 feet).

Even so, a last-minute controversy flared, as Kerry's aides objected to the placement of timing lights on the lecterns.

DEBATES:
MORE THAN MEETS
THE EYE

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audience. Gallup must submit its methodology for choosing audience members to both campaigns for approval.

In all debates but the Oct. 8 town hall-style debate, audience members are forbidden from asking questions or speaking during the debates and the questions are selected by the moderator. In the town hall-style debate, audience questions must be approved and selected by the moderator "for the sole purpose of avoiding duplicate questions," according to the agreement.

The agreement also dictated how media coverage of the debates is conducted. The candidates are restricted from offering challenges for more debates or accepting debate-formatted television or radio airtime. Also, the agreement stated that television networks cannot shoot footage of audience members, family of the candidates or shots of a candidate when he is listening to his opponent speak. However, in Thursday's debate, several networks did show reaction shots of candidates.

— Jared Paben

DEBATE LINEUP

• Thursday at the University of Miami — topics were foreign policy and homeland security.

• (Vice-presidential debate) Tuesday at the Case Western Reserve — topics will be a mix of questions about domestic and economic policy, foreign policy and homeland security policy.

Source: Commission on Presidential Debates

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Sophomore Cole Robinson, who watched the debate at the event, said Kerry clearly presented a more eloquent case.

"Bush speaks a lot, but he doesn't say anything," Robinson said. "I think he gives a much more solid picture of his plans for Iraq than Bush has."

Robinson said Bush focused too much on Kerry's voting record.

"I think that Bush is a broken record when he talks about John Kerry changing positions," he said.

Robinson also said he agreed with Kerry's message that Saddam Hussein was removed from power in an inappropriate manner.

Nicolas Peslin, an international student from France, said the candidates reiterated the issue of Iraq but answered questions in a more straightforward manner than he expected.

Peslin said Bush's view that America sought a multinational coalition before attacking Iraq is not necessarily held by citizens of his country.

"America is not seen as very trustful," he said.

Peslin added he feels that ties between other nations and America will improve if Kerry is elected.

"I know the French people are not in a position against America but in a position against the Bush administration," he said.

Bush supporters

Members of the College Republicans were among nearly 150 people who gathered in front of a big screen

television at the Town Club in Downtown Eugene to witness the debate.

College Republicans Chairwoman Laura Jenkins said Bush "came out on top" in the debate.

"After watching this debate, I think it's really clear which candidate stands firm on his goals, his values, and what direction he'd like this country to go in," Jenkins said. "It's the real man versus the East Coast elitist."

Jenkins said Bush showed himself to be a strong and steadfast leader.

"I thought Kerry, on the other hand, Kerry continued to flip-flip," she said. "The debate really cleared up where each candidate stands."

She emphasized that foreign policy and homeland security are Bush's strong areas.

"In general, the topic in this debate was to his advantage."

College Republicans member Tom Albright said Bush dominated the rebuttals.

"His rebuttals were incredibly articulate and witty," he said. "(He) backed up all of his arguments with fact and did not change his position tonight, unlike some other people."

Albright said many people underestimate the president.

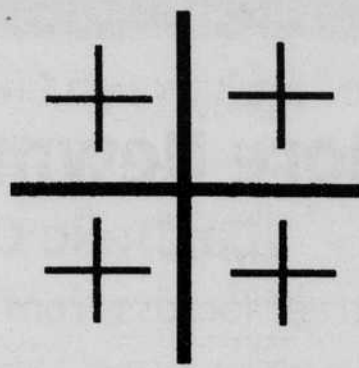
"People say he's stupid," he said. "I say he's stupid like a fox."

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