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OUTSIDE THE BOX

A Man of Conviction

Why Bush will win.

BY PETE DU PONT

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A week ago John Kerry climbed into this year's equivalent of Michael Dukakis's tank--a crisply pressed, fully tailored *haute couture* hunting suit, capped by an Armani-looking chapeau. The visual impact was Boston-effete and no doubt the last straw for every bluejeaned, layered-jacketed and baseball-capped hunter the Kerry campaign sought to persuade.

It was the symbolic climax of the Kerry campaign. Next Tuesday--barring some substantial, unexpected event--George W. Bush is likely to be re-elected.

President Bush is not going to win because of Mr. Kerry's style or Boston blue blood, as out of sync with most Americans as they may be. He is going to win because he believes in things, while Mr. Kerry is a candidate of concern, consensus and compromise.

Mr. Bush believes in the "transformational power of liberty"; that "freedom is on the march"; that the spirit of liberty

that created America in 1776 has brought freedom and opportunity to Afghanistan and will bring it to Iraq and every other nation that grasps its principles. It is a powerful message that Americans understand. Mr. Kerry believes we are imposing democracy on people, instead of which we must bring everyone together in international forums where America's decisions must pass a "global test." As the New York Times noted, Mr. Kerry "sees himself as an ambassador president," intending his first act in office to be a speech to the United Nations to recast American foreign policy.

Mr. Bush believes free nations should have the right to make their own decisions about trading with America; he has negotiated trade agreements with 12 countries and is working on 10 more. Mr. Kerry is against free trade because he believes America must "establish core labor rights around the world." He would repeal Nafta and other trade agreements until he decides what the wages and working conditions of the citizens of Chile, Mozambique and other nations must be.

Mr. Bush believes in an ownership society in which individuals have the resources to improve their lives, owning their own health-care and retirement accounts. Mr. Kerry is against such individual ownership, believing a wise and benevolent government should have the tax revenues to make the decisions it believes are best for you.

People understand that believing in principles and values is an important leadership quality. Last week's Wall Street Journal poll showed 57% of voters thought Mr. Bush believed in things and "stood up for his beliefs"; only 19% said the same of Mr. Kerry. The Washington Post reports that 65% of voters supporting Mr. Bush are "very enthusiastic" about him, while only 42% of Kerry supporters felt similarly about him. That's a 23% difference in excitement, which compares with a negligible excitement difference in 2000 between Mr. Bush and Al Gore. These emotions are being felt in the black community too; polls suggest that Mr. Bush will receive about 18% of the black vote, twice as much as in 2000.

One historical analogy might be the two British prime ministers at the outset of World War II: Neville Chamberlain and Winston Churchill. Chamberlain advocated a policy of appeasement, giving Hitler the benefit of the doubt, and returned from Munich waving an agreement and declaring "peace for our time" had been achieved. Churchill perceived the evil and threat of Nazi Germany, opposed appeasement, and led England to the military strength and action needed to save his country.

The presidential analogies would be Harry Truman and Woodrow Wilson. Truman dropped the atomic bomb to end World War II, gave aid to Greece and Turkey to stop the expansion of communism, established the Marshall plan to rebuild Europe, launched an enormous airlift to keep Berlin free, and had a sign on his desk saying "The Buck Stops Here." Truman was a strong man; like Bush, he believed in things.

Mr. Kerry, on the other hand, thought "communism was not a threat to our country," probably would not have used the atomic bomb without international approval, and would likely have thought the Berlin airlift too threatening to the Soviet Union. He is more like Woodrow Wilson, who after the Germans sank the Lusitania, killing 128 Americans, did not respond, saying he was "too proud to fight." He committed U.S. troops to World War I, but through his 14 Point Plan and League of Nations proposal sought "peace without victory." And of course Wilson imposed America's first income tax after the ratification of the 16th Amendment. The Kerry analogies abound.

President Bush is likely to be re-elected because the American people believe this presidential election is the most important one in memory. A USA Today/Gallup poll revealed that 72% of

respondents think it is, compared with 47% who thought so in 2000 and 41% in 1996. Much of that feeling is based on the insecurity created by 9/11, and it is shifting the voting patterns. The veterans' and married women's vote will be stronger for Mr. Bush than they were four years ago. Both perceive, as many Americans do, that a victory for Mr. Kerry would be a signal to terrorists everywhere that America does not have the resolve to defend itself.

The largest unknown in next Tuesday's election is the enormous number of newly registered voters. Democrats believe they have been mobilized by anti-Bush feelings; if so, Mr. Kerry will win. But it seems more likely that new voters will feel like the rest of us: that America's security and resolve are at stake in a turning-point election, and this is no time to weaken either one.

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