



JEAN-CLAUDE GRUFFAT

Chairman of the Competitive Enterprise Institute, Washington DC

Jim BITTERMANN

Jean-Claude you said a consequential Presidency. Why? What does that mean exactly?

Jean-Claude GRUFFAT

Let me start by asking the audience and the panel, how many of you are going to vote in the next presidential election in the United States? That is the problem, because everybody in this room has an opinion about who should be the next President of the United States.

Jim BITTERMANN

There maybe some non-Americans in this room, so Trump would not allow them to vote. They have got to have a proper ID card.

Jean-Claude GRUFFAT

What I mean by that is that everybody has an opinion on who should be President of the United States. The bad news is that only American citizens vote. It takes 60 million people plus, give or take a few, to elect the President of the United States and the people who are going to vote at the next Presidential election, as they have in prior elections, are not voting on trade unless it affects their own situation. If they are selling soya beans from Iowa to China, they have a view on trade. Or, if they are from Wisconsin and they are selling milk to Canada, USMCA gives 5% more access. It is not yet approved by Congress but as you know, this is the new NAFTA or ALENA as you call it here. USMCA gives milk products from Wisconsin, which is a milk state, an additional 5% access to Canada.

Jim BITTERMANN

A state where Trump barely won.

Jean-Claude GRUFFAT

What I mean by that is that the American people, American citizens care about international policy when it affects their own personal selfish interests, or when they belong to a community that is very important and has some influence on the political process. I will take two examples and I will not elaborate on that, the Irish community, which we have seen in the past and obviously, the Israeli or Jewish community. That is where you see that they have a view and a strong view.

Why consequential? I am not trying to run away from your question. Again, I will give you a few examples, positive, negative, however you want, I will give you my own personal view. I am not trying to pre-empt John, but I agree that for me deregulation is a very critical one, and I can come back to that. The other one is the judicial process. We have a country that has a three-power structure, legislative, executive and judicial, starting with the Supreme Court, Federal Court, etc. I have some statistics and we can go back to those, but clearly the judicial process, the number of judicial appointments that have been made since the beginning of the Trump administration is something very critical and important for the Republican party. The Republican Party does not like Trump. Trump hijacked the Republican party and they do not like him as a person, but he delivers what they want so they accept the Tweets, his personal attitude and a lot of things they hate because they are getting what they think is essential. Again, deregulation, because it is good for business, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises and due judicial process. Now they are also



getting, and I know we are going to talk about Turkey, the Kurds and so on, but there is less and less engagement and I think this is very much a bipartisan effort, which we have talked about the last few days. Not the prior panel but the one before, which talked about the Middle East, said that there was less engagement from the US. The Republicans are more interventionists traditionally than the Democrats, but not Trump. Trump is not a Republican. Trump was a registered Democrat most of his life, and when he was not a registered Democrat, he was an independent. In the 2016 Primary election in New York, his children could not vote because they were not registered Republicans, and this is what is called a closed Primary and that is six months before the election. This is the reality. He hijacked the Republican party and he does not represent it, but the Republican party gets something out of it, and they accept the rest because on balance they feel that they get what is important.

Jim BITTERMANN

From your standpoint, do you think that Trump is a game changer when you compare him to Obama? That his time in office has already accomplished...

Jean-Claude GRUFFAT

Not in everything, but in certain aspects yes. Definitely in foreign policy with Obama surge in Afghanistan etc. Trump said that he was against the Iraq war in 2003 and that is not true, but he campaigned saying that he was against foreign engagement and that he was against regime change. You know he appointed Bolton, but everybody knew it was a mistake and that he would fire Bolton at some point and that is exactly what happened. What he is now doing in northern Syria is something that is very disturbing for many people from a moral and ethical standpoint. However, it is consistent with the view of a lot of Americans, Democrats and Republicans who feel it is not the role of the United States to settle every international conflict on the other side of the world.

Jim BITTERMANN

There has been enormous pushback on that, even from the Republicans.

Jean-Claude GRUFFAT

I know that but there are also people on the other side, one of my arguments is that one of the consequential aspects of the Trump election on foreign policy has been what I call the defeat of the neocons. The neocons have lost and it was not obvious, and I think it is a positive thing. I can continue on that.

Jim BITTERMANN

I am sure you can.