



JEAN-CLAUDE GRUFFAT

Member of United Way Leadership Council, board member of Atlas Network, Managing Director of Weild and Co LLC New York

Virginie Robert, Foreign Desk Editor at *Les Échos*, Vice President of the European-American Press Club in Paris

I know you are back, Jean-Claude, and when we talked over the phone you said that this foreign policy theme becoming important to Americans was something that never happened in a US election before. However, it is a big challenge for the politicians this time because of the war in Ukraine and what is happening with Israel and Hamas. Can you tell us a bit more about this?

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I would say that traditionally there is a consensus between the Republicans and the Democrats on foreign policy. I heard what some of the panelists were saying about a quasi-civil war in the United States and it is true that we have a bipolarization of American politics but it is no longer just on domestic issues, it is also on foreign issues.

Let us talk about Ukraine for a moment. When Russia invaded Ukraine a year and a half ago, there was immediately overwhelming support for helping Ukraine, obviously not getting directly involved in a war, but providing massive financial and military support. I would say that at the beginning this military support was massively endorsed by both sides, Republican and Democrat. However, over time we have gradually seen less support from some parts of the Republican party, which is not just one block. I would say you have the Trump minority, the traditional isolationists who do not support foreign involvement and led by people like Rand Paul, and then you have the Reaganian part with Nikki Haley but also people like Tim Scott, Mike Pence, etc., who want the United States to be involved and play a role that it is significant if not dominant, in foreign policy.

Until pretty recently Biden has been able to get from Congress, both the House and Senate, the financial help that he needs and let us face it, very cynically you might say, the United States has been benefitting from the war in Ukraine for three reasons. First, remember some time ago the French President said that NATO was brain dead and NATO has never been stronger and two major countries that have been neutral since World War Two are now joining NATO, Sweden and Finland, which is very significant. NATO has never been stronger and the countries that are on the borders of Russia want NATO to be more involved to protect them because they think that if Ukraine falls they are likely to be the next targets. Two, the money that the United States has spent is coming back in the form of military orders, for example, when Germany did not spend that much on defense, as well as Japan, etc., they are now buying from the United States not Europe. Third, on the energy side, the US is more or less self-sufficient, which Trump played a role in, and it is now supplying Europe with natural gas to replace part of what they used to get from Russia. Therefore, the United States has benefitted from this war from both an economic and strategic point. At the same time, there is less and



less support for additional help for Ukraine simply because this war has lasted longer than many people expected and there is no obvious solution in the very near future. We know that Trump would probably drop the American aid to Ukraine significantly but parts of the Democratic party are also more hesitant and one reason is simply the fact that there is now this war in the Middle East between Israel and Hamas.

Again, there is no consensus on this war. You can see people on the right and the left being reluctant. Biden has been very supportive of the Israeli counter-offensive on Hamas and the ground invasion in Gaza but at the same time, the left of the Democratic party is now voicing some disagreement and to be re-elected, Biden needs their votes. As you know, there is no Bernie Sander or Elizabeth Warren running against him, he is unopposed but from a practical standpoint that does not mean that he will not lose votes that could be critical in some states if the war lasts too long and the civilian casualties in Gaza become unbearable.

We have a situation where the next presidential election in the US could have a significant impact, the question of Taiwan is very critical, there is a minority of people in the United States who would support American involvement if China attacked Taiwan in the near future, but only a minority. The majority of Americans feel that they can only be involved in a foreign war or conflict if a significant element of American society would support it. That was the case during the Ireland-UK conflict, for example, where there was always support for the Irish side because of the large Irish community. You are probably aware of the Jewish community in the United States but do you know there are 7.6 million, which is more than in the state of Israel which has a population of 9 million people but only 73.5% of them are Jewish? In New York City where I live, 1.6 million people are part of this Jewish population. The Muslim population in the United States is 3.5 million, not just Arabs, but people from Africa, Iran, Somalia, Egypt, etc. You also have 3.5 million Arab people not all Muslim but in 2050 the projection is that there will be 8 million Muslims in the United States, which means it would surpass the Jewish population.

Bottom line, I think this election in November might see some shift of votes based on what is happening in Ukraine but frankly speaking, if you watch American TV, listen to the news or read the papers, nobody talks about Ukraine anymore. We used to have Ukraine all over the screens, now it is all about Gaza, Israel, and I know that this is a real concern for the Ukraine government. The new speaker is pushing some funding but Biden wants a package to support Ukraine and Israel and the Republicans say it should be split with separate votes on help for Israel and Ukraine. We know they are doing that because they are unlikely to support additional money for Ukraine.