

Trumpian World: Donald Trump and Foreign Policy

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On Tuesday, February 21, UCF Global Perspectives and the Learning Institute for Elders (LIFE) at UCF hosted Kim Ghattas, BBC journalist and former State Department correspondent covering Condoleezza Rice, Hillary Clinton and John Kerry. Ghattas is also the author of *New York Times* Bestseller *The Secretary: A Journey with Hillary Clinton from Beirut to the Heart of American Power*. In her presentation, titled “Trumpian World,” Ghattas discussed new American foreign policy with an audience of about 400 community members gathered in the Pegasus Ballroom of the UCF Student Union.

Ghattas first discussed her childhood in the midst of civil war. Growing up in Lebanon, she said she had many misconceptions about the United States and its power as a country. Quoting her father, Ghattas said many Lebanese shared his sentiment: “If the United States wanted the war to end, it would be over tomorrow.” Through her years as a State Department correspondent, Ghattas discovered the deep complexity of U.S. foreign policy. America, she said, cannot make things happen “at the click of a button.”

Showing a video of former President Barack Obama meeting with various world leaders, Ghattas pointed to how Obama would repeat particular phrases and compliments. For example, he would often say that a country “punches above their weight” or is one of “our strongest and closest allies.” Though comic to see the same compliments repeated, the point was that the previous administration was careful to reinforce existing relationships. Ghattas then showed another video of newly-appointed U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley saying the United States has begun “taking names” of countries that “do not have our back.” Ghattas described a rippling “Trump Effect,” as countries are increasingly insecure about their relationship to the United States.

To Ghattas, the five defining principles of President Donald Trump’s foreign policy are populism, centrism, division, contradictions and uncertainty. His political rise has inspired populist candidates across the world, such as Marine Le Pen in France. European leaders and candidates have also adopted a more centrist outlook according to Ghattas. On division, Ghattas described the reaction to UK Prime Minister Theresa May’s recent visit to the White House. European leaders criticized May because of Trump’s stance on the EU. Discussing contradictions, Ghattas pointed



to examples including Trump describing the media as “the enemy of the people” and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis saying the opposite. Finally – from nonstop tweets, to executive orders, to phone calls with heads of states – Ghattas suggested that journalists covering the Trump administration have been “drinking from a fire hose.”

Concluding her presentation, Ghattas displayed a quote from Donald Trump’s 1990 interview with *Playboy* magazine to help explain his approach to foreign policy. The quote read: “It’s expensive to be the superpower but you do not get a lot in return.” Opposing Trump’s statement, Ghattas argued that America benefits greatly from other countries through trade and alliance. She closed her remarks by stating that although the United States provides a great deal for the rest of the world, it also receives a great deal of reciprocal benefits.

When asked whether or not Trump “tapped into something” that was previously ignored within American minds, Ghattas said that she thinks Trump appealed to “middle America” more than his opponents during his campaign. She described how Trump won by only an 80,000-vote difference in three different states, and how, without his having appealed to “middle America,” the United States might have seen a different outcome from this election.

Ghattas’ presentation was a feature of the 2017 LIFE Global Issues Series. Sponsors included the UCF Global Perspectives Office, UCF LIFE, the Orlando Area Committee on Foreign Relations and the Global Connections Foundation.