

FAREED YASSEEN

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Fareed, you were Ambassador in Washington, DC. Have you worked with both administrations, or mainly Trump's? Tell us.

Fareed Yasseen

Vaste sujet, as the French would say. My experience with U.S. administrations dates back to the 1990s when I was an Iraqi opposition activist during the Clinton administration. My first trip to the White House was in 1994. I later served briefly with the Obama administration, then through the full Trump administration, and for a year and a half with Biden's. When discussing such a broad subject, it's essential to focus on what you want to convey. This often depends on your intended audience. Right now, my focus is on my successor in Washington. What can I share to help him better understand how the Trump administration operated? May I do that?

Virginie Robert

Yes, sure.

Fareed Yasseen

Okay. The first thing you have to understand is that this election is completely different from the previous election. A lot of people in the United States in 2016 thought that the election was Hillary's to lose. This election, Trump won, period. He won the Electoral College. He won the popular vote. He won Congress, both houses, and he has the Supreme Court. Therefore, it is a mandate. The position is completely different. He can do whatever he chooses to do. That is the first thing.

The second thing is that in 2016 the Republicans were not actually really well-prepared for winning the White House. That is why they had – and you might correct me if you want – such a difficult time finding people that would stick with the Trump administration, that were suited to his personality, to his ideas. I think that is one of the reasons why he had so many departures. This time, it is going to be different. It will be rehearsed. It has actually been prepared. A lot of people have been working on it: think tanks, groups of sympathizers, funders. One way to look at how things will evolve is that one has to realize that a presidential election is like a crowning in the United States, and so it comes with a lot of activities. I think it would be helpful for diplomats, particularly my counterpart in Washington now, to look at how the inauguration will



be run. I have the impression that it will be run in a much more effective, professional, flamboyant, I would say, way than what happened in 2016.