

JAY TRUESDALE

CEO of TD International

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Jay, you were at the State Department, I think, during the first Trump administration. How do you answer back to Fareed? Do you feel that it is better prepared?

Jay Truesdale

Yes. In the spirit of conversation, I will pick up on the points that were just made. I really do believe there is a sense of mandate and a sense of mission for President-elect Trump and those around him. Indeed, there is a difference between now and 2016, in that Trump is entering into office with the experience of having governed, as well as a fairly concrete sense of what it means to address his top five policy priorities – which are, not necessarily in order, tariffs, immigration, China, Russia-Ukraine, and the Middle East.

However, while he has a mandate and while he is entering the office with tremendous momentum, he has surrounded himself with individuals who do not have senior-level executive experience. With one exception, the new head of the CIA, John Ratcliffe, none of the cabinet-level nominees have served in that capacity previously. Therefore, while Trump is entering with administration experience, others have ground to gain, at least in the first six to twelve months. What does that mean in practical terms? Well, we saw a lot of turmoil within the first Trump administration's cabinet, with some cabinet members pushing hard and others seeking to be conciliatory from the beginning. I think this group will be more on the conciliatory side, more deferential to Trump than what we saw in the first go-round.

The other dynamic that we saw in the first administration was what the professional class of civil servants did upon the entry of President Trump and his cabinet-level leaders, particularly at the State Department where I was serving at the time, but also in the intelligence community, both the CIA and the FBI, at Commerce, and at other executive-level agencies. I project there will be early retirements taken by retirement-eligible individuals who will not want to put up with another round of uncertainty in the interagency policymaking process when so much will be centralized in the White House, particularly around those five policy areas.

What will that mean? I believe there will be a gap in decision-making on technical topics, where decision-making will not be centralized in the Oval Office. To fill that gap, there will be pressure on the incoming administration to name nominees and push through the roughly 1,200 to 1,400 nominees who will take senior-level positions in the administration, of which roughly one-third are either economic or national security positions. Therefore, I would say that if you were writing a memo to your colleagues on how manage the transition, knowing how to gain access to the



Trump White House and how to work through the institutions that are going to go through a lot of turmoil will both be critical.

The last point I will make is that getting access to those institutions will require unorthodox access points. Some of these are proxies for President Trump. Others are gatekeepers, people who have not been named as such but play that role in an informal way. It is going to be important to know how to gain access and how to maintain relationships in this transition period when so much potentially could be both centralized and in turmoil in the administration.