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**Reflecting on the First 100 Days of the Trump Administration:  
A Political-Organizational Perspective**

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The new American administration headed by Donald Trump, formed to lead the world's number one power towards the objectives the President has defined for himself, for the American people, and for the world at large, has aroused much interest and a mixed range of responses. There are those who are delighted with the new winds blowing in Washington and anticipate a better future, while others are concerned by the ideological and cultural gaps between themselves or their own countries and the new trends in government that Trump and his team bring to the White House. In any event, the emerging reality has stimulated much curiosity and close scrutiny of the new administration.

Some three months after the Trump administration entered office, it is worth recalling a number of concepts from the world of organizational behavior research. Concepts regarding a new term of office can add an additional angle to the perspectives on defined questions of policy, and can help in examining what is happening in the ranks of the new administration and what may be expected in its future conduct.

Donald Trump himself, like many in his administration, has little experience in managing government systems. Therefore, notwithstanding the very senior roles to which they have been appointed, it should be remembered that the principles of organizational behavior of presidents, ministers, managers, and junior employees, which have been defined and confirmed in social science research, also apply to them. It is no accident that people talk about "a hundred days of grace" as a necessary period of adjustment to the job, although the actual duration of this period differs from person to person, depending on his abilities, the nature and requirements of the job in general and its management in particular, and the unique circumstances of the reality in which the process takes place.

In the 1940s, American researcher Bertha Reynolds designed a unique model to describe the stages of learning for a manager who starts a new job. Although the original study focused on the adjustment processes of social workers, at a later stage its conclusions were applied to the field of management, and it is accepted as relevant fundamental research. Reynolds defined five main stages, on a chronological continuum:

*"Survival"*: The appointed or elected official must learn a new role, and handle a wide range of subjects, people, tasks, and processes in the organizational environment. During this period he has difficulty dealing with the huge amounts of information that surround him. He is focused on himself and feels unable to decide how he should proceed in order to perform his role. Some people react to this situation by becoming withdrawn and silent, while others send out multiple verbal messages. In some cases, the new officeholder's worries about the challenges he faces could lead to harsh conduct.

*"Sink or swim"*: The new official has not yet formulated an orderly management style. However, there is more response to the surroundings, and he starts to ask himself and those around him if he is indeed on the right path. At this stage there are signs of difficulty in coping with the numerous demands of the job, and in fact he still has no genuine understanding of the deep and long term significance of his decisions and their implementation. This difficulty leads to self-questioning: Am I really suitable? Can I really do this job as I hoped? It is uncomfortable to share this dilemma with others, and the response to the tensions that it creates will vary from person to person and from job to job.

*"Insight"*: At this stage there is more attention to formal tasks and recognition of areas of activity and responsibility, than to the job itself. There is more control of the data and significant improvement in the understanding of processes and the dynamics of the surrounding reality. However, there is still a gap between the quality and depth of understanding, and the ability to actually perform.

*"Skill"*: At this stage there are the first signs of results of the efforts invested during previous stages. The quality of the outcome is directly linked to the seriousness of the investment. There is significant improvement in skills, in routine management, and the decision making process; in tandem, processes of improving and learning lessons are implemented, the search for new challenges begins, and new ways of coping with them are examined.

*"Control"*: At this stage there is already a combination of understanding and performance. More attention is paid to innovations, and the individual has a more "objective" concept of himself. Accordingly, his ability to review and adjust methods in response to changing demands improves, and there is a perceptible rise in his ability to manage complex tasks. At this stage there should also be an ability to mentor others and contribute to their personal and professional development.

Changes of leadership have always been seminal occasions, posing the same challenges again and again. In this context, 2012 Professor Michael Watkins (Harvard Business School) published a book that summarized research on 90 days of grace for a new manager. In the Preface he writes: "The president of the United States gets 100 days to prove himself. You get 90." Watkins

states that transitional periods are crucial, and any mistakes during such times could have serious consequences in the future. He believes that leaders are extremely vulnerable in their first months in a new position, mainly because they lack detailed knowledge about the nature of the challenges they face, and because they still lack a support network of relationships and orderly processes. It is therefore probable that failure to create momentum in the first months actually ensures a constant struggle throughout the term in office. On the other hand, building trust and achieving some success early on will lay the foundations for long term success. Watkins proposes a model for smart and effective management of the process of starting a job, specifying the many and complex difficulties and challenges to be faced. This study is important because it shows that the process of adjusting to a new position is not necessarily linear, with one stage leading directly and successfully to the next, and even experiencing all the stages will not in every case ensure success.

When planning moves with the American government, attention should be paid to a term that reflects the personal situation of someone starting a new job: the "joy of appointment." Many people have felt the joy of finally receiving the job or status they dreamed about, and this is especially true after an exhausting election campaign such as Donald Trump experienced. At this stage, the individual loves everyone who supported him, the surroundings that helped him achieve the appointment, those who appointed him (in a hierarchical organization) or the electorate (in politics), and his family. He is engulfed in a sense of power, and any worries about challenges are dwarfed by the heady belief in his own ability. However, there are many dangers during this period. Things may be said that are subsequently regretted and promises made that cannot be kept, and there is confusion over who is a colleague and who is a rival.

When looking at the current measures made by the Trump administration through the prism of the stages of starting a new job, we should remember that the new President, as well as most of the people appointed to support him in the execution of his task, are inexperienced in the management of the systems and the people under their responsibility. Both the entire American people plus the international arena, including Israel, expect orderly, professional, and responsible conduct from Trump and his associates, but we must speculate if the expectations are realistic, and remember that the laws of human behavior also apply to them. Attempts to cut corners will not necessarily be successful.

In other words, if we rush to examine the Trump administration during its first few months in order to assess its future actions – against the background of orders banning the entry of Muslims from some countries defined as threats; ambivalent moves regarding Russia; attacks on the American media; settling accounts with members of the previous administration and attempts to erase the Obama legacy; the warm embrace of the Israeli Prime Minister and the declarations regarding policy in the Middle East; and the attack in Syria in response to Assad's use of

chemical weapons – we would do well to identify the stage the administration has reached in the empirical process of starting a new job. Any study of the administration's current behavior must take into account the possibility that what we are seeing now will not necessarily reflect the future picture.

