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Speech Therapy

By Paul Glastris



When Barack Obama left to visit Israel in March, expectations could hardly have been lower. He had a relationship with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that was widely described as “frosty.” The two had feuded over everything from Obama’s insistence, early in his first term, that Israel freeze settlement building to Netanyahu’s repeated threat to bomb Iran unilaterally. The rapport between them was so strained that Netanyahu had all but openly rooted for Mitt Romney to win in November.

The Israeli public, too, viewed Obama with suspicion. He had not visited Israel in his first term, and in his famous 2009 Cairo speech, he was said to have argued that the Holocaust justified Israel’s creation, a grave insult to a country that bases its right to exist on the Jewish people’s historic and uninterrupted presence in the Holy Land. That Obama had not in fact said this in Cairo, that other presidents had waited until their second term to visit Israel, and that under Obama military aid to Israel was at a record high did not seem to matter. Polls showed that a sizable portion of Israelis viewed Obama as hostile to their interests and partial to the Palestinians.

The president’s aim during this visit was to turn this unpromising state of affairs around, a fact that became apparent as soon as he exited Air Force One. “I know that in stepping foot on this land, I walk with you on the historic homeland of the Jewish people,” Obama said upon arriving at Ben Gurion Airport—magic words meant to rebut the impression left by his Cairo speech. He would elaborate on that formulation over the next three days, to the delight of Israeli media commentators, underscoring the point with a visit to the tomb of Theodor Herzl.

Before the trip, former U.S. diplomat and Middle East negotiator Aaron David Miller, echoing a widely held view, predicted in the Washington Post that “[t]here isn’t likely to be a dramatic transformation in Obama and

Netanyahu’s relationship, and certainly not on this visit.” But in their joint appearances in Israel, the president and Netanyahu—whose power had been weakened in recent Israeli elections even as Obama’s was strengthened in November—were all smiles and pats on the back, conspicuously agreeing with each other’s positions on Iran and Syria, trading jokes about their respective children’s good looks, and displaying such bonhomie that NBC’s Mark Murray called it a “bromance.”

Then came the highlight of the trip, Obama’s address to college students in Jerusalem. The president began the speech by noting the coming of Passover and, to build a connection with his audience, explaining the significance of the Exodus narrative to both African Americans and himself. “For me, personally, growing up in far-flung parts of the world and without firm roots, the story spoke to a yearning within every human being for a home.” He talked of the Jewish people’s centuries of suffering and exile and of the sustaining dream of an independent homeland. He spoke of the struggles and sacrifices of Israel’s founding generation, and praised the country Israelis have built, with its high-tech entrepreneurial economy and its culture of vibrant public debate. He extolled the shared interests and “unbreakable bonds of friendship” between Israel and the U.S.

Most importantly, he described Israel’s security situation as Israelis themselves see it: that the country had taken “risks for peace” by withdrawing from Lebanon and Gaza only to get rocket fire in return; that its diplomatic entreaties have too often been met by rejection and anti-Semitism; and that the skepticism toward the peace process felt by many Israelis, especially

the younger generation, was completely understandable.

Then, after portraying the world as seen through Israeli eyes, he asked his audience to see through Palestinian eyes—their lives hemmed in by an occupying army, unable to move about freely or farm their lands, subject to attacks by settlers that go unpunished. “Just as Israelis built a state in their homeland, Palestinians have a right to be a free people in their own land,” he said, linking the Zionist vision he’d just acclaimed to an argument for the renewal of the peace process. His supposedly jaded young audience roared with approval.

“This will not be the same country after this speech,” gushed Haartz columnist Bradley Burston that night. A week later, a Jerusalem Post poll found that the percentage of Israelis who consider Obama more pro-Palestinian than pro-Israel had fallen from 36 to 16 percent.

The question now is whether Obama can or will leverage his enhanced stature into peace negotiations that will go anywhere. No one has ever lost money betting against the Palestinian-Israeli peace process, and there are good reasons to be doubtful now—not the least of which is that Netanyahu’s governing coalition, which contains representatives of the pro-settler Jewish Home Party, would likely fall apart if pressed to accept concessions to the Palestinians.

That said, it is possible for one presidential trip to change the dynamics of seemingly unyielding geopolitical problems. I’ve witnessed it myself.

In November of 1999, President Bill Clinton flew to Turkey and Greece on a trip aimed at easing tensions in the broader Balkan region, and in particu-

lar between those two countries. As the Greek American on Clinton’s speechwriting staff, it fell to me to write the address he would give in Athens. The Greek-Turkish problem was not nearly as geostrategically important as the Israel-Palestine situation, but it seemed no less intractable. Sparked by the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus, it had roots in the Ottoman occupation of Greek lands centuries before. As recently as 1996, the Greek and Turkish militaries had almost come to blows over the disputed sovereignty of an uninhabited Aegean islet; Clinton himself had had to talk the two countries into holstering their weapons.

Then, in the summer of 1999, Turkey was hit by a devastating earthquake, and the Greeks responded by sending badly needed humanitarian aid—a spontaneous outpouring of sympathy that surprised both sides. A few months later, Greece itself suffered an earthquake, and Turkey responded with assistance. Seizing the moment, the two countries’ foreign ministers, Ismail Cem of Turkey and George Papandreou of Greece, began a round of “seismic diplomacy” meant to explore more permanent ways of building trust. Chief among these was a deal the Clinton administration had been advocating: Greece would end its objection to Turkey becoming a candidate for membership in the European Union, something Turkey desperately wanted. In return, Turkey would amend its constitution to better protect its minorities (including its shrinking Greek population), reduce the role of the Turkish military in civilian politics, and press for a negotiated end to the division of Cyprus that would include the removal of Turkish troops from the island.



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Commission offers praise and concern

By Nikos Chrysoloras and Sotiris Nikas

The European Commission report on the Greek economy published on Friday in Brussels praised Athens's progress in its streamlining program and matches the government's expectations of a return to the financial markets next year. However, there is some concern regarding the privatizations program.



Unlike the draft report leaked earlier this week, the actual report retains the target of revenues from privatizations at 2.6 billion euros, but as a senior European Union official told reporters in Brussels after presenting the report, delays may cause Athens to miss this target. "We are concerned that there could be delays," the official said on condition of anonymity.

ity. "There are issues of state aid that are complicating the asset sales," he added.

High-level EU officials who are involved in the Greek program said yesterday that the fiscal adjustment Athens has achieved along with structural interventions such as the liberalization of the labor market constitute impressive feats that have been recognized internationally, which should allow Greece to borrow from the markets again in 2014.

Nevertheless, full disengagement from the stability mechanism will take a long time, depending to a great extent on the decisions the eurozone makes in terms of lightening Greece's debt. The report forecasts a zero primary deficit, in which case Greece would not be able to ask for its debt to be restructured in accordance with last November's Eurogroup decision. The next inspection on Greece's progress is scheduled for early June, when the creditors' representatives arrive in Athens. The prior actions required for the disbursement of the next bailout installments concern the liberalization of the energy market and the voting on bills concerning over-indebted households and combating corruption.

The creditors further expect to see a list of the 12,500 civil servants who will enter the labor mobility scheme. They are also prepared to discuss the possible reduction of value-added tax on food service, currently at 23 percent, although Kathimerini has also heard reservations from others as to whether any surplus revenue that may appear should go toward making that possible or be spent on a program for the return of young people to the labor market.

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ATTORNEY: What was the first thing your husband said to you that morning?
WITNESS: He said , ‘Where am I,Cathy?’
ATTORNEY: And why did that upset you?
WITNESS: My name is Susan!

ATTORNEY: This myasthenia gravis, does it affect your memory at all?
WITNESS: Yes.
ATTORNEY: And in what ways does it affect your memory?
WITNESS: I forget..
ATTORNEY: You forget? Can you give us an example of something you forgot?

ATTORNEY: Now doctor, isn’t it true that when a person dies in his sleep, he doesn’t know about it until the next morning?
WITNESS: Did you actually pass the bar exam?

ATTORNEY: The youngest son, the 20-year-old, how old is he?
WITNESS: He’s 20, much like your IQ.

ATTORNEY: Were you present when your picture was taken?
WITNESS: Are you shitting me?

ATTORNEY: So the date of conception (of the baby) was August 8th?
WITNESS: Yes.
ATTORNEY: And what were you doing at that time?
WITNESS: Getting laid

ATTORNEY: She had three children, right?
WITNESS: Yes.
ATTORNEY: How many were boys?
WITNESS: None.
ATTORNEY: Were there any girls?
WITNESS: Your Honor, I think I need a different attorney. Can I get a new attorney?

ATTORNEY: How was your first marriage terminated?
WITNESS: By death..
ATTORNEY: And by whose death was it terminated?
WITNESS: Take a guess.

ATTORNEY: Can you describe the individual?
WITNESS: He was about medium height and had a beard
ATTORNEY: Was this a male or a female?
WITNESS: Unless the Circus was in town I’m going with male.

ATTORNEY: Is your appearance here this morning pursuant to a deposition notice which I sent to your attorney?
WITNESS: No, this is how I dress when I go to work.

ATTORNEY: Doctor , how many of your autopsies have you performed on dead people?
WITNESS: All of them.. The live ones put up too much of a fight.

ATTORNEY: ALL your responses MUST be oral , OK? What school did you go to?
WITNESS: Oral..

ATTORNEY: Do you recall the time that you examined the body?
WITNESS: The autopsy started around 8:30 PM
ATTORNEY: And Mr. Denton was dead at the time?
WITNESS: If not , he was by the time I finished.

ATTORNEY: Doctor, before you performed the autopsy, did you check for a pulse?
WITNESS: No.
ATTORNEY: Did you check for blood pressure?
WITNESS: No.
ATTORNEY: Did you check for breathing?
WITNESS: No..
ATTORNEY: So, then it is possible that the patient was alive when you began the autopsy?
WITNESS: No.
ATTORNEY: How can you be so sure, Doctor?
WITNESS: Because his brain was sitting on my desk in a jar.
ATTORNEY: I see, but could the patient have still been alive, nevertheless?
WITNESS: Yes, it is possible that he could have been alive and practicing law.



President Obama and his administration have moved swiftly to put as much distance between themselves and this shocker of a scandal. Look at the words he's used: "outrageous", "inexcusable", and if you didn't get . Meanwhile, Treasury Secretary Jack Lew is "deeply troubled" and has "zero tolerance" for behaviour that is "inappropriate" and "unacceptable". They are right to come out hard and fast. For one arm of the government to target its most vociferous opponents is the sort of thing that happens in dodgy banana republics and failing democracies. Although the IRS commissioner has denied any staff acted out of partisan motives, political critics are doubtful.

IMAGES OF THE WORLD



President Barack Obama checks to see if he still needs the umbrella held by a US Marine during a news conference in the Rose Garden of the White House.



France's president has signed into law a controversial bill making the country the ninth in Europe, and 14th globally, to legalise gay marriage.



The prospect of a deep sea "gold rush" opening a controversial new frontier for mining on the ocean floor has moved a step closer.The United Nations has published its first plan for managing the extraction of so-called "nodules" - small mineral-rich rocks - from the seabed. A technical study was carried out by the UN's International Seabed Authority - the body overseeing deep sea mining. It says companies could apply for licences from as soon as 2016.



Sweden hosts Eurovision as Bonnie Tyler makes debut. Bonnie Tyler is bidding to become the first British winner since 199. The Swedish city of Malmo is gearing up to host the Eurovision Song Contest final with 26 countries set to perform for millions of TV viewers. Denmark's Emmelie de Forest is the favourite to win with Only Teardrops. Singer Bonnie Tyler will make her Eurovision debut on Saturday when she performs UK entry Believe In Me. Tyler, best known for her 1983 hit Total Eclipse of the Heart, claims she has "a fighting chance" of becoming the first British winner in 16 years.But bookmakers William Hill revealed her current odds stand at 50/1. Denmark has odds of 4/6 to win the contest, with its closest competition coming from Norway.

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Then I pass out. (rest)The way I see it... If you keep your alcohol levels up, flu germs can't get you! REMEMBER:'A shot in the glass is better than one in the ass!' Live Well - Laugh Often .



FILE - This April 25, 2007 file photo shows a colony of honeybees at the Agriculture Department's Bee Research Laboratory in Beltsville, Md. A new federal report blames a combination of problems for a mysterious and dramatic disappearance of U.S. honeybees since 2006. The factors cited include a parasitic mite, multiple viruses, bacteria, poor nutrition and pesticides. Experts say having so many causes makes it harder to do something about what's called colony collapse disorder. The disorder has caused as much as one-third of the nation's bees to just disappear over the winter each year since 2006. The report was issued Thursday by the Agriculture Department and the Environmental Protection Agency.

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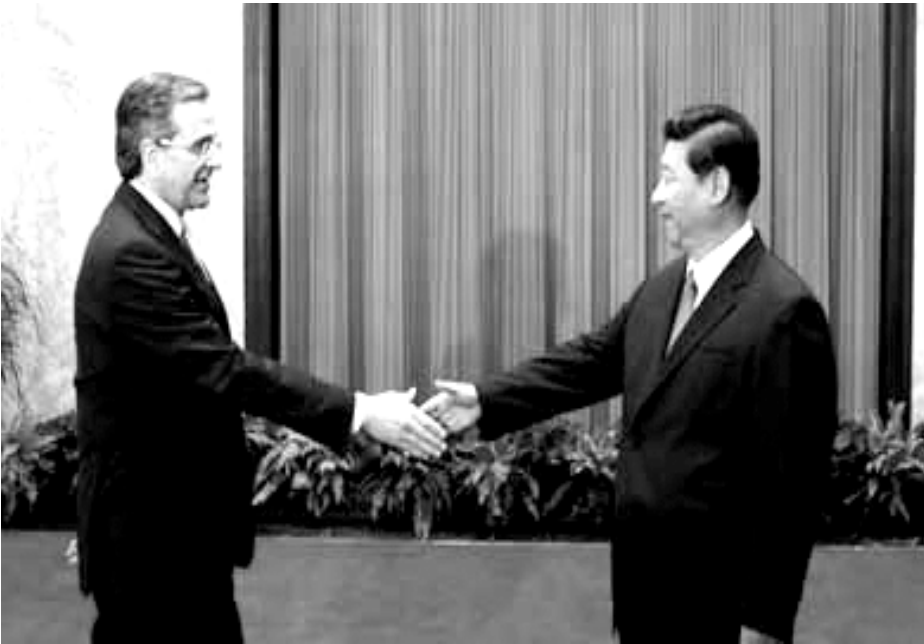
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NEWS FROM GREECE

Greece, China forge closer ties

China's President Xi Jinping (right) shakes hands with Greece's Prime Minister Antonis Samaras (left) during a meeting



at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Friday. Greece and China committed on Friday to strengthening their ties as Prime Minister Antonis Samaras continued meet-

ing top officials and business representatives in Beijing on the second day of his visit to the Asian country. The two countries put out a joint

communique covering everything from trade to cultural and diplomatic relations after Samaras met with Chinese President Xi Jinping. The two men expressed a desire to ex-

plore greater cooperation, saying that this “serves the fundamental interests of both countries and peoples.” Greece agreed to play a “positive and constructive” role in the development of relations between China and the European Union. Sources said Samaras had a productive meeting with Xi, who accepted an invitation to visit Greece and said he was committed to encouraging Chinese firms to do business with Greek companies. “(We) look forward to closer cooperation between the two sides on trade, shipping, culture and tourism,” Xi said according to the Xinhua news agency. Samaras also continued his meetings with business contacts in China. He met on Friday with officials from China Minsheng Bank, China Development Bank, the Export-Import Bank of China as well as Piraeus container port operator Cosco and telecoms companies ZTE and Huawei, which signed agreements on Thursday to set up transit and logistics hubs in Greece. The prime minister also held talks with the representatives of another eight Chinese companies said to be interested in investing in Greek airports, sea ports, railways, tourism, real estate and metals. As on his first day in China, Samaras talked up Greece’s chances of overcoming the economic crisis. “Until recently, many analysts believed that Greece was

a lost cause,” he said at a business forum where there were more than 270 business-to-business meetings between Greek and Chinese entrepreneurs. “We proved them wrong. Most of them now witness not a ‘Grexit’ – an exit from the eurozone – but a ‘Grecoversy’ – a recovery of the Greek economy.” On Saturday, the prime minister is due to speak at the World Cultural Forum in Hangzhou before traveling on to Shanghai, where he will take part in another Sino-Greek business forum and meet local and government officials.

Golden Dawn MP first to be ejected from Parliament chamber for years

A Golden Dawn MP, Panayiotis Iliopoulos, on Friday became the first lawmaker to be ejected from Greek Parliament since democracy was restored to Greece when the junta fell in 1974. Iliopoulos was ejected by Deputy Speaker Yiannis Dragasakis after launching an attack on SYRIZA leader Alexis Tsipras instead of asking the question that he had been allowed during a debate. Iliopoulos then refused to recognize Dragasakis, who demanded that the lawmaker ask his question or face expulsion. This triggered applause from deputies of other parties, whom Iliopoulos promptly called “goats” (sheep).

Dragasakis called security guards but the Golden Dawn MPs withdrew from the chamber before they arrived. As they left, “Heil Hitler” was heard three times. Parliamentary minutes show that one cry came from SYRIZA lawmaker Christos Pantzas. “Why don’t you take out a gun and shoot us? Heil Hitler,” he shouted at the departing deputies. It wasn’t clear who else shouted the Nazi salutation.

Although Golden Dawn often attempts to hide its neo-Nazi links, high-profile members, including leader Nikos Michaloliakos, have refused to condemn Nazism and recognize the Holocaust. Tsipras later accused New Democracy of contributing to the rise of Golden Dawn by harboring far-right MPs. The conservatives responded by warning that SYRIZA lawmakers had in the past overstepped the mark in Parliament.

Justice Minister insists anti-racism bill is going to become law

The strain that the anti-racism bill has put on the coalition was abundantly clear on Friday, as Justice Minister Antonis Roupakiotis told Parliament he felt slighted by the behavior of some government colleagues who appear to be hold-



ing up the legislation. “The bill against racism and xenophobia is not being withdrawn,” insisted Roupakiotis, who has yet to submit the draft legislation for public consultation. On Thursday, government general secretary Panayiotis Baltakos said the bill was being reviewed, only a few hours after Justice Ministry sources suggested it was ready. Roupakiotis, affiliated with Democratic Left, expressed frustration with the bill’s treatment. “I do not know what some statements aim to achieve,” he said. “Statements driven by public relations interests not only insult us but fail to help realize the decision taken by the prime minister and two other coalition leaders for the bill to pass.”



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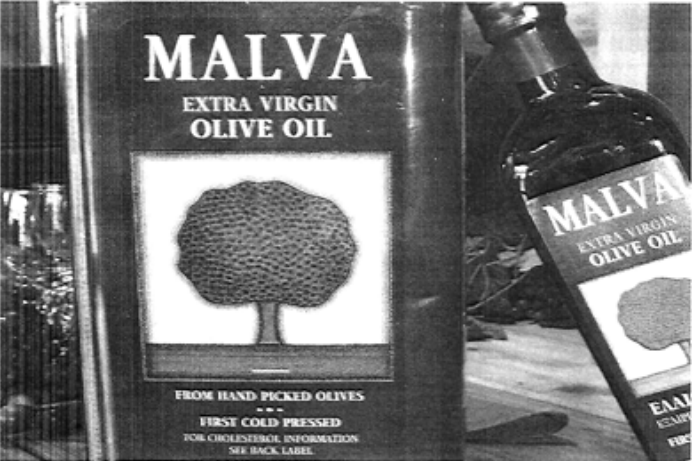
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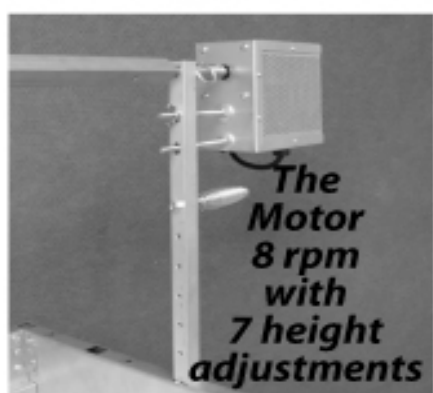
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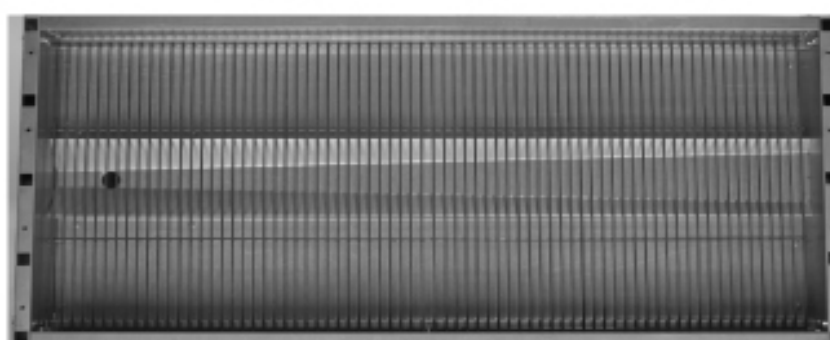


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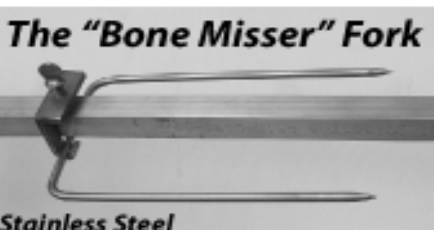
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