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The Two Kingdoms

Part 1
By: Louis A. Palivos

Cross-culturally, cross-ethnically and cross-religiously, most of humanity still believes in a Spiritual World, a world that is beyond our human senses. Going back to Babylonian, Egyptian, Assyrian, Medea- Persian, Greek and Roman history, there was a belief in a Spiritual World of good and evil. Throughout history, many have attempted to find understanding behind the curtain of our senses and our dimensions. Yet, have forces beyond our world, planet and senses been revealed to humanity? Is there a conflict going on now and beyond our planet, beyond our solar system and beyond our galaxy?



Pictures are revealed of a Spiritual War in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ healed a demon-afflicted man who was *blind and mute* by driving out the evil spirits.

“But when the Pharisees heard this they said, ‘It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons that this fellow drives out the demons.’” Matt. 12:22-24b Jesus responded, “If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his Kingdom stand?” Matt. 12:26. “But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you.” Matt. 12:28

Jesus Christ *unveiled* Two Kingdoms at war, the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan, the invisible was brought out to the visible. In the Gospel of St. Mark, chs., 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9, in part, this Spiritual War was *revealed* to the visible.

In the New Testament, St. Paul *revealed* a clear picture about a Spiritual War occurring: “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness, in the heavenly places.” Eph. 6:12

Please note two very important points: first, the existence of highly organized evil force(s); and second, that its headquarters is in the heavenly places.

In the Old Testament, this Spiritual Invisible Dimension was also *revealed*. “And the Lord said to Satan, ‘From where do you come?’ So Satan answered the Lord and said, ‘From going to and fro on the earth and from walking back and forth on it.’” Job 1:7

Where is God’s Kingdom? The *third heaven*, that is, Paradise, that God’s Kingdom reigns is extremely difficult to define; a place of eternal love, eternal glory, uncreated eternal light, eternal joy, eternal truth and eternal health. St. Paul *unveiled* a glimpse of this *third heaven*, “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago- whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know- such a one was caught up to the third heaven.” II Cor. 12:2. St. Paul wrote further, that “he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words which is not lawful for a man to utter.” II Cor. 12:4. Presently, on earth, this “Kingdom of God is within you,” the Believer, Lk. 17:21. St. Mark the Ascetic said, “We are not forgetting the blessings of the life to come or limiting the universal reward to the present life.”²¹ “The Kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the

[\(Continued p. 2\)](#)

ALEXIS PAPACHELAS

Dangerous times



In an interview with Alexis Tsipras back in 2012, I had asked him who he’d call first if he were prime minister and had learned of a serious incident in the Aegean. It was obvious that he hadn’t given much thought to the scenario but he said, “Mr Erdogan, of course,” in reference to the then Turkish prime minister and now president.

I admit that I would not ask the same question today, because there is no clear answer. When such incidents occurred in the past, Georgios Papandreou spoke to US President Lyndon B. Johnson, the dictator Georgios Papadopoulos called Cyrus Vance, Constantinos Karamanlis turned to Gerald Ford, and so on. They all knew more or less what the response from Washington would be: some kind of intervention to prevent an escalation from both sides.

Things are very different today, as nobody knows what US President Donald Trump thinks on the big issues or who might influence him if he decided to pick up the phone to speak to Tsipras or Erdogan. The officials who held these portfolios are no longer in their posts and the “machine” does not work as it did in the past.

I cannot stress how strongly I feel about the need for caution. Greece has already suffered from mistaken or garbled messages from Washington. Right now, every Greek American and his cousin suddenly appear to be speaking for Trump, saying crazy things like, “Of course he’ll side with Greece if there’s a conflict because it’s a Christian country.”

Then there’s the issue of the government’s poor track record in reading international signals, but the stakes are much higher than negotiating the conclusion of another review here.

The second factor is Europe’s weakness in crisis management. Berlin is trying to play a leading role as a problem solver from the Kosovo to the Cyprus issue, but it hasn’t been tested in a big crisis that needs quick reflexes. More importantly, because of the migration crisis, Erdogan has leverage he didn’t possess before. He knows that he can deliver a serious blow to the German chancellor and other European Union leaders by opening the borders.

I’ve left Erdogan for last. He’s not Tansu Ciller or even Turgut Ozal. He feels almighty – albeit ephemerally – and under a lot of pressure, and there is nothing standing between him and the military leadership anymore; the buffer between politics and any tactical decision has been removed. The only obstacle is the weakening of the armed forces and the removal of well-trained officers, pilots and other personnel.

In other words, this is absolutely not the time for an incident between Greece and Turkey.

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THE PLATFORM OF THE GREEK PRESS

1. To applaud the achievements of our ethnic group
2. To support the ideas of the Hellenic-Christian tradition
3. To promote the preservation of the Greek language
4. To encourage all worthy Community causes
- 5 To assist all the Greek-American fraternal, cultural patriotic and religious organizations
6. To install Americanism in the Greek-American community
7. To advance the just causes of Hellenism.
8. To promote the ideals Greece has given to humanity.

The Two Kingdoms

(Continued from p.1)

Holy Spirit." Rom 14:17.

However, Satan's Kingdom of the *second heaven* and *the earth* is a place of hate, rebellion, confusion, misery, darkness, sadness, falsity and sickness. This Satanic Kingdom forces itself against humanity with deception and with violence!

So why did the Lord, Jesus Christ come? Why did He have to be crucified? Why did a Man who did not sin die on the cross? "Therefore, Jesus Christ came to destroy the works of the devil," I Jn. 3:8, and "to be sin for us," II Cor. 5:21, so as to free us that accept Him as Lord and Savior, "from the wiles of the devil," Eph. 6:11. If you are an Unbeliever and have doubts, it's good! Would you cross a street without looking right and left? So, Believers, Skeptics and Unbelievers look right



and left!

Aside from the *revealed* truths in the Holy Bible, many ancient cultures and writers have attempted to understand these Two Kingdoms at war! In ancient Greece, Hesiod wrote the *Theogony*. There are also the Vedic and Hindu cosmologies. In ancient Babylon, there was the story of *Enuma Elish*. The common similarities of all of these stories were wars among the gods!

Erich von Däniken, who wrote, "*Chariots of the Gods*", "*Return to the Stars*" and "*Gods from Outer Space*", believes that the Earth has been visited by aliens.

The author begs to differ with Mr. Däniken; because, God Almighty has *revealed* in the Holy Bible the truth about the identity of the aliens, as well as, the gods at war.

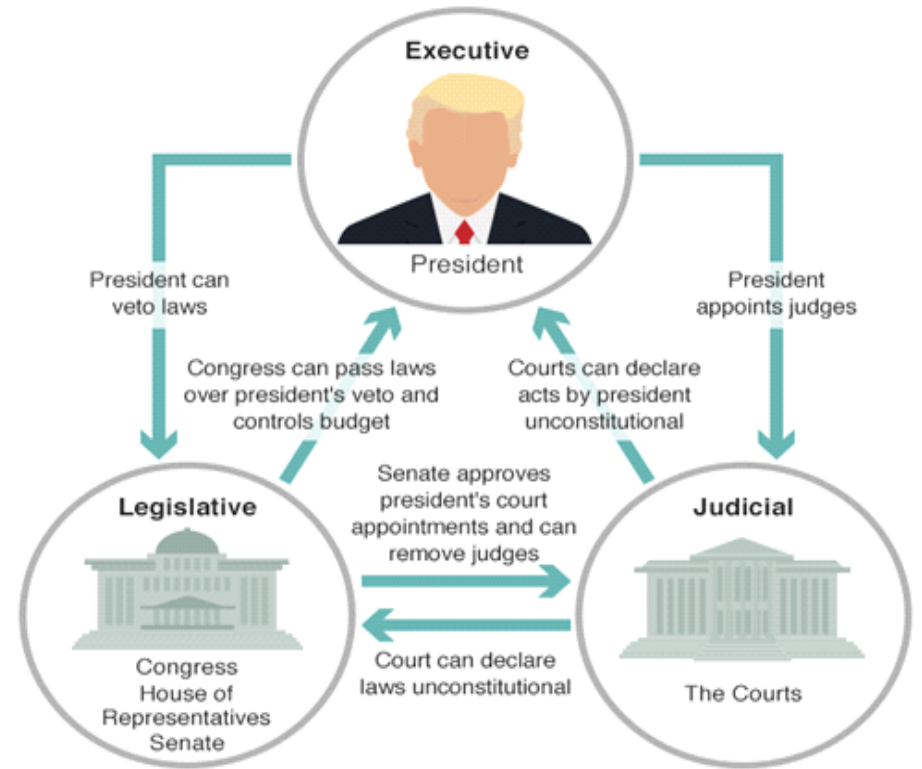
God's Kingdom does not force itself against humanity, but operates with free will, love, grace, mercy, compassion, holiness, peace, joy and truth.

In closing, the next seven articles shall pierce the veil to understand this Spiritual War between the Two Kingdoms. Unbelievers have not been trained in the "pulling down of strongholds," II Cor. 10:4; or in how to "resist the devil," James 4:7; or how to "wrestle against principalities...powers...rulers of the darkness of this age... and spiritual host of wickedness in heavenly places." Eph. 6:12. The question is are Believers trained?

1. *The Philokalia, the Complete Text*, compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, Vol. I, translated from Greek to English by G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard and Kallistos Ware, Faber and Faber, Inc., 1979.

Taking on Trump: Is the US facing a constitutional crisis?

Checks and balances on the US government



BBC

Donald Trump says he is defending the United States from terrorism - but a "so-called judge" is "making the job very difficult".

But the judge - in halting the president's controversial executive order on immigration - said he was making sure President Trump's actions follow the law.

That sets two theoretically equal branches of the government against one another - and could bring about a crisis.

What's at stake?

The separation of powers is crucial to understanding how the US is governed. The country's constitution established its treasured system of checks and balances - where the different branches of government hold equal authority and offset one another.

The federal government's power is split into three distinct parts - the executive branch, which includes the president and his cabinet; the legislative branch, Congress, which makes the laws; and the judiciary.

This works well most of the time, with each branch co-operating with the next. But with the president in open conflict with another branch, there are fears that an impasse could be reached.

That could lead to a constitutional crisis - a scenario in which the situation cannot be resolved - particularly after Mr Trump seemed to openly question the judge's authority.

"The President's hostility toward the rule of law is not just embarrassing, it is dangerous," Democratic Senator Patrick Leahy, from the Senate judiciary committee, said. "He seems intent on precipitating a constitutional crisis."

Is a judge really the equal of the president?

There are about 700 federal district judges in the US - the type facing down the president's order. Unlike state court judges, these men and women are part of the federal court system - along with the Supreme Court and the Courts of Appeals. Day to day, it's the 94 District Courts which deal with interpretation of US laws, treaties, and public officials - powers devolved to them from the Supreme Court. The judicial Power shall extend to all Cases, in Law and Equity, arising under this Constitution, the Laws of the United States, and Treaties made, or which shall be made...US Constitution, Article III (2)

But the courts do not offer opinions on government policy unless they are asked - they only interpret law when a case is brought before them.

The other two branches of government *make* and *enforce* the laws, and the judicial branch interprets the laws when there is a *dispute*. That is the issue here - a presidential executive order has all the force of law, and is subject to the same checks. Those judicial powers have been used many times before. Barack Obama faced stumbling blocks in 2015 when he attempted to use an executive order to grant a reprieve to undocumented immigrants, and George W Bush faced similar battles over detainees in Guantanamo Bay.

Why doesn't Trump fire these judges?

It is true that district judges are appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate. Judge James Robart, for example - the "so-called judge" of Mr Trump's Twitter criticism - was appointed by President George W Bush and confirmed in 2004. But Mr Trump can't fire judges. That's because the founding fathers of the United States created a system to protect the judiciary from interference.

Only Congress can remove a federal judge from office through impeachment, which involves both the House and Senate. It is the same system used to remove a president.

This "article three" protection is, in practical terms, very rigid. Only eight judges have been convicted in an impeachment trial in the entire history of the United States. The end result is that federal judges usually serve until they choose to retire - or until death.

In effect, two of the country's three branches of government are in conflict - and neither can remove the other. **Source: BBC**

Why is there a war in Syria?



What began as a peaceful uprising against Syria's President Bashar al-Assad five years ago became a full-scale civil war that has left more than 300,000 people dead, devastated the country and drawn in global powers.

Long before the conflict began, many Syrians complained about high unemployment, widespread corruption, a lack of political freedom and state repression under President Bashar al-Assad, who succeeded his father, Hafez, in 2000.

In March 2011, pro-democracy demonstrations inspired by the Arab Spring erupted in the southern city of Deraa. The government's use of deadly force to crush the dissent soon triggered nationwide protests demanding the president's resignation.

As the unrest spread, the crackdown intensified. Opposition supporters began to take up arms, first to defend themselves and later to expel security forces from their local areas. Mr Assad vowed to crush "foreign-backed terrorism" and restore state control. The violence rapidly escalated and the country descended into civil war as hundreds of rebel brigades were formed to battle government forces for control of the country.

Why has the war lasted so long?

In essence, it has become more than just a battle between those for or against Mr Assad. A key factor has been the intervention of regional and world powers, including Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia and the United States. Their military, financial and political support for the government and opposition has contributed directly to the intensification and continuation of the fighting, and turned Syria into a proxy battleground.

External powers have also been accused of fostering sectarianism in what was a broadly secular state, pitching the country's Sunni majority against the president's Shia Alawite sect. Such divisions have encouraged both sides to commit atrocities that have not only caused loss of life but also torn apart communities, hardened positions and dimmed hopes for a political settlement.

Jihadist groups have also seized on the divisions, and their rise has added a further dimension to the war. Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, which was known as al-Nusra Front until it announced it was breaking off formal ties with al-Qaeda in July 2016, is part of a powerful rebel alliance that controls much of the north-western province of Idlib.

Meanwhile, so-called Islamic State (IS), which controls large swathes of northern and eastern Syria, is battling government forces, rebel brigades and Kurdish groups, as well as facing air strikes by Russia and a US-led multinational coalition. Thousands of Shia militiamen from Iran, Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen say they are fighting alongside the Syrian army to protect holy sites.

Why are so many outside powers involved?

Russia, for whom President Assad's survival is critical to maintaining its interests in Syria, launched an air campaign in September 2015 with the aim of "stabilising" the government after a series of defeats. Moscow stressed that it would target only "terrorists", but activists said its strikes mainly hit Western-backed rebel groups.

Six months later, having turned the tide of the war in his ally's favour, President Vladimir Putin ordered the "main part" of Russia's forces to withdraw, saying their mission had "on the whole" been accomplished. However, intense Russian air and missile strikes went on to play a major role in the government's siege of rebel-held eastern Aleppo, which fell in December 2016.

Shia power Iran is believed to be spending billions of dollars a year to bolster the Alawite-dominated government, providing military advisers and subsidised weapons, as well as lines of credit and oil transfers. It is also widely reported to have deployed hundreds of combat troops in Syria.

Mr Assad is Iran's closest Arab ally and Syria is the main transit point for Iranian weapons shipments to the Lebanese Shia Islamist movement Hezbollah, which has sent thousands of fighters to support government forces.

The US, which says President Assad is responsible for widespread atrocities and must step down, has provided only limited military assistance to "moderate" rebels, fearful that advanced weapons might end up in the hands of jihadists. Since September 2014, the US has conducted air strikes on IS in Syria, but it has not intentionally attacked government forces.

Sunni-ruled Saudi Arabia, which is seeking to counter the influence of its rival Iran, has been a major provider of military and financial assistance to the rebels, including those with Islamist ideologies.

Turkey is another staunch supporter of the rebels, but it has also sought to

Water, one of the four deadly elements in nature

The world is full of natural hazards, from volcanoes to floods and storms. But where is the risk to human life greatest?

Most of us have been caught out by the weather, whether we got soaked to the skin in a storm or burned red by the sun. But there are places in the world where Mother Nature really goes in for the kill. From deadly storms to volcanic eruptions, there are threats everywhere. Of all Earth's danger zones, which is the most deadly?



Water has obvious perils for us, because we are pretty poorly adapted to an aquatic environment.

Some waters are more dangerous than others, thanks to unique geographical features that boost their power. The Saltstraumen strait in Norway has earned a fearsome reputation for having the strongest currents on Earth. But the home of the world's most powerful whirlpool has now been so thoroughly studied, tourists can traverse it in an inflatable boat with a knowledgeable skipper.

It is perhaps on dry land then that water is a greater force to be reckoned with. For those living by the coast, inundation by sea water is a particular danger. The Maldives, a group of low-lying islands and atolls in the Indian Ocean, have also been called "the ephemeral isles" because they are so vulnerable to rising sea levels. The risk rises every year as our climate continues to change.

The hazard peaks when water levels rise suddenly, during a tsunami or storm surge.

The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami was devastating. A tsunami is the sudden displacement of water causing a colossal wave, or series of waves, and can have devastating consequences. Most tsunamis – 71% according to the US National Weather Service – occur in the Pacific Ocean. However, those generated by earthquakes can occur in any subduction zone, according to Thorkild Aarup, head of the Tsunami Unit at the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO.

The summer flood on China's Yangtze River in 1931 is thought to have killed millions of people.

There are global tsunami warning and mitigation systems in place to protect people from these life-threatening events. But in some places, the warning times are as short as 20 minutes, so tsunamis can still claim many lives.

In 2004, the deadliest tsunami in recent history claimed up to 280,000 lives across 15 countries, after an earthquake struck off the coast of Sumatra, Indonesia. That death toll is so high, it is hard to comprehend. Yet even more lives have been lost to flooding rivers.

The summer flood on China's Yangtze River in 1931 is thought to have killed millions of people, though official records downplay the casualties. Heavy snowfall that year was followed by thawing and abnormally heavy rainfall, resulting in arguably the worst natural disaster on record.

Today, billions of people still live on flood plains next to China's biggest rivers and flooding is a growing concern as our weather patterns change.

contain US-backed Kurdish Popular Protection Units (YPG) fighters who are battling IS in northern Syria, accusing the YPG of being an extension of the banned Turkish Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

In August 2016, Turkish troops backed a rebel offensive to drive IS militants out of one of the last remaining stretches of the Syrian side of the border not controlled by the Kurds.

What impact has the war had?

The UN says at least 250,000 people have been killed in the past five years. However, the organisation stopped updating its figures in August 2015. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based monitoring group, put the death toll at 310,000 in December 2016, while a think-tank estimated in February 2016 that the conflict had caused 470,000 deaths, either directly or indirectly.

More than 4.8 million people - most of them women and children - have fled Syria. Neighbouring Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey have struggled to cope with one of the largest refugee exoduses in recent history.

About 10% of Syrian refugees have sought safety in Europe, sowing political divisions as countries argue over sharing the burden. A further 6.3 million people are internally displaced inside Syria.

The UN estimates it will need \$3.4bn (£2.7bn) to help the 13.5 million people who will require some form of humanitarian assistance inside Syria in 2017. More than 7 million people are affected by food insecurity and 1.75 million children are out of school.

The warring parties have compounded the problems by refusing humanitarian agencies access to many of those in need. Some 4.9 million people live in besieged or hard-to-reach areas.

Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin together?

By John Sweeney



The question of whether Russia's leader Vladimir Putin has got material with which he could blackmail Donald Trump is for now unknowable and misses the point by a country mile: the two men think alike.

Mr Trump's belief in American traditionalism and dislike of scrutiny echo the Kremlin's tune: nation, power and aversion to criticism are the new (and very Russian) world order.

You could call this mindset **Trumputinism**.

The echo between the Kremlin and Trump Tower is strong, getting louder and very, very good news for Mr Putin.

A new nuclear arms reduction deal seems to be in the offing linked to a review of sanctions against Russia.

The dog that did not bark in the night is Mr Trump's peculiar absence of criticism of Mr Putin, for example, on the Russian hacking of American democracy, his land-grab of Crimea and his role in the continuing war in Eastern Ukraine.

What is odd is that Mr Trump, in his tweets, favours the Russia line over, say, the CIA and the rest of the American intelligence community. But why on earth criticise the world leader with whom you most agree?

Three men have egged along Trumputinism: Nigel Farage, who is clear that the European Union is a far bigger danger to world peace than Russia; his friend, Steve Bannon, who is now Mr Trump's chief strategist; and a Russian "penseur", Alexander Dugin.

With his long hair and iconic Slavic looks, Mr Dugin is variously described as "Putin's Brain" or "Putin's Rasputin".

He has his own pro-Kremlin TV show which pumps out Russian Orthodox supremacy in a curious mixture of Goebbels-style rhetoric and Songs of Praise.

Mr Dugin is widely believed to have the ear of the Kremlin.

He is also under Western sanctions for the ferocity of his statements in favour of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which has cost 10,000 lives to date.

Messrs Farage, Bannon and Dugin are all united that the greatest danger for Western civilisation lies in Islamist extremism.

Mr Bannon aired his views in a right-wing mindfest on the fringes of the Vatican in 2014.

He claimed that so-called Islamic State has a Twitter account "about turning the United States into a 'river of blood'".

"Trust me, that is going to come to Europe," he added. "On top of that we're now, I believe, at the beginning stages of a global war against Islamic fascism."

Democratic values at risk?

The danger is that in allying yourself with the Kremlin in the way they fight "Islamist fascism" in say, Aleppo, you end up siding with what some have called "Russian fascism" or, at least, abandoning democratic values and the rules of war and, in so doing, become a recruiting sergeant for ISIS.

First, he dismissed the chances that the Russians hacked American democracy as "strictly zero".

I asked him about the depth of Mr Putin's commitment to democracy.

"Please be careful," he responded. "You could not teach us democracy because you try to impose to every people, every state, every society, their Western, American or so-called American system of values without asking...and it is absolutely racist; you are racist."

Too many of Mr Putin's critics end up dead - around 20 since he took power in 2000.

I have met and admired three: Anna Politkovskaya, Natasha Estemirova and Boris Nemtsov.

Mr Nemtsov was shot just outside the Kremlin's walls.

I asked Mr Dugin what his death told us about Russian democracy.

"If you are engaged in Wikileaks you can be murdered," he countered.

I then invited Mr Dugin to list the American journalists who have died under Barack Obama.

Mr Dugin did not oblige but told me that ours was a "completely stupid kind of conversation" and walked out of the interview.

Later, he posted a blog to his 20,000 followers, illustrated with my photograph and accusing me of manufacturing "fake news" and calling me "an utter cretin... a globalist swine".

Such is the language of the new world order.

A few days later I watched the press conference when Mr Trump closed down a question from a CNN reporter by accusing him of manufacturing "fake news".

Under Trumputinism, the echo between Russia and America is getting louder by the day.

Switzerland

The nation that hates to be late



The Swiss derive genuine joy from the fact that life unfolds on time and in a highly efficient manner. Although many countries are saddled with stereotypes, in Switzerland's case they're dead on. The alpine nation really *is* highly efficient. And meticulously punctual. Clean, too. For chronically tardy, resolutely inefficient (not to mention slovenly) people like myself, a visit to Switzerland yields a cocktail of emotions: awe, relief and a dash of irritation.

Whenever I visit Switzerland, I go through several stages of punctuality reaction. At first it delights me, especially if I'm coming from neighbouring Italy or France with their rather more flexible approach to timekeeping. By contrast, life in Switzerland is sturdy and dependable, like a Saint Bernard dog. If someone says they will meet me at 2 pm, they arrive at 2 pm not 2:05 (or 1:55, for that matter). I like this. For a while.

Then it annoys me. The extreme punctuality strikes me as a kind of stinginess, and I find myself agreeing with the English writer Evelyn Waugh who said that "punctuality is the virtue of the bored." That is unfair though, and finally, invariably, I come to appreciate Swiss punctuality for what it is: a deep expression of respect for other people. A punctual person is a considerate one. By showing up on time - for everything - a Swiss person is saying, in effect, "I value your time and, by extension, I value you."

It's no coincidence that the Swiss are the world's watchmakers. Which came first - the precise timekeepers or the precise people? Hard to say, but the result is the same: a nation where the trains - and everything else - really do run on time. Then there are the toilets.

"Have you seen our public toilets?" asked Dieter, a Swiss doctor, over an afternoon beer in Geneva. "They are very clean." He's right. Swiss toilets are indeed clean, as is everything else too. In some countries it would be suicidal to drink the tap water. In Switzerland it is fashionable to do so; the water comes from natural springs.

How to explain this cleanliness and punctuality? No one knows for sure. But a popular theory is that, historically, it stems from the unforgiving, mountainous terrain. Either you planted your crops on time and harvested them promptly or, well, you starved.

Punctuality, sadly, is a dying art in many parts of the world. Mobile phones are partly to blame. We feel less compelled to arrive on time if we can always text to say we're running a few minutes late. I don't sense that is happening in Switzerland, though.

Susan Jane Gilman, an American author who has lived in Geneva for the past 11 years, recounted with awe how she's "never had a taxi that arrived late, that wasn't there exactly when it said it would be". She marvelled at how, for instance, when she's ordered a new refrigerator, the company gives her a precise two-hour window for delivery - and sticks to it.

Switzerland has changed her. Once a "chronically late person", Gilman is now meticulously punctual. "I feel a greater respect for people's time," she said, sounding very Swiss.

The flip side, though, is that when she visits New York, her hometown, she is annoyed by the relative lack of punctuality: the bus that is 15 minutes behind schedule or doesn't show up at all, the friends who saunter into a restaurant 30 minutes late. "My friends will say 'Suze hon, this isn't Switzerland, relax. They'll hold our table.' But I've gotten anal. I get annoyed if people are late."

Punctuality is not without its drawbacks. For one thing, it creates a kind of bunching effect. Coffee shops in Swiss cities tend to be crowded at 4pm every day because everybody takes their coffee break at exactly 4pm. In apartment buildings, residents must abide by a strict weekday schedule for use of the laundry room.

Extreme punctuality also creates an expectation, and if that expectation is not met, disappointment ensues. On those rare occasions that things do not function smoothly, the Swiss get flustered - and angry. Recently, the country was thrown into a tizzy with the disturbing news that only 87.5% of the trains run by the federal railroad arrived within three minutes of their scheduled time, shy of their 89% target.

But perhaps that frustration has some merit. After all, Switzerland has some fierce competition when it comes to punctuality. In Japan, the Shinkansen bullet trains make the Swiss railroads look downright tardy. The average annual delay? Thirty six seconds.

ALEXIS PAPACHELAS

The fake news virus

The term “fake news” has become an international catchphrase over the past few months. However, it had already entered the household lexicon here in Greece thanks to the wonderful and anarchic world that is the internet.

Yesterday, a friend called me to ask if it was true that I would run as a candidate on a party’s so-called state list. Three years ago, many friends contacted me to express their surprise at speculation that I would become manager at ERT state broadcaster. I was never offered that particular job, but reports circulated for days.



The strangest thing happened to me when the fake news phenomenon first appeared in Greece in early 2009. I remember speaking to a friend on the phone while walking in the street. It was not a political discussion. I remember arriving at a hotel in central Athens where I had an appointment. While I was waiting in the lobby, one of the two candidates for the New Democracy leadership walked in. He asked me how I was and,

seeing that I was alone, asked if I wanted to have a coffee with him. I took up the offer.

Soon, I started receiving text messages. I did not check them until I received a call from a colleague who had just read something on a blog. According to the report, I had been spotted shouting into my phone that a certain New Democracy candidate was doing poorly in the polls. After that, the report said, I was seen heading for a meeting with the candidates’ aides. “He is there now,” the blog said. The only problem was that I was having coffee with the rival candidate. And our meeting was pure coincidence.

I found it hard to convince my friends that the blog post was unfounded. For a moment I thought of releasing a statement to deny the report. But it would obviously have no meaningful effect. I tried to understand why someone would bother to make up a story out of nothing. It was to no avail. Since that day, I have operated on the belief that there is nothing better I can do than be patient and strong.

I sometimes think that millions of people, including myself, have possibly made crucial decisions – even cast votes – on the basis of baseless information.

Greece is no stranger to this phenomenon. Conspiracy theories, character assassinations, and all sorts of bizarre scenarios have become mainstream in the eyes of Greek society. In fact, some old-school politicians took advantage of fake news long before Donald Trump did. Today, many of the same politicians are in despair as they too have become victims of the trend. It’s like a virus which has struck Western society, eating away at it from within.

There is still no antidote to this disease. It’s rather worrying to see the US looking increasingly like our country.

Pay from Home at cookcountytreasurer.com Property Tax Bills Due March 1 Show Local Government Debt, Pappas Says

Taxpayers can stay home to make online payment of property tax bills that show them the debt of each local government that levies taxes on their homes and other real property, Cook County Treasurer Maria Pappas said today.

Nearly 1.8 million property tax bills for the First Installment of Tax Year 2016 have been mailed to owners of homes, businesses and land, and the due date for on-time payment is March 1, Pappas said.



“No need to leave the house when you can pay online,” Pappas said. Simply by logging onto cookcountytreasurer.com, online payment can be made from a smart phone, a laptop, or a computer at work or in a library.

Anywhere from seven to 20 taxing districts – such as local governments and school districts – levy taxes on a given property, Pappas explained, adding that First Installment bills are 55 percent of last year’s total property tax.

On the front of every mailed bill, below the amount owed, is a section called “Taxing District Debt and Financial Data.” That section lists each taxing district that levies a tax on a property and gives the following financial information about each district:

- * Money Owed by Your Taxing Districts
- * Pension and Healthcare Amounts Promised by Your Taxing Districts
- * amount of Pension and Healthcare Shortage
- * Percentage of Pension and Healthcare Costs Taxing Districts Can Pay

Those who log onto cookcountytreasurer.com can see even more information by selecting “Want to see your local government debt?” and entering the 14-digit Property Index Number for the property or the name of a taxing district.

“Property owners should know how much they are being taxed and by which units of government,” Pappas said. “The bill and our website tell them.”

Information: Maria Pappas, 312.603.6202



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'Lonely cowboy' crooner Loukianos Kilaidonis dies

Loukianos Kilaidonis, known for the almost naive and upbeat sentiment of his songs, has died, his family announced on Tuesday.

The 74-year-old singer, songwriter and composer passed away in an Athens hospital in the early hours of Tuesday from heart disease.

Kilaidonis was born in the Athens district of Kypseli on July 15, 1943, and was married to actress Anna Vagena, with whom he had two daughters.



A graduate of Thessaloniki's Aristotle University and the National Technical University of Athens, Kilaidonis gave up architecture to pursue his passion for music in the 1970s, writing songs for the theater, film and television, and work-

ing with popular and acclaimed singers.

His recording career comprised more than 20 albums and dozens of hit songs, including "I'm a Poor and Lonely Cowboy," "A Day of a Mary," and "The Hymn of Black Dogs," while he was also renowned for launching the beach party culture in Greece in the 1980s, organizing huge bashes in Vouliagmeni and other parts of the capital's southern coast.

His candid sentimentality, his sense of humor and humanity, and his no-frills style that tapped into the country's folk music traditions helped him build a cross-generational affinity with the Greek public that only a handful of local artists have enjoyed.

Kilaidonis wrote music for almost every major theater company in Greece, including Xenia Kalogeropoulou's successful productions for children, and also penned tunes for renowned filmmakers such as Theo Angelopoulos, Pantelis Voulgaris and Vassilis Alexakis.

In 1999, he and Vagena founded the Metaxourgeio music venue, where Kilaidonis made regular appearances.

A memorial service was held yesterday for close friends and family. His body will be cremated outside Greece.

In the announcement of his death, his family asked for donations to be made in Kilaidonis's memory to a poor family he had taken under his wing, to National Bank account number GR8501101130000011395450502.

Could some snakes really be so dim-witted they mistake themselves for dinner?

Most of that disappears once the sea squirt reaches adulthood. "Once attached, the juvenile adult no longer needs the sense organs, nerve chord or even its tail, so it reabsorbs them," says Bishop. "The brain vesicle is transformed into a cerebral ganglion, which only helps the stationary adult to feed."



So the sea squirt's behaviour is not as gory as it sounds. It does not so much "eat" or "digest" its simple brain. Instead, it recycles it to make other, more useful organs.

However, there are other animals that are famous for eating their own tails.

This male king cobra (*Ophiophagus hannah*) is eating a female. But would a snake ever eat its own tail? "Snakes who eat other snakes (like King and Rat) will confuse their own tail for another snake and will end up eating itself," "There is a greek word for it called ouroboros and it symbolizes the eternal cycle of life and death."

Another user, whose comment has since been removed from Facebook, reported that his snake had eaten over half of its own body and suffocated as a result.

While snakes do try to eat themselves from time to time, it does not seem to be intentional .

Could some snakes really be so dim-witted they mistake themselves for dinner?

"Most snakes use heat-sense to find their prey, so their own tail is unlikely to capture their attention," says Sally South from the South Australian Museum in Adelaide. "But a few snakes also do 'caudal luring' (fast tail wagging) to attract prey. Some even do it just when they're excited. Snakes have small brains and are more reactive than proactive, so this movement could catch their eye and make them think 'prey'.

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GREEK NEWS

PANTELIS BOUKALAS

The 10 days that shook the world



It used to be that a newly elected president or prime minister had to complete 100 days in office before you could draw a relatively safe conclusion about their intentions. Not so with Donald Trump, the 45th president of the United States. One could say that everything takes place at nearly internet speed. After all, it's online (and especially on Twitter, which seems tailored to his temperament) that Trump codifies his delicate thoughts before announcing them to the rest of the world – which is not just the American people.

So his first 10 days in power were enough to reveal the style and moral character of a man who operates with the same hazardous simplicity and intellectual shallowness whether he is running a reality TV show or the world's biggest superpower. Trump's executive order on Friday to bar Syrian refugees and suspend travel to the United States from seven Asian and African (mainly Muslim) countries exposed (more clearly than his obsession with building a wall on the Mexican border, with Mexican money) the direction in which he wants to pull the globe: That is, toward a culture of irresponsibility (i.e. Washington will advance American interests around the world, without taking into account the consequences of its warmongering policy on local populations), bigotry, nationalist isolationism and zero solidarity (in the name of Christianity).

Any limits set by Trump's predecessor at the White House, Barack Obama – ranging from the maximum number of refugee admissions to the Paris agreement on greenhouse gas emissions – are now being swept aside, together with basic healthcare for the uninsured. That would explain why Trump is already facing opposition not just from the usual suspects (activists, journalists, celebrities and so on) but also judges (such as the one who blocked the deportation of those detained under the executive order), Republican Party politicians, international leaders (Canada, Mexico and some Europeans), and a growing number of “anonymous” Americans.

Although he received about 3 million fewer votes than Democratic rival Hillary Clinton (which has fed his fixation that he is the victim of ballot manipulation), Trump is still an elected president. We had been warned about his intentions. But Trump is not the leader of some insignificant nation on the global periphery, but a country whose decisions will affect the fate of many other countries. The culture of accountability concerns each and every politician, particularly the leader of a superpower whose words frighten us equally whether they are written or spoken.

Athens sticks to low-profile responses as Ankara ups rhetoric over islet

The fallout from Ankara after the Supreme Court's decision last week

not to extradite eight servicemen to stand trial in Turkey for their alleged role in the failed coup attempt in July, continued on Friday, with Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim disputing Greece's sovereignty over “130 small and large chunks of rocks in the Aegean.”

Yildirim said the rocks have “no identity” and that it is not clear who they belong to, while describing Greece's stance vis-a-vis Turkey's extradition request as “disappointing.”

He also took a swipe at Greek Defense Minister Panos



Kammenos for flying over the Imia islets this week to drop a wreath to commemorate three Greek servicemen who were killed when their helicopter crashed at the height of the Imia crisis in 1996, which brought the two neighbors to the brink of war.

“Geography is fate and we cannot choose our neighbors,” Yildirim said.

Greece's sovereignty in the eastern Aegean was also disputed by Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hussein Muftuoglu, who claimed Greece has no right to conduct military exercises on the island of Kos, as it is, he claimed, “demilitarized.”

For its part, Athens appears to be sticking to its strategy of low-key responses to Ankara's increasingly incendiary rhetoric, with Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias limiting himself to explaining Greece's sovereign rights and the status of the islands in the eastern Aegean.

It is essential, he told Alpha 98.9 radio on Friday, to keep the lines of communication with Ankara open in order to avoid a “hot incident.”

For Greece, diplomacy and negotiations are fundamental, he said, adding that “the Defense Ministry must do its duty with the means it has, with the hope that there will not be a need to use them.”

Meanwhile, the US has reportedly lauded the Greek Foreign Ministry's delicate and considered responses, so as to avert a further escalation of tension between the two NATO allies.

Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras conveyed his concerns about Turkey's “provocative claims and actions” to German Chancellor Angela Merkel on the sidelines of an informal summit of European Union leaders in Malta on Friday.

According to government sources, Tsipras told Merkel that Turkey's actions are undermining Greek-Turkish relations, peace and stability in the wider region.

The latest upsurge in tension

has also raised concerns over the fate of the efforts to reunify Cyprus. The talks foundered last month in Geneva over disagreements on post-settlement security. Both sides however have carried on talks and asked the United Nations this week to back another peace conference in March.

Varoufakis urges Tsipras to ditch negotiations with lenders



Former finance minister Yanis Varoufakis has called on Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras to turn his back on Greece's lenders, adopt a parallel payment system that he was responsible for designing in 2015, and to unilaterally restructure the European Central Bank loans it holds.

“This two-pronged preparation is the only way to prevent another excruciating retreat by the prime minister in the short term and [German Finance Minister Wolfgang] Schaeuble's plan in the long term,” Varoufakis wrote in an op-ed in Efimerida ton Syntakton on Saturday.

In his article, Varoufakis suggested that Schaeuble's strategy is to lead Greeks to the point of exhaustion so they ask to leave the euro themselves.

Merkel stops talk of political solution to review

German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble blamed the Greek government Friday for the delay in the conclusion of the second review of the country's third bailout.

“If Greece again and again does not do what it has committed to, eventually that will not work,” Schaeuble told a business meeting in Saarbruecken, western Germany.

His remarks came a day after his

meeting with the International Monetary Fund's European department director Poul Thomsen, which yielded no breakthrough on the debate over the primary surplus Greece must achieve.

The Eurogroup and Germany want Greece to achieve a 3.5 percent surplus, but the IMF official insists that this will be impossible to accomplish with the current measures in place, and that more are needed.

Given its analysis, the Washington-based Fund has argued that it will not join the Greek program if the country's debt is not made sustainable.

Schaeuble, who is not sold on the need for substantial debt relief, has insisted that the IMF must be on board, and is pressuring Greece to accept its demands for measures that would make a 3.5 percent surplus feasible.

The German minister said the finger of blame shouldn't be pointed at the European Central Bank for the Greek problem, but to a lack of a uniform economic policy in the eurozone.

“The ECB is not actually to blame for our problems – rather the prob-



lem is that the structure in the eurozone is such that we have a shared currency without a shared finance and economic policy and that the members – and the ECB never gets tired of saying this – aren't doing what they committed to doing.”

However, despite Tsipras's efforts to conduct what he described as “political negotiations” to break the deadlock in review talks, German Chancellor Angela Merkel reiterated her position that Greece must stick to the agreements it has made with the institutions and complete the review as soon as possible.

Sources said Merkel showed understanding but stressed that her “hands were tied.”

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I'll dress like a woman when you act like a presi- dent, police officer tells Trump



Image copyright Elizabeth Rooney Image caption Police officer Elizabeth Rooney felt the comments were “misogynistic and unpresidential”

It seems President Trump has high standards when it comes to the way his staff are dressed. Looking the part is as important as acting the part when you are in the president's circle, apparently.

But his reported requirement that his female staff “should dress like women” has provoked an inevitable backlash on social media.

According to a former Trump campaign worker, quoted in a [news report by Axios](#), the president wants the men who work for him to wear ties and the women to dress “appropriately”.

Dresses are apparently preferred, but if a female staffer wears jeans, they must “look neat and orderly”, the publication reported.

The internet responded in a powerful way, with many using the hashtag #DressLikeAWoman.

‘Misogynistic’ remarks

Elizabeth Rooney, a police officer in Boston and army veteran, posted a [photo](#) of her in uniform. She told the BBC: “I’ll start dressing like a woman when he starts acting like a president. I felt his remarks that women should “dress like a woman” are misogynistic and unpresidential.

“Each morning when I wake up, I dress myself in pride, honour, duty and freedom.” Others followed suit by posting pictures of themselves in their own work attire or of other inspirational women.

There were some voices in favour of the more gender-appropriate approach, but the majority of comments appeared to mock the remarks, which have not been confirmed as coming from President Trump, which they perceived to be sexist.

Four probes under way into ‘trillionaire’ Sorras, says minister

Justice Minister Stavros Kontonis on Friday told lawmakers in Athens that a prosecutor is currently investigating four misdemeanor case files compiled against self-proclaimed “trillionaire” Artemis Sorras, who claims to have enough money to pay off Greece's entire public debt and that of its citizens.



Kontonis was responding to criticism that the authorities have delayed looking into the activities of the man who also created a nationalist political organization called Convention of Greeks, which has attracted thousands of fee-paying followers.

The minister added that the Supreme Court prosecutor's office has overturned a decision by a lower court acquitting him of charges of disseminating false information.

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Trump travel ban: Seattle judge issues nationwide block



A US judge in Seattle has issued a temporary nationwide block on President Donald Trump's ban on travellers from seven mainly Muslim nations.

Federal Judge James Robart ruled against government lawyers' claims that US states did not have the standing to challenge Mr Trump's executive order.

Last week's order has led to protests and confusion at US airports.

Customs officials have told US airlines that they can resume boarding banned travellers while a legal case is heard. Gulf carrier Qatar Airways told Reuters news agency it would start accepting all passengers with valid travel documents.

The administration, however, could again block them if it were to win an emergency stay. The justice department says it will appeal against the Seattle ruling.

In a statement, the White House described Mr Trump's directive as “lawful and appropriate”. “The president's order is intended to protect the homeland and he has the constitutional authority and responsibility to protect the American people,” the statement said.

Mr Trump's order suspended the US Refugee Admissions Programme for 120 days. There is also an indefinite ban on Syrian refugees. Anyone arriving from Iraq, Syria, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan or Yemen faces a 90-day visa suspension.

Constitutional battleground



Dozens of lawsuits have been filed against the executive order since it was signed by Mr Trump a week ago but this is the first time a nationwide order has been granted - temporarily voiding the president's ban.

But the order could be reinstated once the justice department files a motion to quash the Seattle court's ruling. In a statement the White House initially called it “outrageous”, before withdrawing that description.

The executive order caused chaos when it was suddenly introduced a week ago - some travellers arriving in the US were turned back, and protests broke out at airports across the country. The Seattle judge issued his order on the grounds that the travel ban could be unconstitutional - an argument that could be challenged all the way to the Supreme Court.

An estimated 60,000 people from the seven countries affected had their visas cancelled because of the ban. The customs department said those visas would now be reissued, and the people involved were free to travel to the US.

The lawsuit against President Trump's ban was initially filed by Washington State, with Minnesota joining later.

“Folks who had visas, folks who were allowed to travel were denied that right without any due process whatsoever - that's un-American and unconstitutional,” he said in a BBC interview.

The order, Mr Ferguson added, also violated freedom of religion rights. “You cannot prefer one religion over another,” he told the BBC.

Mr Trump has argued that his directive is aimed at protecting America. Critics respond by saying that most terror attacks in the US in recent years have been carried out by home-grown militants.

The president said visas would once again be issued once “the most secure policies” were in place, and denied it was a ban on Muslims.

Courts in at least four other states - Virginia, New York, Massachusetts and Michigan - are hearing cases challenging Mr Trump's executive order.

Earlier on Friday, a judge in Boston declined to extend a temporary ban that prohibited the detention or removal of foreigners legally authorised to come to America.

The ban - which only applied to Massachusetts - is due to expire on 5 February.