

THE SOFT POWER OF THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE

By

Prodromos Yannas

Professor of International and European Relations

Technological Educational Institution (TEI) of Western Macedonia, Greece

yannas@kastoria.teiko.gr

1. Introduction

What power does the Ecumenical Patriarchate have? What are the sources of its power? Certainly the answer does not lie in the material resources the organization possesses nor the army divisions it commands, to paraphrase Stalin's remark on the Vatican. A more plausible answer is the soft power the Patriarchate wields in the modern world. According to Joseph Nye (2004) who coined the term, soft power is exercised through attractiveness to an actor's ideals and policies. In this paper, I discuss the notion of ecumenicity of Orthodoxy that has been promulgated for centuries by the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Ecumenicity refers to the leadership role of the Patriarch of Istanbul (Constantinople) among Orthodox Churches in fostering a supranational or cosmopolitan vision of conciliation and understanding in the Orthodox world or "ecumene." The meaning of ecumenicity has not remained constant throughout the ages. It is more likely the case that Patriarchs have tried to accommodate challenges to their position and title to changing circumstances in critical historical junctures. In this article, I examine how Patriarch Bartholomew, the current holder of the seat, has tried to defend the ecumenical title of his position vis-à-vis his Turkish challengers comprising of state officials and ultra-nationalists. The ecumenical vision of the Patriarchate has for long been a target of Turkish nationalism. The Turkish national frame has been unbearably constraining for the exercise of the Patriarchate's ecumenical duties. Unlike past arrangements that associated the performance of ecumenical duties with the empire, Byzantine or Ottoman, the nation-state model is ill suited for accommodating the ecumenical duties of the Patriarchate (Mavrogordatos, 2003, 127). One exception, showing possibly the path that could have been taken, is the Pope's acquisition of a sovereign territorial state, the Vatican City state. This possibility is in the minds of many nationalists in Turkey who fear the granting of a sovereign status to the Patriarchate. To allay these fears, Patriarch Bartholomew has ruled out this possibility.

2. Historical Overview

Throughout its long and tormented history spanning 17 centuries, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, a religious institution based in Constantinople (Istanbul) has seen its fortunes wax and wane through the passage from Byzantium to Ottoman empire up to the Republic. Under Byzantine rule, the Ecumenical Patriarchate extended its reach to all known territories populated by Christians in the East, the known “ecumene” and the interests of religious (the clergy) and civil authorities (the Emperor) converged on the propagation of the Christian faith. In Ottoman times, the Ecumenical Patriarchate became a “church in captivity”, with the Patriarch assuming the role of head of the Orthodox faithful, the religious designated community comprising the Rum millet. Although the Ottoman Empire was predominantly Muslim, it did allow non-Muslims to practice their religion and conduct their community affairs provided that they would exhibit loyalty to the Ottoman rulers and pay their taxes. The Ottomans allowed the “religions of the book” to be organized in millets: the Orthodox Christians or Rums, the Armenians and the Jews. In the Rum millet, the Ecumenical Patriarch was accountable to the Sultan for the conduct of the people in the Rum millet and was the chief interlocutor of the Sublime Port. Under the Ottoman system of governance, the Patriarch was held responsible for any act of disloyalty or rebellion committed by millet members against the state. Beginning in the nineteenth century, the spread of nationalism throughout the Balkans led to a double break up: the empire was dissolved into the nation-states of Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, Albania and Turkey and nation-building efforts loosened the grip of the Ecumenical Patriarchate over the faithful as nationality replaced religion as the defining marker of identity. As the nation-building process proceeded apace, the Ecumenical Patriarchate reluctantly acquiescent to the formation of national churches and witnessed a considerable territorial loss of its ecclesiastical jurisdiction. A watershed in the creation of autocephalous churches was the Bulgarian schism in 1870, a crack in the unity of the Rum millet effectuated by the Ottoman gesture of granting autocephalous privileges to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. The Bulgarian schism was not only a blow to the primacy of the religious bond uniting all Orthodox but the last in a series of events --following the unilateral declaration of an autocephalous Orthodox Church of Greece in 1833 and of Romania in 1865-- leading to the “nationalization of religion,” or the infusion of national sentiments in the constitution of Orthodox communities. The close affinity between Orthodoxy and

nationality were to have negative repercussions for the ecumenical status of the Patriarchate. The challenge facing the Patriarchate was how to reconcile its traditional claim to the ecumenicity of Orthodoxy with the trend linking Orthodoxy to nationality. Although the Ecumenical Patriarchate hastened to condemn “phyleticism” or nationalism in 1872, it did get embroiled in the nationalist struggle in Macedonia and Thrace siding with Greek nationalists against the nationalist-induced ecclesiastical claims of the Bulgarian Exarchate. At the turn of the century, the Ecumenical Patriarchate was torn between adherence to upholding the unity of the Orthodox community and the realization of becoming encapsulated by the trend of “nationalization of religion” that had engulfed the other churches in the Balkan region (Kitromilides, 1994, 181-184). To resolve the tension, between Orthodox ecumenicity and nationalist Orthodoxy, the Ecumenical Patriarchate started reinterpreting the claim to ecumenicity through the prism of nationalism (Matalas, 2002; Anagnostopoulou, 2004). This compromising stance of the Patriarchate was to become a potent weapon a few decades later at the hands of Turkish nationalists who castigated the complicity of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire (Toktas, 2005, 399) and sought to eradicate its centuries-long continuous presence from Istanbul.

At the Lausanne Conference in 1922-1923, the Turks were determined to expel the Ecumenical Patriarchate together with all the Greeks from Turkey. They couldn't conceive of granting a place in the newly created Turkish Republic to an institution that had openly supported Greek territorial aspirations in Asia Minor. The creators of a nationally defined Turkish state were hostile to the Ecumenical Patriarchate for forsaking the long-established practice of preaching the ecumenical vision to embrace Greek nationalism at the end of World War I in 1918. In the course the negotiations, Turkish delegates voiced at three different occasions the suggestion that the seat of the Patriarchate be removed from Istanbul. U.S. and British negotiators, especially Lord Curzon, the head of the British delegation, who was adamantly opposed to any suggestion of relocation, opposed the Turkish proposal. In its place, Curzon suggested that the Patriarchate be stripped of its civil privileges in exchange for retaining its seat in Istanbul (Diakofotakis, 2007, 23-35). Turkish negotiators verbally acquiesced to the demands of great powers (USA, United Kingdom, France) and of Greece that the Patriarchate be allowed to retain its seat in Istanbul on the condition that its authority would be confined to purely spiritual

matters (Alexandris, 1983, 103). This agreement was recorded in the Minutes (No. 20) of January 10, 1923 that were approved by all delegates including the Turkish representative Rechid Safvet (Diakofotakis, 2007, 33). However, the text of the Treaty of Lausanne makes no explicit reference to the status of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. With no written clause inscribed in the Treaty of Lausanne, the status of the Patriarchate is an issue of contention that has remained unsettled since 1923.

3. Contrasting Perspectives on “Ecumenicity”

Since the formation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the Ecumenical Patriarchate has been operating in a socio-cultural environment that is not conducive to its ecumenical mission. To be more precise, the state-induced national homogenization project disregarded or was openly hostile to the call of minority groups for respect of their rights. The adoption of Turkish nationalism by state elites and their implementation of a top-down national modernization project figured the non-Muslim Rum Orthodox minority and the Ecumenical Patriarchate as the “enemy within.” Presently, what is at stake is the status of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Turkey, that is the legal basis for exercising its ecclesiastical authority to propagate its mission on a global scale. Related to the issue of ecumenical status are other issues that pertain to the re-opening of the Theological Seminary in Halki (Haydebelia) for the training of Orthodox clergy and recognition of property titles for religious foundations. The present article concentrates solely on the ecumenical status of the Patriarchate, the bone of contention that has re-emerged with increased intensity in the past decade. Positions on the issue can be arrayed along a continuum ranging from cosmopolitanism to virulent expressions of nationalism. Patriarch Bartholomew and his supporters are the bearers of an ecumenical vision for the Patriarchate. Turkish state officials and especially vocal ultra-nationalist circles counter this vision. Indicative of the different perspectives are the terms (discourse) the two opposite sides use. Beginning with the title, Bartholomew thinks of himself as “Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarchate.” Bartholomew is assigned the twin role of serving as leader two communities, the local community of Orthodox Christians in Istanbul and the global community of Orthodox Christians around the world. The Turkish side, on the other hand, ties the prelate’s role to the local congregation of believers referring to Bartholomew as Patriarch of Istanbul or as Patriarch residing in the Fener district of Istanbul. There is a great quantitative gulf separating the two perspectives. For Patriarch Bartholomew, his congregation

numbers about 6 million faithful whereas for Turkey the congregation is restricted to the 2500-3000 Rum residing in Turkey (Mason, 2001, 59). Turkish society, with few notable exceptions, treats the Patriarchate as a Turkish institution subject to the laws of the country. Supporters of Bartholomew seek to break away from the suffocating Turkish legal straightjacket; in line with the international agreement at Lausanne, they aim to attain for the Patriarchate an international legal personality or a legal personality that would be safeguarded by binding Turkey to international guarantees.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate marshals historical, religious and legal arguments in support of its ecumenical status and demands the granting of a legal personality commensurate with that status. Historically, the center of Orthodoxy has been located in Istanbul for more than 16 centuries. The historical claim refers to the already alluded religious and administrative privileges and duties that successive Ottoman Administrations accorded to the Patriarch, the head (Millet Basi) of the nation of the Orthodox (Rum Milleti). Although negotiations at Lausanne in 1923 confined the Patriarchate's role to purely religious matters, Turkey is bound by a multilateral international agreement, specifically Article 42 of the Lausanne Treaty, to protect the religious establishments of the minorities. On religious grounds, the Ecumenical Patriarchate derives its ecumenical mission from the Ecumenical Councils of 381 and 451 AD. Being "first among equals – primus inter pares" - of all Orthodox Churches, the Ecumenical Patriarchate safeguards the unity of the Orthodox faith, coordinates and sets the agenda of Ecumenical Synods and Pan-Orthodox Conventions and participates in inter-faith dialogues with Islam and Judaism respectively. In legal terms, the Patriarchate has for centuries been treated as a subject of public international law. This international legal personality constitutes part of customary international law and is affirmed by international treaties like the Peace of Kucuk Kaynarca in 1774, the Paris Peace Treaty in 1856 and the Treaty of Berlin in 1878 to which the Ottoman Empire was a party (Karikopoulou, 1979). Turkish authorities remain oblivious to this line of argumentation and prefer to treat the Patriarchate as a non-governmental institution subject to the Turkish civil code.

Turkish authorities have protested on a number of occasions references to the ecumenical mission of the Patriarchate. Five instances where Ankara reacted strongly to the ways the Patriarch was received and addressed were the July 1990 visit of Patriarch Dimitrios to Washington, the address of Patriarch Bartholomew before the European Parliament on May 28, 1994, the visit of Patriarch Bartholomew to the

Vatican in June 1995, the invitation of former U.S. Ambassador Eric Edelman for celebrating the U.S. national holiday, the 4th of July, in 2004 and the Court of Cassation verdict issued on July 13, 2007. On these occasions, the official Turkish position became more pronounced that the Patriarchate (Fener Rum Patrikhanasi) is a Turkish institution limited to serving the Rum Orthodox minority in İstanbul.

Turkish officials from the Prime Minister down to civil servants and party functionaries have on a number of instances openly challenged the ecumenical title of the Patriarchate. At the beginning of this decade, the Vali of Istanbul visited and presented to Patriarch Bartholomew a circular issued by the Turkish Foreign Ministry forbidding him from using the title “Ecumenical” prior to his name or the institution he is heading (Kourkoulas, 2005). In December 2004, Prime-Minister Erdogan seized the opportunity offered by an invitation of the organization “Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate” in honour of U.S. Ambassador Eric Edelman to express on Turkish TV channel NTV his discomfort over the use of the title “Ecumenical”. “We consider it a mistake”, the Prime Minister said, “one of our citizens to issue invitations using titles that does not possess and are attributed to him from abroad.” (Express, December 3, 2004, p.9). Caustic remarks against the ecumenical mission of the Patriarchate reached a climax in October 2005, a period of intense negotiations leading up to EU’s decision in December of the same year to grant Turkey eligibility for full EU membership. Turkish Ambassador to France Uluc Uzulker is reported to have stated that “in a secular country as is Turkey that abolished the caliphate of the muslims, the ‘Patriarch of Fener’ cannot be the leader of a global diocese and cannot use the term ‘ecumenical’.” (Quoted in To Pontiki, Greek Weekly, October 10, 2005). The most blatant attack, though, came from the Deputy President of the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP) Saban Disli who, sitting on the same panel with Patriarch Bartholomew for the 9th Dialogue meeting of the European People’s Party with the Orthodox Church, stunned his audience by saying “The Patriarch is the spiritual leader of the Orthodox of Fener, his role is constrained and the Patriarchate is a Turkish institution that concerns only Turkish citizens.” (I Kathimerini, October 21, 2005; To Ethnos, October 21, 2005). Quite recently, the ecumenical claim of the Patriarchate was put to rest by the Turkish judiciary. The Court of Cassation, in rejecting an appeal brought by members of the Synod of the Patriarchate against a decision of a local court surrounding the case of priest Konstantin Kostoff, reasoned that the Patriarchate “bears only religious powers as the church of the Greek minority

in Turkey” and affirmed that “there is no legal claim that the Patriarchate is Ecumenical.” (Republic of Turkey, 2007).

Turkish authorities seem to be concerned over the likelihood that the Patriarchate might be a Vatican City in the making. Implicit in the Turkish position lies the fear that if the principle of extraterritoriality applies to the Patriarchate, then the sovereignty of the country will be compromised. One can sense that the issue of sovereignty would strike a sensitive chord to people who saw their country divided among foreign powers in the aftermath of World War I; at the same time, one should also be mindful not to be easily drawn by the Serves syndrome, the nationalist tendency to see behind minority actions foreign designs or conspiracies aimed at carving up and dividing the country’s territory. There are a number of reasons that refute claims of the Ecumenical Patriarchate ever resembling the Vatican. Orthodox churches are autocephalous national churches run by collective bodies, their respective Synods. The Patriarch may safeguard Orthodox unity through the convening of a Pan-Orthodox Synod but cannot impose his will on the other three ancient (Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem) and modern patriarchates (Moscow, Serbian, Romanian, Bulgarian) and the 15 autocephalous churches. In short, he is first among equals but has no power to interfere in the internal affairs of other churches. In addition, his claims to universalism have not gone undisputed by the Patriarch of Moscow Alexios II as head of the most populous Orthodox congregation. The sharp contrast with the Vatican is evident, where the Pope’s authority reigns supreme and remains undisputed. Additionally, Patriarch Bartholomew has on a number of meetings with Turkish officials tried to efface any lingering thoughts about according to the Ecumenical Patriarchate status similar as that of the Vatican. Not too long ago, Patriarch Bartholomew has been reported as saying, “we do not want to give this (ecumenical) title a political context. Becoming a second Vatican is not in keeping with the Orthodox Church’s principles” (Helicke, 2004). The same assurances to appease nationalist fears of the Ecumenical Patriarchate attaining secular power to become like the Vatican the Patriarch gave in an interview to Turkish daily “Milliyet” in December 2005. He specifically stated, “Even if the government of the Turkish Republic offers the Patriarchate to become a second Vatican, we would turn it down.” (Sazak, 2005).

4. Sources of Ecumenical Patriarchate's Soft Power

The broad ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, not only gives credence to its ecumenical duties but is also a source of soft power through the support of parishioners worldwide and the leverage these people can exert on governments, legislatures and international governmental and non-governmental organizations. On religious grounds, the reach of the Patriarchate is global and extends beyond its small diocese in Istanbul to Europe, North Central and South America, Asia and Oceania.. The beginnings of this development are traced back to the turn of the century, certainly prior to the Lausanne settlement, when former Patriarch Joachim III sought to keep alive the ecumenical mission of the Patriarchate by establishing new ecclesiastical provinces under its jurisdiction and by asserting its leadership role within the institutional domain of Orthodox Patriarchates and autocephalous Churches (Balakou-Theodoroudi, 2001, 80-83). In total, the number of faithful that fall directly under the Patriarchate's institutional umbrella is estimated to be close to 16 million, an exponentially larger figure than the community of approximately 3.000 believers in Turkey. The difference in numbers is startling and the Ecumenical Patriarchate rightly considers its parishioners around the world a source of strength. A subtler source of power, though, emerges from the mobilization of noted parishioners especially in Europe and North America rallying in support of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. A case in point is the organization "Order of Saint Andrew the Apostle-Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate," headquartered in New York, which has been actively engaged in lobbying governments and legislative bodies like the U.S. Congress and the European Parliament. To underscore the Patriarchate's jurisdiction beyond the confines of Turkey, effective March 1, 2004 six non-Turkish citizen Metropolitans have been appointed to the Holy Synod, the chief religious-administrative organ. In a way, this decision is an open admission that the Patriarchate can no longer rely solely on the pull of high priests with Turkish citizenship for its survival and the functioning of its institutions. This move, which took Turkish authorities by surprise, must be viewed in tandem with the stalemate on the issue of reopening a theological seminary for orthodox priests.

A source of soft power is the recognition foreign governments and international organizations bestow on the international personality of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. On his numerous visits abroad, foreign governments receive the Ecumenical Patriarch with the honors befitting a head of state. Since ascending to the

throne in 1991, Patriarch Bartholomew has been invited by many countries and paid official visits in the United States (U.S.), the European Union, Austria, Greece, Iran, Qatar, Libya, Bahrain, Cuba, and other countries. All foreign leaders, except Turkey's, acknowledge the ecumenical rights of the Patriarch over the Orthodox world.

Of special significance is the weight the U.S. government has brought to bear on the ecumenicity issue and other related problems befalling the Patriarchate. The support of the U.S. to the Ecumenical Patriarchate dates back a number of decades. Domestic and international-strategic considerations account for the backing the Ecumenical Patriarchate has received from the U.S. Domestically, the U.S. government cannot remain indifferent to the pleas of support expressed by the approximately 2.5 million U.S. citizens of Orthodox faith that fall under the Patriarchate's jurisdiction. Additionally, the U.S. government has consistently castigated in the human rights reports it issues annually Turkey's denial of ecumenical rights to the Patriarch. In strategic terms, the U.S. government has viewed the Ecumenical Patriarchate as a bulwark against the encroachment of the Moscow Patriarchate in Europe and of its elevation to ecumenical status as a "Third Rome." In the Cold War period, U.S. pressure was instrumental in obtaining Turkey's approval for granting to then Archbishop of North and South America Athenagoras the Turkish in order to ascend to the Ecumenical throne in 1949. In the aftermath of the Cold War, President George Bush and Congressional leaders stressed the ecumenical role of the Patriarchate and extended a warm welcome to Patriarch Demetrios during his official visit to the US in July 1990. In a similar vein, President George W. Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell warmly received Patriarch Bartholomew in Washington on March 5, 2002. Moving closer to the present, the U.S. Government Spokesperson unequivocally stated in the December 5, 2005 press briefing: "the U.S. considers Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to be a religious leader of global standing."

The European Union (E.U.) has in a number of ways exhibited its support for the ecumenical role of the Patriarchate. Strong expressions of support have come from various quarters including the European Commission, the European Parliament and the political party groups represented at the E.U. level. For example, successive Presidents of the European Commission from Jacques Santer to Romano Prodi and down to Jose Manuel Baroso have all been forthcoming in co-sponsoring with

Patriarch Bartholomew international shipboard symposia promoting ecumenical values for the protection of the environment. In 1994, the European Parliament through its President Egon Klepsch invited Patriarch Bartholomew as a leader of the Orthodox world to address the body in its plenary session of April 19, 1994. On November 13 of the same year, Patriarch Bartholomew also delivered a speech to the European Court of Justice (Koukoulis, 2004, 105-111). Following these visits, the Patriarchate established a liaison office in Brussels. The goal of the liaison office is to underline the role of Orthodoxy in the European unification process and to underscore the contributions that the Ecumenical Patriarchate can make to the building of a united, multi-cultural European society. The ecumenical mission of the Patriarchate in defense of human rights, religious tolerance and environmental protection is compatible with the EU's heritage and support for universal ideals of democracy, peace and prosperity. Last, European political party formations and in particular the strong European People's Party and European Democrats Group (EPP-ED, Christian Democrats and allies) have entered into a series of dialogues with the Ecumenical Patriarchate in the last ten years. Since the first dialogue held in Istanbul on April 28-29, 1966, nine more dialogues have been held in Strasburg, Brussels and other major European cities attended by MPs, heads of states and government ministers. It is noteworthy that the European People's Party did not hesitate to take a stand when the issue of ecumenicity was brought to the fore recently with a Turkish Court of Cassation ruling forbidding Patriarch Bartholomew from using the adjective "Ecumenical" in his title. On July 23, 2007, the President of the EPP-ED group Wilfried Martens together with the Foreign Minister of Greece Dora Bakoyannis issued a joint statement deploring the court's decision and urging Turkey to accept the international status of the Ecumenical Patriarchate by recognizing its legal status (Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2007).

The visits of foreign leaders to the seat of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in the Fener district of Istanbul are another indicator of the Patriarchate's soft power. These visits, a tribute to the legacy and the global reach of the center of Orthodoxy, are testimony to the growing concern of world leaders for the problems troubling the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Indicative in this respect are the visits of former U.S. President Clinton on November 17, 1999, of President of the European Parliament Borel in November 2004 and of German Chancellor Angela Merkel in early October 2006 respectively.

Of course, Pope Benedict's XVI visit to the seat of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Fener as part of his four-day official visit to Turkey in 2006 helped boost the Ecumenical Patriarchate's soft power. The Pope conducted together with the Patriarch a ceremony held on November 30 and then both leaders addressed the faithful in a show of Christian solidarity. The Papal visit demonstrates the Pontiff's support for the ecumenical rights of the Patriarchate and confirms the equal status the two religious leaders possess in the Christian world.

Additional support of the global reach of the Patriarchate comes from Patriarch Bartholomew's initiatives for the protection of the environment (Chryssavgis, 2007). Concern for the environment serves the dual purpose of underlying a theological preoccupation with the Earth, God's creation, while concentrating on an issue that transcends national boundaries. Following in the footsteps of his predecessor, Patriarch Dimitrios I (1972-1991) who had declared that beginning in 1989 the first day of every September will be celebrated throughout the Orthodox world as a day for the protection of the environment, Patriarch Bartholomew (1991- present) has been very active organizing environmental summer seminars at the Theology School of Halki island spanning the period 1994-1998 and sponsoring international symposia held bi-annually since 1995 on the general theme of "Religion, Science and the Environment." Participants of the summer seminars were given the chance to draw connections between environmental concerns and broader issues surrounding questions of ethics (1995) and justice (1997).

Patriarch Bartholomew, though, gained his international reputation as a champion of environmental causes from organizing international symposia on the condition of the earth's waters. Thus far, six symposia have been organized and another one is scheduled to take place on September 6-12, 2007 focusing on the Arctic Sea.

The first symposium was held in September 1995 in the Aegean Sea on the occasion of the 1900th anniversary of the book of Revelation. The symposium, organized jointly with the Worldwide Fund (WWF) for Nature, brought together approximately 200 leading academic personalities and policy-makers to ponder on the relation between religion and the environment. Participants boarded a ship and visited the ports of Piraeus, Istanbul, Kusadasi and the island of Patmos. The second symposium was held in September 1997 in the Black Sea with more than 400 distinguished participants in attendance discussing the threats to the sea's ecosystem.

Co-sponsored by President of the European Commission Jacques Sander, religious and political personalities, local community leaders and prominent scientists travelled more than 1,000 miles on a sea journey visiting the ports of Trabzon, Batuni, Novorossiysk, Yalta, Odessa, Constanta, Varna and Istanbul. The symposium made raising awareness about the environmental crisis of the Black Sea a top priority, singled out the Black Sea Environmental Program as an international initiative in need of further financial assistance and established a network for coordinating activities of civil society actors on improving the environmental condition of the Black Sea. The third symposium, which was held in October 1999, addressed the ecological problems of the Danube River. Organized jointly with President of the European Commission Romano Prodi, the symposium focused on a troubled region that had been hit by NATO bombings just three months ago. The symposium gathered a number of eminent participants who made a 2,800km journey starting in Passau, Germany and stopping along the way in areas of Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine. The fourth symposium tackled the environmental problems of the Adriatic Sea. The symposium was held in June 2002 and was jointly sponsored by European Commission President Romano Prodi. Policy-makers, experts, representatives of non-governmental organizations and journalists traveled aboard a ship on a journey that took them from the island of Corfu in Greece to their final destination in Venice, stopping along the way to coastal cities of Albania, Montenegro, Croatia, Slovenia and Italy. The symposium culminated in the signing by Pope John Paul II and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of the Venice Declaration, a document on environmental ethics (Declaration on the Environment, 2002) on June 10, 2002. The fifth symposium focused on the pollution of the Baltic Sea and was held in June 2003. Organized under the auspices of Patriarch Bartholomew and President of the European Commission Romano Prodi, the symposium drew about 250 participants and featured among its invited speakers the Queen of Denmark, the King of Sweden and European Commissioner Margaret Wallstrom. Participants toured five countries stopping along the way in Gdansk, Kalinigrad, Tallinn, Helsinki and Stockholm. The symposium's main task was twofold: 1) to generate a list of practical solutions for solving the region's problems; 2) to pursue universally applied ethical goals and principles in the formulation and execution of environmental programs. The sixth symposium was held in July 2006 on the Amazon River. It was organized jointly with U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan

and gave to more than 250 invited participants the chance to address the environmental problems of the region as well as the global ramifications of these problems. The seventh symposium is scheduled for September 2007 and will feature as organizers both President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Baroso and former U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan. The focus will be on the environmental problems of the Arctic Sea with special attention given to the dangers of global warming.

The international symposia on the environment are a source of Ecumenical Bartholomew's soft power. They manifest the leverage the Patriarch can exercise on elites and the general public worldwide in furthering the Orthodox perspective of seeing nature as a sacred entity to be embraced rather than be exploited and in fostering environmental awareness. Patriarch Bartholomew's soft power derives from various demonstrations of support for his ecological initiatives. The international symposia in particular have been noteworthy events on the world's stage both in terms of their organizational set up and of their pull of qualified participants. Among the symposia co-sponsors one notices Presidents of the European Commission, the U.N. Secretary General and the President of the Worldwide Fund. Participants have included members of the world's elite deliberating region-specific consequences of environmental degradation, a global condition that concerns everyone. The international symposia have been a strong vehicle for getting the message of environmental awareness and action across to a wider public. Elliott Norse, who has participated in several symposia in his capacity as President of the U.S.-based Marine Conservation Biology Institute, has expressed Patriarch Bartholomew's soft power in words. He has succinctly stated: "Bartholomew is unique amongst the world's religious leaders in the degree to which he has devoted his ministry to helping his flock understand the impact of human beings on the earth. This thrills me because, as a scientist, I have not been able to get the message out, but when the patriarch speaks, it's immediately newsworthy." (Woodward, 2003). Additional proof of Patriarch Bartholomew's soft power comes from the world press that has coined him the "Green Patriarch." Other religious leaders have also shown sensitivity to the environment but Patriarch Bartholomew has proven to be persistent and effective in spreading the ecological message. Finally, the Patriarch's painstaking efforts on the environment have received worldwide acclamation. For his theologically inspired ecological ministry, the Ecumenical Patriarch has been awarded honorary doctorates

from Yale University in May 1998 and from Bologna University in November 2005. Moreover, he has received numerous awards including Norway's Sophie Prize in 2002 and U.N.'s Champion of the Earth award in 2005.

As we have seen, Turkish state officials and court rulings have denounced the ecumenical role of the Patriarchate in Istanbul. The vocal opposition of fringe national groups has fueled negative reactions like these of the "National Force Platform" (Milli Guc Platformu) headed by Kemal Kerincsiz which has expressed its displeasure in many ways ranging from peaceful public demonstrations to the collection of 1,5 million signatures demanding the expulsion of Patriarchate from Istanbul and its relocation to Greece. In some instances, the reaction has taken more violent forms like bomb attacks launched against the grounds of the Patriarchate. This negative atmosphere has been corroborated by recent public opinion trends in Turkey. Unfavorable opinion of Christians has been on the rise in Turkey, exhibiting an upward trend from 52% in March 2004 to 63% in May 2005 and climbing to 69% in April 2006 (Pew Global Attitudes Survey, 2006, 44). Despite this gloomy general picture, there are some encouraging signs of the Ecumenical Patriarchate making inroads to selected members of the Turkish elite. The more advocates the Ecumenical Patriarchate gains among Turkey's opinion leaders, the more its soft power will have a bearing on Turkey's public opinion. A number of Turkish academics, journalists and diplomats are beginning to recognize the global significance of the Ecumenical Patriarchate (Alexandris, 2003, 122; Aktar, 2007). It is instructive to quote at length the words of a Turkish diplomat on October 15, 2003 before a hearing of the Committee of Human Rights of the Turkish National Assembly: "...the Greek Orthodox Church, that is the Fener Patriarchate, differs from the remaining minority Patriarchates and churches. It has special significance and weight in the distinction between Catholics and Orthodox and is of interest to the Christian world. If, for example, at some point the Armenian minority shrinks, the Armenian Patriarchate will be closed. But, the Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate, the Fener Patriarchate, in the eventuality that none Greek-Orthodox citizen remains, no matter our saying that the Patriarchate is the church of the Greek minority, will remain and this is a historic truth. It is a Foundation which carries weight in our relations with the Christian world (my translation)" (Abatzis, 2003). Certainly, these pronouncements are more in line with a "post-national" reading of history, anchoring Turkey's place in the European family of nations.

5. Conclusion

This paper has elaborated on the ecumenical rights of the Patriarchate of Istanbul in an attempt to demonstrate the institution's soft power. Having placed the issue in the historical context of the rise of modernism in the Balkans, the paper has examined the turn the discussion of ecumenicity has taken under the tenure of current Patriarch Bartholomew on the throne. I have argued that Patriarch Bartholomew has exercised the institution's soft power astutely by linking the ecumenical rights of the Patriarchate to recognition granted by great powers including the Vatican and to global concerns like the protection of the environment. It remains for Turkish authorities to reconsider the lonely road of constraining the global reach of the Patriarchate. Such a course does only damage to improving Turkey's relations with the Christian world and erects stumbling blocks on Turkey's entry to the European Union.

REFERENCES

- Abatzis, A. (2003) "Maybe the rights of the Greeks were violated," *Eleftherotypia (Greek Daily)*, October 29 (in Greek).
- Alexandris, A.(1983). *The Greek Minority of Istanbul and Greek-Turkish Relations 1918-1974*. Athens: Center for Asia Minor Studies.
- Aktar, C. (2007). "Significance and Weight of the Ecumenical Patriarchate," *Turkish Daily News*, August 14, [available online at: <http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr>]
- Anagnostopoulou, S. (2004). "The Terms Millet, Nation, Ecumenicity, Redemption in Greek Historiography." In P. Kitromilides T. Sklavenitis eds., *Historiography of Modern and Contemporary Greece 1833-2002* (pp.657-676). Athens: National Research Foundation.
- Chryssavgis, J. (2007). "Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew: Insights into an Orthodox Christian Worldview," *International Journal of Environmental Studies* 64 (1): 9-18.
- Declaration on the Environment* (2002). [available online at: <http://conservation.catholic.org/declaration.htm>]
- Diakofotakis, G. (2007). *The Ecumenical Patriarchate after Lausanne*. Athens: Ant. N. Sakkoula Publications (in Greek).
- Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2007). July 23. [available online at <http://www.mfa.gr>]
- Helicke, J. (2004) "Turkey policies on minorities spark debate," *The Associated Press*, July 12 [available online at: <http://www.archons.org/news/>]

- Karikopoulou, C.(1979).*The International Regime of the Ecumenical Patriarchate*. Athens: Grigori Publications (in Greek).
- Kitromilides, P. (1994). *Enlightenment, Nationalism, Orthodoxy*. Aldershot, Variorum.
- Koukoulis, Th. (2004). *European Union and Ecumenical Patriarchate 1991-2003*. Athens: Ktitiki Publications (in Greek).
- Kourkoulas, A. (2005). “Bomb, the Statists and the Fener”, *To Vima*, (Greek Daily) December 4, A32 (in Greek).
- Mason, W. (2001).”Constantinople’s Last Hurrah. Turkey and the Ecumenical Patriarchate,” *World Policy Journal* 18(2): 55-64.
- Matalas, P. (2002). *Nation and Orthodoxy*. Herakleio: University of Crete Press (in Greek).
- Mavrogordatos, G. (2003). “Orthodoxy and Nationalism in the Greek Case,” *West European Politics* 26 (1): 117-136.
- Nye, J. (2004). *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York: PublicAffairs.
- Pew Global Attitudes Survey. (2006). *The Great Divide: How Westerners and Muslims View Each Other*. Washington, DC: The Pew Global Attitudes Project [available online at: <http://pewglobal.org/reports/pedf/253.pdf>]
- Republic of Turkey. (2007). “Verdict of the Court of Cassation on Behalf of the Turkish Nation,” June 13, [available online at: http://www.archons.org/pdf/CoC_decision_on_Patriarchate.pdf]
- Sazak, D. (2005). “We will not restore the Byzantium,” December 1, [available online at: <http://www.milliyet.com/2005/12/01/siyaset/asiy.html>], (in Turkish).
- Totkas, S. (2005). “Citizenship and Minorities: A Historical Overview of Turkey’s Jewish Minority, *Journal of Historical Sociology* 18(4): 394-429.
- Woodward, C. (2003). “Orthodox Leader Blesses Green Agenda,” September 15, [available online at: <http://www.orthodoxnews.netfilms.com/29/Orthodox%20leader%20blesses.htm>]