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“Keen but Raw”
Mediterranean Europe Facing New Challenges

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Muslims and Christians speak readily of crusades and jihads. Such an agenda is very reassuring to the men and women who are stranded in the middle of the ford, between the deep waters of tradition and modernity.

But we are all swimming in those waters, Westerners and Muslims and others alike. And since the waters are part of the ocean of History, trying to divide them with barriers is a futile exercise.

Edward W. Said

The Nation, October 22, 2001

In recent years, a new theory has emerged among the analysts of International Politics affirming that we are living “a new phase” in world politics after the end of the Cold War, and that in this “new phase” the fundamental source of conflict will not be ideological or economic. The dividing line among individuals and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural.

To give strength to this approach, the new theoretical framework invoked the theory on tectonic plates, firstly elaborated by geologists. In this theoretical framework, all civilisations follow their own path without blending into one another. At best, they slide over one another, like tectonic plates, and from time to time their collision creates fault lines which engulf reality. The fault lines between civilisations will be the battle lines of the future. This was the apocalyptic conclusion of this new theory.

Listening to the proponents of this theory, the people of Mediterranean Europe suddenly realised that they were on the edge of one of the most dangerous fault lines; or rather, they probably *were* the fault line. They decided, consciously or not, that it was necessary to react, and that it was necessary to show the rest of the world that their historical experience was not an experience of fault lines and tectonic plates. On the contrary, their experience was one of exchange, cross-fertilisation and sharing, in a process which goes beyond boundaries and enriches both sides.

Their experience is now flowing into the mainstream of the process of European integration: the Treaty on European Union was negotiated at a time of radical transformation in Europe associated with the collapse of communism and the end of the Cold War. Linked to this was the gradual disintegration of three multi-nation polities: the Soviet Union, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. It is perhaps unsurprising that the European Union, as a fledgling multi-nation polity, felt the need to correct the cultural homogenising tendencies of European economic integration for sub-state nations through a number of region-related institutional developments and policies.

Traditionally, tolerant multi-nation political societies have established policies that facilitate the maintenance and development of regional cultural diversity. Sub-state nationalists identify a number of EU region-related institutional developments and policies which suggest that the EU not only recognises the underlying tensions caused by the two objectives of economic integration and maintaining cultural diversity, but have acted to offset the cultural homogenizing tendencies of European economic integration for regional and national minorities. This process has been under way for sometime, and was given increasing momentum as a result of the Treaty on European Union¹.

But how could the little keen-but-raw countries of Mediterranean Europe beat the fascinating and attractive theory of the tectonic plates, that promises to explain what global politics was likely to be in years to come? The alternative way was soft power, and the alternative practice was symbolism.

¹ Adam Biscoe, "European Integration and the Maintenance of Regional Cultural Diversity: Symbiosis or Symbolism?", *Regional Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1, 2001, pp. 59-61.

I. Soft Power: a Different Approach to World Politics

Joseph Nye coined the term "soft power" in the late 1980s. According to his definition, "soft power is the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments"². It is strictly dependent upon the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies. Even General Wesley Clark, of the US Armed Forces, recently pointed out that "soft power gave us an influence far beyond the hard edge of traditional balance-of-power politics"³.

Soft power is usually set against its opposite, hard power, which implies the ability to coerce others. Hard power grows out of a country's military and economic might, and it can be very effective when pursuing national interests. However you cannot launch a war whenever you wish without alienating other countries and losing the cooperation needed for achieving peace.

After the World War II, all European countries felt the attractiveness of America's culture, political ideas, and policies: when you can get others to admire your ideals and to want what you want, you do not have to spend as much to move them in your direction. Seduction is always more effective than coercion, and many values like democracy, human rights, and individual opportunities are deeply seductive⁴.

Soft power, however, is difficult to wield. This is, because many of its resources are outside government control, and their effects depend heavily on how they are perceived. Moreover, soft power usually works indirectly by shaping the environment for policy, and often takes years to produce the desired outcomes. Generally speaking, governments prefer to use hard power to achieve desired outcomes within a reasonable time, even though not all wars or economic actions produced the desired outcomes⁵.

The fact that soft-power resources are awkward to wield has not prevented governments from trying. Currently, the closest competitor of the United States in soft power resources is Europe. European art, literature,

² Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: the Means to Success in World Politics*, New York, 2004, p. XI.

³ Wesley K. Clark, *Winning Modern Wars: Iraq, Terrorism, and the American Empire*, New York, 2003, p. 182.

⁴ Nye, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-41.

⁵ Witness the length and ultimate failure of both the Vietnam War by the US Army and the Afghan War by the Soviet Army. Or the fact that economic sanctions historically produced effects in only about a third of the cases where they were tried. See Gary Hufbauer, Jeffrey Scott and Kimberly Elliott, *Economic Sanctions Reconsidered*, Washington, 1990.

music, design, fashion, food and sports have long served as global cultural magnets. Furthermore, the European Union as a symbol of a uniting Europe itself carried a good deal of soft power. The idea that war is now unthinkable among countries that fought bitterly for centuries past, and that Europe has become an island of peace and prosperity gives it a positive image in much of the world. In the late 1980s, when Eastern Europeans were asked which countries would serve as models for their future, Western Europe outranked the United States. Both the Polish and the Czechoslovak election campaigns in 1989 were marked by the slogan "back to Europe"⁶. The British historian Timothy Garton Ash has written that Europe's "soft power is demonstrated by the fact that not only millions of individuals but also whole states want to enter it"⁷.

In addition to its attractive culture and domestic policies, Europe also derives soft power from its foreign policies, which often contribute to the global public good. Of course, not all European policies are far-sighted, but Europe gains credibility from its position on global climate change, international law, and human rights treaties. Moreover, Europe provides 70 percent of overseas development aid to poor countries⁸.

In recent years, Europeans have also been more comfortable about using multilateral institutions than Americans. This is in part a result of their experiences in the development of the European Union; but whatever the reason, in a world where unilateralism is much criticized, the European propensity toward multilateralism makes European countries' policies attractive to many other countries⁹.

All these considerations are particularly true in the case of the South-European countries. They are not economic powers, they have not commercial weight in the global trade flows, and they do not possess mass destruction weapons. But they share a long-lasting tradition of cultural and multilateral diplomacy, especially in their relations with the other shore of the Mediterranean.

Even if the major cultural shifts of history embraced the Mediterranean (East and West, North and South, Islam and Christendom), it remains the best environment to study the processes of adapting, merging, and transforming human societies.

⁶ Rudiger Meyenberg e Henk Dekker (eds.), *Perceptions of Europe in East and West*, Oldenburg, 1992, p. 50.

⁷ Timothy Garton Ash, "The Great Divide", *Prospect Magazine*, March 2003.

⁸ Andrew Moravcsik, "How Europe can win without an Army", *Financial Times*, April 3, 2003.

⁹ *Ibid.*

II. The Language of Symbolism in Foreign Policy

We are all aware of the strength a symbol can have, for individuals, communities and nations. A symbol is something visible that by association or convention represents something else that is invisible, and symbolism is the practice of investing things with symbolic meaning. It is generally acknowledged that symbols are a vital part of social life. Decision-makers actively engage in the manipulation of symbols and rationalise their actions through them¹⁰.

By the word "symbolism" in foreign policy, we mean any action of which the meaning, value, or significance cannot be derived only from its concrete form. Symbolic actions derive their meanings from the beliefs and perceptions of persons, not from the actions themselves. Consequently, an action that possesses positive meaning for some persons may be irritant for others; these differences arises from different patterns of meaning, valence and systemic importance attributed to symbols.

The turmoil of the past 20 years has led many to question the alleged consensus of the rest of the world with regard to Western symbols and values. Rather than an increasingly homogeneous society, the world is now portrayed as a melting pot of ethnic groups and civilisations that did not melt. The divisions that separate ethnic and cultural groupings are sometimes superimposed with generational differences. While these problems may signal a breakdown in the consensus with regard to Western values, there is substantial evidence that this consensus can be strengthened by using the language of symbolism¹¹.

In the field of International Relations, a symbol is not a secondary factor, something that can be considered naïve or irrelevant. A symbolic issue can be as powerful as an economic or a political issue, but the use of symbolic language must be accompanied by a wide knowledge of the symbolic references of the recipients.

To a certain extent the same symbolic discourses can be traced around the shores of the Mediterranean, where a long history of different civilisations has left a rich legacy of symbols. The Mediterranean cultural identity is understood primarily as an awareness of diversity and a search for intercultural dialogue. As the Mediterranean clearly does not correspond to a single identity or a single culture, the language of

¹⁰ Murray Edelman has offered a compelling analysis of these processes. See his *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*, University of Illinois Press, 1964; and *Politics as Symbolic Action*, Chicago, 1971.

¹¹ Roger W. Cobb, "Individual Orientation in the Study of Political Symbolism", *Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. 53, No. 1, 1992, p. 87.

symbolism can be a relevant source of dialogue and understanding among the multiple identities and traditions that grew and developed around this sea. Even if the use of symbolism in foreign policy usually is not given very much attention in the study of International Relations, it is possible to find many significant examples originating from Mediterranean Europe in its relations with its neighbouring countries. Some of these examples can effectively describe the strength of this practice in International Relations.

III. First Example: The Rebuilding of the Mostar Bridge

During the last four centuries, the old bridge of Mostar had been a symbol of Bosnia's multi-ethnic society. Suleiman the Magnificent commissioned it about 100 years after the Ottoman Empire has claimed the Balkans. The elegant white-marble "Stari Most", or Old Bridge, has been a beloved landmark since its completion in 1566. The city of Mostar is named after the bridge, and means the "bridge-keeper".

The bridge united the town's Muslim and Catholic communities for nearly four hundred years: the story of the Mostar bridge was not just one of bricks and mortar, great engineering, and sublime architecture. Its story was the story of this part of Europe – its grandeur, its civilizations, its tragedies.

The 16th Century bridge was blown up during the bitter fighting in the Bosnian war between the city's Muslims and Croats in 1993. What had been the most ethnically-integrated place in old Yugoslavia was now physically divided by the river. Croats on the West bank, Muslims on the East.

The methodical shelling of the bridge symbolised something far greater than just the destruction of an architectural structure. It symbolised the destruction of the multiethnic community for which Bosnia and Herzegovina were once so equally famous. The bridge was destroyed for its symbolic value.

For this same reason UNESCO pledged to rebuild it: in 1998, UNESCO, the World Bank and municipal authorities launched a joint appeal for its reconstruction, which was answered by five donor countries – Croatia, France, Italy, The Netherlands and Turkey – as well as the Council of Europe Development Bank.

Its reopening, on July 23, was seen as the symbolic healing of divisions between Muslims and Croats. A crowd flowed over it on the day of its reopening. They all came to pay tribute to a symbol – hoping that this bridge would somehow unite the two communities so bitterly divided by the Bosnian war. Many have welcomed the bridge's rebuild-

ing, but none is underestimating the gap that still remains between Bosnia's ethnic groups. Today, the town's Croats and Muslims largely maintain that separation, sending their children to different schools and keeping to their respective sides of the Neretva.

But many say the reopening of the bridge is at least a good starting point for restoring connections between Mostar's divided communities, together with a new Western-sponsored plan to unify the town. The new Mostar statute, imposed by Lord Ashdown, the European High Representative in Bosnia, will merge three Bosnian Muslim and three Croat municipalities and the city council into a single unit and administration, abolishing parallel power structures.

The international community has helped in this process, as have four Mediterranean countries: Italy, France, Croatia and Turkey, all aware of the power of this symbol for the past and the future of Bosnia.

The reopening of the Mostar bridge is part of a larger effort of the international community, which is aimed at rebuilding the spirit of compromise throughout former Yugoslavia. The first important achievement was the agreement on the question of succession to former Yugoslavia. The agreement was signed in June 2001 by all five former Republics – Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Yugoslavia and Macedonia, under the auspices of the European Union. For many years, there was no progress whatsoever on this issue. After Milosević had been ousted from power, EU representatives succeeded in bringing the five partners together, and they agreed to sign the so-called Vienna Declaration on the Succession of the Public Property of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. That was the first-ever agreement made among the five former Yugoslav republics, negotiated among themselves, albeit with the help of the international community.

The second example of this change in spirit was the agreement amending the constitutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, signed on April 19, 2002. Under the new constitutions, the ethnic groups of Bosnia-Herzegovina, their peoples and citizens are represented in both entities at all levels of government and public administration – the constitutions set exact quotas for this – and they have far-reaching group rights in the decision-making process at the entity level. This constitutional agreement represents the first major compromise reached by the political leaders of the peoples and ethnic groups of Bosnia and Herzegovina¹².

¹² ICG, *Implementing Equality: The 'Constituent Peoples' Decision in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, ICG Balkans, Sarajevo, Report No. 128, April 2002; http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/showreport.cfm?reportid_618.

These two agreements show that even in the Balkans the virtues of compromise are not totally lost on the current political elites. The Vienna and Mrakovica-Sarajevo Agreements are, probably, the first relevant examples of how a new, more contemporary political culture is about to take root in the region with the help of the international community. Since then, there have been other examples: the Ohrid Agreement that brought Macedonia back from the brink of war. The Serbian-Montenegrin negotiations on their future common status also deserve a positive mention. Both compromises were achieved at the negotiating table, with the help of the EU, but without a military intervention.

However, as well as offering political assistance, it is clear that the EU is bringing certain 'values' to the country, using its soft-power resources. Bosnia and Herzegovina will be a different country once the EU mandate ends: it will be different physically, politically and, in many ways, culturally as well. One might bemoan the fact that long-held traditions are being jeopardised, and that certain continuities and specificities of Bosnian culture could be, in a purist sense, 'tainted' by Western and non-indigenous elements. This is perhaps unavoidable: globalisation – viewed here as a vast cultural phenomenon – brings different lifestyles to traditional cultures, and they are incorporated in one way or another. Western influence in Bosnia and Herzegovina is felt in a very concrete and specific way. The international community sets the political agenda and imposes legislation, creating a specific social and political system.

That is why the partnership with Bosnian citizens, intellectuals and leaders is very important. The result must not be a Western clone in the Balkans. Ideally, the result should be a country that has found its own modern identity, and among Bosnia and Herzegovina's assets are its links to the Islamic world. It is very important that the progressive forces of Islam remain in contact with the Muslim community of Bosnia and Herzegovina and *vice versa*¹³.

If Bosnia and Herzegovina is successful in coming to terms with its internal problems, it could play an important role in Europe, particularly when it comes to the issue of European Islam, which needs to be further explored.

Provided that there is a specifically European kind of Islam, which continues to adapt to and incorporate European achievements – particularly the separation between religion and state, the banner of secular societies, in which religion does not interfere in politics – Bosnia and

¹³ Christophe Solioz, "The fate of Bosnia and Herzegovina", *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, Vol. 5, No. 3, December 2003, p. 358.

Herzegovina could make an important contribution and serve as a bridge to the greater Islamic world. A successful state of Bosnia and Herzegovina could signal inclusiveness to recent Muslim immigrants in Europe¹⁴.

This is not an obvious task when you think of the challenges that lie ahead of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but it is important to acknowledge that finding an identity as a state implies reaching out and finding ways and means to integrate it into the region at an economic, social and cultural level. It means re-establishing links across the new borders with its neighbours. Only within this regional framework will Bosnia and Herzegovina reach the point where it can integrate with Europe and be proud of its achievements. The international community, as well, will be able to be proud of having successfully completed a massive and comprehensive intervention, unique in modern history, by relying specifically on resources deriving from soft power and symbolic discourses.

IV. Second Example: the New Library of Alexandria

The ancient library of Alexandria, in Egypt, was a unique ecumenical effort of human intellect and imagination. Alexandria, standing at the crossroads of the main communication routes linking Africa, Europe and Asia, was in past centuries a major centre of science, philosophy and art, an intellectual meeting place for eminent representatives of the Egyptian, Greek, Persian and other cultures, where they could converse and receive mutual benefit from their contacts. It was in such a climate that the first universal library in history came into being at the beginning of the fourth century BC, having as its aim the bringing together and conservation of the writings of all nations, while, at the same time welcoming their leading scholars and thinkers. From a very early point in its history, at least one copy of every work ever written in Greek, and, subsequently, translations of the most important works written in other languages, was added to its collections.

All ships passing through the port of Alexandria were required to allow copies to be made of any scrolls they had on board, if they were of interest to the Library.

The ancient library, established in 290 BC, was open to all civilisations and systematic efforts were made to collect the best works from all over the world. The result was a mixture of all civilisations and languages, where Asian, Egyptian and Mediterranean cultures enriched the dominant culture of Hellenism.

¹⁴ *Ivi*, p. 366.

By the middle of the first century BC, the Library had in its possession 532,800 manuscripts, which were listed, filed and preserved by highly sophisticated methods. One of its finest achievements was the catalogue of Callimachus, a catalogue of all existing works, which not only gave their titles but also supplied detailed information on the authors and their works, as well as an analysis of each text. This gigantic bibliography, now lost, was for a long time the essential reference work for Greek literature.

The Library was not destroyed by the invading Arabs, as some histories would have us believe. It was the victim of a long decline, punctuated by fires and destructions that spanned over four and half centuries: during the co-regency of Cleopatra and her brother Ptolemy, they began to quarrel. The conflict was resolved by Julius Caesar upon his arrival to Alexandria in 48 BC. Caesar sided with Cleopatra and granted her the throne. Ptolemy in a rage, accused them both of treason and led the army to besiege the palace, in what is known as "the Alexandrian War". Caesar sent for supplies from Rome, but was outnumbered by his enemy's fleet that controlled the harbour. To avoid a naval combat, Caesar burnt 110 Egyptian ships in the dockyards that enabled him to occupy Pharos, control the entrance to the harbour and establish direct communication with his main forces across the sea. The fire extended to the city and the Great Library (Megale Bibliothekē), and approximately 40,000 books (400,000 in some sources) were burnt, with a tremendous loss in intellectual riches and human heritage.

The Daughter Library became the principle library after the burning of the Great Library, and it survived for many centuries up until the late 3rd century. In 312 AD, Christianity was chosen as the official religion of the Roman Empire and state support for indigenous cults ceased, while the Alexandrian triad of Gods (Serapis, Isis and Harpocrates) was still prominent. The sanctity of temples was threatened, and the library endangered due to its location inside the Sarapeum. Civil war started between Christians and Pagans, and in 389 AD, the Temple of Serapis at Canopus fell into the hands of Christians. In 391 AD, the Roman Emperor Theodosius prohibited any non-Christian religions, and authorized Theophilus, the fanatical Bishop of Alexandria, to transform the temple of Dionysus into a church. The pagan inhabitants fled to the Sarapeum as a last refuge, but the emperor issued a decree allowing the demolition of all temples in Alexandria. The Bishop and his followers raided the temple and the library and completely destroyed them, turning the building into a church and causing its final closure in 391 AD¹⁵.

¹⁵ Some scholars believe that the reason for burning the Daughter Library was not only in pursue of pagans, but also to end the Alexandrian Church and theological studies

The new Bibliotheca Alexandrina was opened to the public in October 2002, as the result of a common effort by the Egyptian government, Unesco, and various Arab countries and Western countries. The major donor countries included a large section of Mediterranean Europe: Italy, France, Spain and Turkey.

The library will play a necessary role to further cooperation between the north and the south of the Mediterranean, as well as between the East and West. The Bibliotheca Alexandrina has adopted its collection development policy in cooperation with UNESCO and with the valuable input from national and international experts, to evolve its unique collection and functions and to avoid repetition and unnecessary overlapping with other research libraries both regionally or internationally. Since the 1990 Aswan Declaration, UNESCO and the international community have been cooperating with the Egyptian government to muster resources for implementation of the library¹⁶.

Once again, the importance of a cultural initiative, which is also rich in symbolic significance, has led to a very effective foreign policy by Mediterranean Europe, whose results are now visible on a magnificent site, very close to the location of the Ancient Library, looking towards the bay of Alexandria and the Mediterranean.

A result that is in accordance to the idea that culture can be the most effective antidote to fanaticism and any clash of civilisation. Mrs. Mubarak, the chairperson of the library's board of trustees, emphasised the need for such institutions in these difficult times – institutions that can bring people together in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding and encourage cultures to meet and connect, rather than remaining distant or meeting in conflict. "The library will be Egypt's window on the world and the world's window on Egypt. It will be a meeting point for dialogue between ideas and cultures – an openness that we desperately need at this time, especially after the tragic events the world has recently witnessed"¹⁷.

and to transfer the center of Christianity to Rome. For more details see Jean-François Mondot, "La bibliothèque aux 400 000 rouleaux", *Les Cahiers Science & Vie*, n° 76, August 2003, pp. 48-55. Patrizia Zanelli, "La nuova biblioteca di Alessandria d'Egitto: un invito al dialogo fra le civiltà", *Africa*, Vol. LIX, n° 1, 2004, pp. 135-144. Sameh M. Arab, "The ancient library of Alexandria and the rebuilding of the modern one", in <http://www.arabworldbooks.com/bibliothecaAlexandrina.htm>

¹⁶ Scott MacLeod, "Recreating a Jewel", *Time Europe*, Vol. 155, No. 23, June 2000.

¹⁷ *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, 4-10 October 2002, No. 554.

V. Third Example: "The Roads of Friendship" by the Ravenna Festival

On the last Sunday of July 2004 the Philharmonic Orchestra of La Scala in Milan performed a concert in Syria, with an audience of 11,000 people at the Roman theatre in Bosra. On that occasion, European music was performed for an Arab audience, not only Syrians, but also Lebanese and Jordanians.

The concert was offered not to a select public, but to entire families with their children who had come from Damascus to Bosra by shuttle buses arranged for this special occasion. The concert was organised under the high patronage of the presidency of the Syrian republic and the presidency of the Italian republic, the Syrian ministries for Culture and Tourism, the Italian Chambers of Deputies and Senators, the Italian ministry for Culture, and in collaboration with the Italian Embassy in Damascus, the Syrian Embassy in Rome and the Italian state-owned television, that broadcast the event¹⁸.

The concert in Syria was not the first experiment of this kind, but it was the last event of the music festival organized in Ravenna: in July 1997 Ravenna Festival mapped out the first of its "Roads of Friendship" by crossing the Adriatic Sea to the city of Sarajevo. The notes of Schubert and Beethoven, performed by the Orchestra and Choir of La Scala, rekindled the pride and deep sense of human dignity of a people that wanted to leave the horror and ferocity behind it and recover its lost serenity.

Nothing could better re-evoked that evening than the grateful and moving words of someone who was there, the writer Zlatko Dizdarevic: "For the first time since the day our drama began we felt with all our senses that the hope of the world is culture without frontiers. [...] Dignity restored is far more than houses rebuilt. We shall never forget it"¹⁹.

Since then, other bridges have been built: in July 1998 the Philharmonic Orchestra, Riccardo Muti and the Choir of La Scala crossed the Mediterranean to Beirut. From Sarajevo to Beirut, a route belonging to the ancient lands of Byzantium – the crossroad of wandering peoples and of a whole mosaic of cultures – led in 1999 the Ravenna Festival to another supreme destination: Jerusalem, a city that is a symbol for the three monotheistic religions, a fascinating meeting place of different cultures. Riccardo Muti, the Orchestra and Choir of La Scala performed

Giuseppe Verdi's Requiem Mass against one of the most fascinating backgrounds of the city: the Sultan's Pool.

One year later the Jerusalem Foundation presented the Ravenna Festival's President, Cristina Mazzavillani Muti, with the "Jerusalem Foundation Award", a prize set up to celebrate the exceptional occasion created by the concert. Among the reasons behind the award, also supported by Teddy Kollek, former Mayor of the Holy City, one fully senses the gratitude and unanimity with regard to this new destination on the Festival's journey of brotherhood: "... for her great dedication in seeking peace and understanding among different nations and religions through art and culture. The Roads of Friendship project, in the context of Ravenna Festival, reflects her personal ability to overcome complex difficulties and reach people across seas and human barriers, bringing a message of peace, love and cooperation. The concert held in Jerusalem was an unforgettable expression of this ability, and a noble gesture to the City and its inhabitants"²⁰.

After Jerusalem, Moscow, where the Ravenna Festival 2000 was concluded at the Bolshoi Theatre in a celebration of the bond between two cities historically and culturally linked by a common Byzantine matrix, whose symbol is the mosaic. In the prestigious Moscow theatre, the Festival built a new bridge of goodwill through art and culture with a performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in which the Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir of La Scala was joined for the occasion the Bolshoi Theatre Orchestra and Choir. The Hymn to Joy was a sort of supreme farewell to the century and the millennium left behind, and a salutation full of hope for the one that had just begun, in the ecstasy of this Beethoven masterpiece.

In July 2001, the route of the "Roads of Friendship" reached the cities of Erevan and Istanbul with two concerts. Although the common historical roots between Ravenna and Istanbul (formerly Byzantium) are well known, and the inimitable architecture of the Byzantine basilicas with their mosaics "glowing with gold" is still there to demonstrate it, the links between Ravenna and Erevan in Armenia, one of the most ancient historical-geographical entities in the western world, are far less known. Nevertheless, the main occasion for the Erevan concert was highly significant: the solemn celebration of the 1700th anniversary (301-2001) of the proclamation of Christianity in Armenia, the first Christian country in the world.

¹⁸ *Corriere della Sera*, July 24, 2004.

¹⁹ *Corriere della Sera*, July 15, 1997.

²⁰ See the Jerusalem Foundation web site: www.jerusalemfoundation.org/news.php?id=287.

The isolation of these ancient people, today broken up and dispersed in the diaspora, led the Armenians to gather around their symbols. All this, together with the memory of the extermination, undoubtedly gave deep meaning to the Ravenna Festival project, emphasised in the words of the Patriarch of all Armenians: "The strongest and most lasting bridges stand on cultural foundations. The language of art, and especially that of music, has no need of translators. It brings people together and makes dialogue between peoples understandable".

The "Bridge of Friendship" of the 2002 Ravenna Festival, dedicated to the theme "New York, September 11", could not but lead to Ground Zero: a wound inflicted on all humankind.

The Ravenna Festival achieved an even more "choral" and musically ecumenical event, by calling on many of the best musicians from the "traditional" orchestras that are the connective tissue of musical Europe. Not only this: many members of the New York Philharmonic joined the Musicians of Europe United (representing 11 European nations). So the idea of a musical 'bridge' thrown across the Atlantic from old Europe was louder than ever, bringing a message of solidarity with a sister nation (consisting of many peoples and races) that in itself exemplifies the meaning and possibility of peaceful and active cohabitation in a unique melting pot of cultures and ideas.

In 2003, the "Roads of Friendship" crossed over the Mediterranean once again, up to the great pyramids near Cairo. The La Scala Philharmonic Orchestra and the Ravenna Festival Orchestra, the choirs of the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia and the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino and, the Cairo Opera Orchestra and Choir, conducted by Riccardo Muti, performed music by Berlioz for the pleasure of the Egyptian audience. Muti himself explains the significance behind this unique concert programme: "The piece by Berlioz, *la Grande Symphonie funèbre et triomphale*, which is concluded with an invocation of glory to the fallen heroes, acquires a universal value if we think of all those heroes who fought for freedom in a general sense, with no distinction between race or faith. And naturally the pyramids are, more than anything else, burial places which represent the realm of eternal sleep, intended not only as a resting place for the Pharaohs, but also as an expression of a wish and hope for peace all over the world"²¹.

²¹ See the Ravenna Festival official web site: www.ravennafestival.org

VI. Conclusions

Soft power and its cultural ramifications have become no less important since September 11. Soft power is highly diffuse and empowers a wider diversity of individuals and groups – including potential terrorists – to play roles that are more significant in international relations. As argued by William Tow, those employing the "calibration of fear" to advance their political aims can choose to generate societal dislocation or chaos, to damage economic assets and infrastructure, to undermine state security mechanisms or to intensify general apprehensions by discrediting incumbent elites' inability to control or quell disruptions²². But soft power can also work against such strategies if sustained and patient international cooperation is nurtured as a means of supporting the continued viability of civil societies and advancing the well-being of the diverse social groups within them. How effective this process will be in our time relates to how well the western countries project their own values: embodying freedom of individual choice, while preserving a fundamental tolerance for the inevitable differences such choices will produce within democratic societies²³. The record since the terrorist attacks on September 11 is mixed. Military tribunals and racial profiling have been applied, and are symptomatic of a dangerous tendency to stretch emergency measures for protecting democracy beyond the very limits of that political system. Yet the refusal of most people in the Islamic world to embrace radical doctrines of an anti-western nature constitutes an important sign of encouragement. Ultimately, finding a balance between the prerogatives and limitations of power will be the best means to avoid the insurgence of a new crisis.

²² William T. Tow, "Apocalypse Forever? International Relations Implications of 11 September", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 49, No. 3, 2003, pp. 314-325.

²³ Christopher C. Harmon, "Five Strategies of Terror", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 12, No. 3, 2001, pp. 39-66.