TWENTY YEARS AGO INTO THE FUTURE: A CHALLENGE FOR INTERNATIONAL SOCIOLOGY

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> Whatever we think of the past, we must not be prisoners of it. Our problems must be dealt with through partnership: progress must be shared.
> --- Barack Obama, Cairo, 6/4/09

Twenty Years Ago into the Future

The field which has concerned me for five decades includes nationalism, national identity, severe ethnic conflicts, and ultimately, the problematic of peace processes. This touches on very basic aspects of the social world: how do people come together to form a nation? How do people have a bitter falling apart? Can people who have lost trust in their government and/or one another because of the misdeeds (often, very violent misdeeds) of one group find reconciliation without severe retribution? How can the weight of the tragic past be lifted for a new, constructive future? And perhaps also in this field, is there space for religious values such as forgiveness and redemption?

 This is a very large and somewhat unorthodox field for sociological inquiry. However, I do think the "sociological imagination", to invoke the imaginative phrase of C. Wright Mills (1959), more than ever today in an era of globalization, needs to expand its comparative outlook on the human condition, including its "dark aspects" and key challenges in living together.

Introduction: Good Surprises

Twenty years ago, the International Institute of Sociology held its congress in Rome. Change was in the air (as it had been 40 years ago with the end of the colonial era), this time in Eastern Europe the most, but also in China. At the beginning of 1989, practically nobody anticipated that the planned celebration for the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution would turn out by the end of the year to have been a celebration of one of the most fantastic, unforeseen revolutions of our modern times: the collapse of the Soviet Empire. And this "implosion" from the Western part of the empire was to spread within two years to the center and on to the eastern periphery of Central Asia. The democratic revolution aborted in China in June at Beijing's Tiananmen Square but survived that fate in Moscow's Red Square the following year.

What might well qualify this as a "miracle" of modernity is that the collapse of the Soviet empire came about *without a bloody war, without lives being shed to defend or to attack the empire, quite unlike what took place in a previous liquidation of empires in the aftermath of the Holocaust of World War I*[1].

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[1] Warfare did catch up with one peripheric region to the Soviet empire, the case of the implosion of Yugoslavia in 1993-94 and the collapse of a Yugoslav national identity. It also was unanticipated less than ten years before and might be seen as a "bad surprise".

I have come to see the historical process, not as linear, but as containing some "very good surprises" and also unfortunately, some "very bad surprises" with high numbers of victims (such as world wars and genocides, but also global financial crises). The "velvet revolutions" 1989-91 from the Elbe to the Urals rank high as a set of unanticipated "good surprises" that led to structural changes without immense shedding of lives and physical destruction. People liberated from repressive, authoritarian regimes in Eastern Europe in 1989 included Germans, Poles, Hungarians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Estonians, Czechs and Slovaks.

As a caveat, "good surprises" are not the end but the *beginning* of new possible social formations; if they introduce a new degree of freedom to actors, these must also face up to *new challenges*. And amidst the new challenges, I wish to focus on the problems of finding **new identities**, especially but not solely, where the previous setting has been one of conflict and distrust.

What is the **national identity** for the new nation-state is problematic in the aftermath of the implosion of empires. *Before*, the identity was to be a subject, a component part of the empire (e.g., a real or an administrative unit). *Now*, a new national identity needs to be reconstructed, re-imagined, even. For some new states, the problem may be simplified if there is ethnic homogeneity (as is the case for Poland, Armenia and Azerbaijan, respectively); for others where there is a large ethnic minority, the problem is more complex (as for Moldova, Latvia, etc). And involved in questions of national identity is not just *who are we?* But also, who are our neighbours, and what weight should we give the past in defining who our neighbours are? Lastly, and related to the question of national identity, is the question of what line of development should our country seek to follow: shall we continue, for example, the "programming" of a central command economy and the political structure of yesterday or shall we adopt a more laissez-faire, deregulated program encouraging wherever possible free enterprise?

Personally, I do not think there is *one* best path of development. I do believe that nation-states and people have contingent degrees of freedom in deciding what course of action they can take; yet, in some situations, such as the present global economic crisis, there may well be fewer degrees of freedom. The important thing is for a country to retain its autonomy.

Autonomy – the ability to take charge and responsibility for its action - is certainly desirable, but small states, limited in population, resources, and overall size, may not always be able to exercise autonomy as a distinct unit. After the 13th century, Armenia became a *submerged nation*[2], resurfacing briefly as an independent nation-state from May 1918 to December 1920. It lacked the ability to continue, and for the next 70 years its identity was given as part of a "merger and acquisition" within the USSR[3]. Now that it has regained independence, it has degrees of freedom as to what it wants to be, what it wants its leaders to be, what it wants its friends and associates – within and outside its region—to be.

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[2] In the more familiar Western setting, *Scotland* at the start of the 18th century became a submerged nation within Great Britain, retaining some of its institutions and customs. Though today not independent, it has gained a great deal of autonomy with the setting up of its own Parliament in 1999.

[3] I lack knowledge of everyday life in Armenia as a Soviet Socialist Republic and what limited autonomy may have prevailed, for example, regarding language instruction, religious freedom, and representation in the Supreme Soviet. That is a matter for institutional and oral history research.

Of course there is ambiguity as to its national identity… the emergent global age in which we live (Albrow 1996) is very much at a stage of ambiguity as to its major trends. Armenia's location and history emphasizes its West-East ambiguity: the European Union and America with their large diaspora form one beckoning pole of modernity, especially for a younger generation of Armenians that is adept with the internet. Russia is another pole, given a not altogether negative past linkage, and with a language widely spoken and understood in Armenia. And then there is the ambiguity of its relation to its Islamic neighbours, Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Iran.

The title of my address tacitly suggests my major orientation: to consider the bearing of the past on our present condition, but not to be dragged down by the past since working for a better future is also part of the historicity of modernity.

Since this congress of the International Institute of Sociology is taking place in the greater Transcaucasus region, you might expect me to delve on identity issues involving its many actors, individually as states and collectively as a region. Let me admit readily that although I have broad comparative interests, the Transcaucasus is not a region of professional competence of mine (though existentially I can say it is an ancestral land). Hence, I will rather talk in more general terms about nation, national identity, and one form of the latter that I consider particularly important in questions of nationalism and interstate conflict, negative national identity. I will use as case materials the situation of Germany, in particular, and to some extent, that of Japan. The changing relation of Germany to its neighbours, particularly to France, and the internal and external problem of German national identity, with passing reference to Japan, will be used for this section of my analysis. Pari passu, I do have in mind Armenia's situation with its neighbours in confronting national identity, but at the onset, we may get a better perspective by viewing comparative materials.

Before taking up the case of changing German national identity, a few remarks are in order regarding the concept of nationhood and national identity.

What is a Nation and its National Identity?
Much of the recent voluminous literature on nationhood (see for example, Calhoun 2007) takes off from a seminal address given by the French historian Ernest Renan to students at the Sorbonne in 1882 entitled "What is a Nation?" (1996). If for a France sharply divided along various political, cultural, and economic axes in the new Third Republic the question was very timely, his probing analysis retains its relevance in our advanced modernity.

To condense its major points, Renan's inquiry was geared to invite a new generation to work together in a common enterprise, the community of the nation. Not sufficient for this are "objective" features such as geography, language, even kinship. Beyond these markers, it is also necessary to have intersubjective "we" ties of "wanting to live together, having done great things together, and wanting to do more." Working together on important projects to be realized in the future is a crucial endeavour for the existence of a nation, an existence which cannot be taken for granted since nationhood, Renan proposed in a famous phrase, is based "on a daily plebiscite." This means that nationhood is integrally related to the historical process; it is not a static, homogeneous entity but comes into being in the crucible of history, with joys and pains from within and without.

In the construction of nationhood, memory plays an important role in giving the collectivity a sense of where it is coming from and what have been significant elements in its markers. This is imparted both privately at home and in the country's educational system. And here Renan introduced an important caveat: selective forgetting is as important as remembering: some things are best forgotten. One can stay fixated in painful events of the past, including painful dealings we have had with others. There are many aspects of French history that Renan may have had in mind, like the invasion of the North on the South in the 13th century, or the religious wars of the 16th, perhaps even the then more recent bloody urban uprisings in Paris in 1870-71. Renan does not give a recipe for how to forget and how to forgive; remembering the past is easier, since at the collective level this is done in multiple ways: monuments are built to commemorate heroes and victims, academic chairs are created to honour benefactors, avenues and parks are named after eminent figures, stamps struck to honour important historical persons and settings.

 What is not so common, and undoubtedly more difficult, is to forget what is painful, especially traumatic events, and within that, traumatic events caused by others. Yet, without some forgetting, the past can continue to plague the present. French nationalists after the crushing defeat of 1870 by Prussia wanted revenge and the regaining of the lost territories of Alsace and Lorraine, annexed by Germany in the peace treaty. They got their revenge at the end of World War I when a defeated Germany had to return Alsace/Lorraine and submit to humiliating conditions of surrender, including the occupation of the Saar. This is turn led 15 years later to Hitler's rise to power seeking revenge on France (and England) for its lost territories (former German colonies), fuelling a new world war. Ultimately, neither the French Third Republic nor the new German Weimar Republic survived.

There is a happy ending to French-German relations, however, something of a "good surprise" in post-war Europe. France and Germany did come together in a common project, the building of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), which eventually evolved into today's greatly enlarged European Union. Much of the credit for this was the forging of strong ties between Charles De Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer, along with the vision of a democratic and prosperous recovery for Europe formulated by Jean Monnet and Robert Schumann, to ward off the political and economic threat of communism. But an essential ingredient in this reconstruction of a new Europe was for the new generations on both sides of the Rhine to forget certain things, certain things which previous regimes of each nation had done to each other.

Post-war France and post-war Germany both had to face challenges of national identity. France had political toils, fuelled by the prolonged and violent Algerian crisis which almost led to a military coup d'état and perhaps even a new civil war; it was rescued from this by De Gaulle assuming the presidency and leading a peaceful decolonization of its empire following a "plebiscite" regarding ties with France. We need not consider France further in this presentation, even if French national identity today still has problems (e.g., the shrinking significance of the French language in world affairs, the large increase of an immigrant African and Islamic population). What needs to be considered more is the complex case of German identity, particularly in relation to the concept of negative national identity.

National Identity and Negative National Identity

National identity is an important base line in how actors relate to each other, within and across boundaries. In 1989-91, the period of the ending of old entities and the coming forth of new ones, a whole set of countries could start anew. They came not altogether as tabula rasa entities but as states having to establish for their citizens and for the international community a level of national identity, a set of collective representations of who we are as a people and as a nation. National identity includes the objective criteria of territory, population size, resources, etc. It also includes, as Renan (and Durkheim) might have stated, some subjective aspects, collective representations, ways of relating to one another, shared values, levels of trust, and many more. There is a bit more to that, however, since national identity also takes in how the national collectivity perceived others, and how others perceive the collectivity.

Most established nation-states recognized by the international community (such as represented by the United Nations) have an on-going national identity satisfying its members, most of the time, though at present one could point to nation-states that risk being "failed states" lacking popular support and threatened with dissolution, predaceous foes, and the like[4]. *State recognition* is relatively easy to obtain, since the criteria of legitimacy are rather facile to meet, even if non-democratic governments are in power[5].

There is a smaller set of countries, however, which have not passed muster, either in the past or presently, of having beyond state recognition, its *national identity* accepted in the brotherhood of nations by the international community. They are countries – and even more broadly on occasions, regions between and even within nation-states-- which have been stigmatized with a **negative identity.** That is, the comportment and characteristics of its inhabitants tend to be viewed as having negative values by community standards (or as will be further discussed, by national standards). Frequently, the negative identity is conferred because of the violence and oppression, especially violence and harsh treatment toward weaker members of the international community or toward its own members. The sanctions invoked by the international community may be symbolic and attitudinal (including resolutions invoking violations of human rights), or they may be consequential in the form of embargos and even armed intervention (as in the case of Kosovo in 1999).

Before discussing the illustrative case of Germany and its endeavour to overcome a negative national identity, some other instances might be mentioned. Spain was for a long-time subject to a "dark legend" (the *Leyenda Negra*) associated in the media with the Inquisition and New World colonization, a dark legend which furthered the justification of the Spanish-American War in 1898 and the "freeing" of Cuba and Puerto Rico. Equally, Gerard Delanty views the successive invasions of Europe by Islam, the Moors, and the Ottoman Turks as having provided the West with a collective identity by a definition of the oppositional "the other" that was instrumental in "the invention of Europe" (1995). Updating De-

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[4] Somalia is one blaring instance at present but certainly not the only one.

[5] Of course, there are governments not granted international recognition due to various political factors, such as the Serbian Republic of Srpska, the Republic of Abkhazia, The Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh.

lanty's historical analysis, one may see residual traces of this negative identity of Islam in contemporary traces of "Islamophobia"[6] and in the resistance to Turkey (for its past harsh treatment of ethnic minorities) joining the European Union[7]. Lastly, we need not go very far in the past of this decade to have encountered the emergence of a negative identity for the United States in both Europe and the Islamic world following the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

As to negative identity of *regions*, for much of the non-Muslim world the Middle East is depicted more frequently than not as a cauldron of never-ending conflicts and/or despotism. Likewise, the Balkans might have as suitable frame Dante's Inferno inscription "Abandon Hope all ye who enter here", with Robert Kaplan instead of Virgil as the guide (Kaplan 1993; see also Hagan 2003), and the "South" in American popular culture (plays, novels, television) has borne a long time image associated with "grits", "hillbillies", and racist sheriffs and judicial authorities.

The Case of Germany

The case of Germany is illustrative of the complexity of the dynamics of national identity, including generating and finally overcoming a negative national identity.

Following the Napoleonic Wars which served to unify a loose confederation of states, a pan-German nationalism, and capable leadership (especially by Bismarck), brought together a strong nation-state, which after decisively beating France in 1870, emerged as an empire. German national identity achieved a peak internally and externally with high levels of industrial development, scientific and cultural achievements, and unequalled academic standards of scholarship and training. By 1890, Germany had become, in multiple respects, one of "the Great Powers." But its very positive national identity in the 19th century, turned very negative a generation later and for a great deal of the next century.

Germany, before reunification in 1990, had twice in the 20th century been condemned by the international community. Twice Germany went to war against neighbors, led by leaders (the Kaiser Wilhelm II and Adolf Hitler) who seemed the antinomy of benign rulers. Wilhelm II and Germany shouldered the blame for the holocaust that was World War I, with immense damage to the perception of the country by the international community when Germany violated the international treaty granting Belgian neutrality and when Germany launched unrestricted submarine warfare on non-military vessels (the sinking of the Lusitania).

Worse than the bombastic Wilhelm for Germany's international negative national identity was Adolf Hitler and his Nazi followers, seen as demonic figures engaging in horrible deeds against non-Aryan minorities. After World War II, how to deal with Germany as a pariah nation became a preoccupation for various parties: (1) the victorious Allies fretful of Germany's recidivism after World War I, (2) neighboring countries apprehensive of this economic behemoth in the middle of Europe, (3) the victims

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[6] See my essay, "No Laughing Matter: Applying Durkheim to Danish Cartoons," pp. 239-69 in Edward A. Tiryakian, *For Durkheim: Essays in Historical and Cultural Sociology.* Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2009.

[7] In the postwar period, the Cold War provided the West with a renewed identity, one in opposition to Communism and the Soviet world. Delanty, writing shortly after the fall of the latter, was hoping for a new positive identity to emerge. But since 9/11, the West has (re)gained a new identity, one in opposition to global terrorism, with a particular demonic agent of terrorism, Al-Qaeda and its mastermind, Osama bin Laden.

of the Nazi regime, and (4) the postwar leaders of Germany, in the West government (the German Federal Republic at Bonn) and in the East government (the German Democratic Republic in Berlin).

For the last named, the DDR, obtaining a national identity 1950-1990 was *relatively* easy: essentially, the DDR put on the "new clothes" of socialism as a member of the Warsaw Pact[8]. However, for democratic West Germany particularly, a far more laborious, agonizing process of rehabilitation has involved the treatment and perception of German national identity: questions of war crimes and crimes against humanity, retribution, reparation, repentance, atonement, distrust regarding basic national character dispositions have been replete. This has generated an enormous literature, even larger if we include the non-Germans in the periphery of the Third Reich who during World War II are deemed to have aided the Nazis in their crimes against humanity by acquiescing passively or even actively. There is no point to deal in general with this literature here.

What is noteworthy is the extent of postwar – and even post-1989—Germany's *contrition* for heinous deeds done by an anterior regime. Acknowledgment of Nazi crimes, even acceptance of collective national guilt with centrality given to the genocide of Jews, by political leaders and intellectual, has been central in pursuing atonement, with very substantial and continuing support for restitution of victims' properties. The acknowledgment is both symbolic (as in history textbooks, memorials to the victims, etc.) and material. Clearly, by any international standards, the Germany of today has apologized in words and in deeds for the Germany of yesterday (understood mainly as the Germany of 1933-45) to a far greater extent than any other country in history has apologized for an anterior period of its history.

As part of the long process of Germany's "normalization" in the international community, including with its communal neighbours in the European Union, a "good surprise" took place in 1989-90, with the coming down of the Berlin Wall and the swift and unexpected reunification of the two Germanies. This was the only instance of an ex-Communist state voluntarily joining a democratic, capitalist state. However, the integration of two different regimes, albeit of "one people" also posed problems of overcoming a negative national entity, in this instance, that of a region, East Germany.

Regional Integration

The problem of integration following the enthusiasm of 1989 was both structural and psychological. Structural here means that Western Germany had grown and prospered during the Cold War, while the economy of Eastern Germany in the wake of the socialist/communist regime was not competitive with the free market system, laden with industrial waste and pollution, and floundering without the former ties to the Russian "métropole". Hence, West Germans spent huge amounts to restructure the dilapidated economy of the East, setting up resentment in the West, matched by resentment in the East for much higher unemployment rates and for seemingly being taken over in administrative, industrial and university positions by *Wessies*.

Psychologically, for many in the East, the Communist regime was seen as undeniably harsh, even abusive, but some aspects of its welfare state characteristics (health care, public education) remained valued. That and the thinly veiled scorn verging on stigma

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[8] I use the qualifier "*relatively easy"* because once East Germany became reunified with West Germany, the onerous conduct of the Nazi regime also became part of East Germans' neglected past.

toward *Ossies* for having been members of a communist regime that had "lost" the Cold War, provoked what some viewed as a certain "nostalgia" – *Ostalgie*—for the past, and a lack of enthusiasm for the reunified government of Germany[9].

Lastly, there also remained as a dark shadow following *Ossies* the question of those who had worked for the East German secret police, the *stasi*, whether they should be prosecuted and whether the secret files should be opened[10]. Twenty years later, this still seems a smoldering issue (perhaps even more acute today with allegations that the *stasi* might have been involved in the 1968 student confrontations[11]).

A unified national identity has had, thus, the challenge of breaking down *mental* walls between the two regions, a challenge which was not apparent in the immediate enthusiasm 20 years ago of breaking down the physical wall of separation between East and West. Regional integration – here understood as the acceptance of the "periphery" as a worthwhile functional component of the "center"—is not a facile process, witness the case of the Italian South by the North, or the American South by the American North media[12]. But, aided by features of globalization, it does take place. So in the case of German national integration, two positive markers might be noted.

First, a study of university students in West and East German universities indicated that traditional symbols of German nationalism were rejected by both "Wessies" and "Ossies" but that an emergent acceptable symbol of national identity might be "German-in-Europe"[13]. Second, the highly successful football World Cup held in Germany June-July 2006, not only gave Germans a sense of great pride in their country's third place finish, but more important, a sense of pride in their flag being displayed with other countries' during the month-long festival – a general international acclaim far different from the setting of the odious 1936 Berlin Olympics. Not to be dismissed as factors for the rehabilitation of Germany are "material factors": the largest economy in Western Europe and full participation in NATO. All in all, it may be said that a unified Germany has reentered the positive national identity in the international community at a higher level than any point in the preceding century.

Can Germany Serve as a Model?

The long process of rehabilitating one's national identity that Germany has experienced has led to careful examination of whether it can be a model for rehabilitation of stigmatized national identities. What complicates matters is whether the process of con-

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[9] It should be borne in mind that in the Soviet period, East Germany was technically a sovereign republic from 1955-1990; with reunification, it had become a mere region, implicitly, a defeated nation.

[10] See John O. Koehler, *Stasi: the untold story of the East German secret police*. Boulder, CO: Westview 1999; Edward N. Peterson, *the secret police and the revolution: the fall of the German Democratic Republic.* Westport,CT; Praeger, 2002.

[11] http://www.spiegel.de/international/Germany/o,1518,627342-4,00.html

[12] The reintegration of the American South, structurally and psychologically, has been arduous and complex and far from complete, even without pockets of symbolic resistance, such as controversy over the display of the Confederate flag.

[13] Elizabeth Dietrich Ezell, M. Seeleib-Kaiser, and E.A. Tiryakian, "The Future German Elite and National Identity: A Study of German University Students," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology,* 44, no. 3 (2003): 280-308. It would be important not only to replicate this pilot study for Germany but also to see if it holds for other young adults in the European Union. Very different from pre-war chauvinism, the European Union may be providing a younger generation of Europeans with welcomed *Lebensraum.*

trition might not carry risk of a "backlash" in sectors of the national community which may have caused much harm to minorities on its own frontiers or region of the world.

Such an investigation has been undertaken recently by Jennifer Lind, first in a published dissertation, and more recently in her article in the influential *Foreign Affairs*[14]. Her analysis is oriented to comparing the situation of Germany with that of an equally negative regional identity, that of Japan. Though Japan after World War II had a substantial transformation of its previous military hierarchical regime, the severe misdeeds of the latter still weigh heavily on the minds of neighbouring states and victims, particularly China and Korea.

Lind first argues that "apology" does matter to neighbours (and especially those that have been harmed) to reassure them of the foreign policy intentions of the former evil-doing country. However, there may be resistance within a country as to how much "atonement" and "contrition" is permissible, despite external pressures and denunciation. She discusses the situation of Japan, clearly viewed with negative national identity by China and South Korea (and quite possibly by other regional entities that suffered from brutal WWII Japanese occupation, such as the Philippines). Japan has not had the internal agonizing search in public that Germany has to *Vergangenheitsbewaltigung* ("coming to grips with the past"). In contrast to Germany, where left and right have made significant acts of contrition, Japan's attempt to come to terms with the past has been fraught, polarizing, and diplomatically counterproductive (2009:141).

Lind briefly considers other settings where national apologies have been divisive, ranging from the Austrian right reaction to wartime accusations of aiding the Nazis in their Holocaust of Jews, the French President Jacques Chirac's apology for similar French complicity provoking public protest, and the 1994 Smithsonian Institutions display of atomic bombing of Japanese cities also creating a furore among war veterans which led to the removal of the exhibit. With this warning of a political backlash, and yet mindful of the need for apology to soothe neighbours' fears of possible return to militarism and the trampling of neighbours, Lind tacitly espouses a reconciliation involving cooperative behaviour. Again, she takes Germany as a model.

Lind sees the first stage of German post-war recovery, under Konrad Adenauer's leadership in the 1950s, as optimal. Here (West) Germany did acknowledge the misdeeds of the previous regime but with "partial amnesia", i.e., culpability for misdeeds – and certainly, atrocities—were laid squarely at the door of the Nazi dictatorship, and the narrative deployed in textbooks also emphasized the toll the Nazis and the subsequent Soviet invasion had taken on ordinary Germans. West Germany could show its contrition for victims of the past, but at the same time, it could peacefully (as enforced by the peace treaty and the occupation of Germany by the four allied powers) help to reconstruct itself and build a new Europe, including working together with France. In effect, a mixture of working together for the future with a previous foe and collective atonement was the German model worth emulating for Japan (and perhaps other countries in similar situations). Lind's analysis does stress a caveat. The warning imparted, then, is that "calls for national atonement make political leaders vulnerable to electoral defeat (or worse)."

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[14] Jennifer Lind, *Sorry States. Apologies in International Politics.* Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2008; "The Perils of Apology. What Japan Shouldn't Learn from Germany," *Foreign Affairs* 88, 3 (May/June 2009): 132-46.

All in all, it is a delicate balancing act to seek atonement and forgiveness from countries or peoples who have been seriously hurt by the policies of an anterior regime. If a successor regime or state does nothing, the rancor, hostility, animosity, grief caused by those earlier deeds of a previous regime will keep the wounds open, and more than wounds perhaps, will keep open the possibility of rejection by the international community. German exceptionalism was shown by the exceptional degree of accepting guilt and the need for reparation, without a significant political backlash. Japan's leaders, in contrast, have on several occasions visited the Yasukuni Shrine where are enshrined those venerated as divinities who have sacrificed their lives for their country and among these may be figures denounced as "war criminals". To deny the sanctity of the Shrine and what is represents would be severely rebuked by rank-and-file Japanese and most Japanese political factions, just as the refusal for American politicians to honour the military dead in Arlington Cemetery would lead to severe denunciation.

Japan has managed to improve its national identity vis-à-vis the international community, as signalled by its being awarded a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council, partly because of recognition of its being a large donor country to the UN which in turn reflects that Japan since the 1960s has transformed itself into one of the world's great economic powers with one of the strongest currencies[15]. Equally important, prompted by the initial postwar American occupation, it has both accepted democratic institutions and been a staunch American ally against possible Communist aggression. Still, despite significant economic and political achievements there is something of a deficit in how neighbouring countries in East and Southeast Asia view this country. The absence of collective contrition vis-à-vis neighbouring countries that its previous military regime trampled in the last century, particularly China, Korea, and the Philippines, are still deep-seated stains on its image.

Some might see a parallel on how a region views the national identity of one of the region's nation-states in the case of Israel vis-à-vis its neighbouring Arabic and Muslim states. I want to simplify in terms of Lind's analysis what is an enormous complex issue that has involved a practical stalemate between the forces of peace and the forces for war, with the international community at times playing the role of a Greek chorus. Working together for the future might seem in 2009 a highly utopian wish, although I could argue that under certain conditions, the Middle East region might evolve into something like the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

What seems like an impenetrable barrier is strong nationalist interests in the far right of the political spectrum, both in Israel and in the radical religious segments of Arabic and Muslim countries. Apologies for acts of terrorism or the concession of contested territories has been met with vigorous "backlash" by political and religious leaders, for whom national identity and its localization in land have not only an historical dimension but also one quasi-sacred. (Smith 2009:94)[16]. As a rather extreme of

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[15] See Bai Gao *Economic Ideology and Japanese Industrial Policy: developmentalism form 1931 to 1965*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997, and Bai Gao, *Japan's economic dilemma: the institutional origins of prosperity and stagnation*. Cambridge and Oxford: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

[16] "St. Gregory's mission to the various provinces of the kingdom of Armenia endowed them with a novel sanctity, binding them together as a union of Christians," Anthony Smith, *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism. A Cultural Approach*. London and New York: Routledge, 2009, p. 94. See the related studies of Anthony D. Smith: *Chosen Peoples*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003, and W.D. Davies, *The territorial dimension of Judaism*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.

such a backlash, the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 by a right-wing zealot who strongly opposed the Oslo Accords that would have returned some occupied West Bank territories has, de facto, served as a warning for other Israeli leaders who might seem compromising.

Ultimately, if a country has a strong negative national identity with the international community, it might still stave off apologizing and coming to grips with its past (or present). Besides the Sudan and genocidal pursuits against Darfur, that seems to be the case presently with North Korea, and perhaps also with Iran, both of whom seem bent on developing nuclear weapons which might well threaten their neighbors, including neighbours at a considerable distance. What would induce each to relinquish or share with the international community the source of this threat, in return for other valuable resources is an elusive matter, since not everything is measurable in materials goods. To be liked and to be accepted as "a good neighbour" is perhaps more difficult, though more necessary, than to be disliked and feared.

What renders the task challenging – and I would like to think this is a challenge that should be taken up by sociologists and social psychologists—is where *trust* has been severely damaged by the behaviour of a past regime. This is a recurrent task in the reconstruction of national identity where the regime –past and in some instances, present—has engaged in sordid misdeeds, which the international community views as requiring apology and contrition[17].

However difficult – structurally and psychologically—to reconstruct national identity, it is a direction for sociology to take at the crossroads. We can stay fixated at the present and continue to re-enact the past. Or we can try some creative approaches to major problems of living together after serious misdeeds and nasty regimes have taken place. For a concluding section, I will start with some additional "miracles" (or "very good surprises") that have taken place since 1989 and which point to another future, however hazardous the path.

Working Together for the Future

Everyday life and historical settings are replete with actions which cause hurt and damage to others at various levels of intensity. In instances of severe ethnic conflicts within a national setting and in instances of such conflicts across national or territorial settings, can there be a change of collective identities so that more constructive, cooperative behaviour replaces identities that are based on past deeds of infamy and/or mutual distrust? That is the key problematic of this paper, and I would like to propose that this endeavour is most appropriate for sociology, for a "public sociology" (Jeffries 2009). It is an endeavour in which much of sociology has lacked experience, since in some general manner, sociology is more of a "critical" science than one geared to reconstruction, more analytic than synthetic. But it is a terrain for a renewal of sociology as we head into the second decade of the new century, a terrain where we can as a discipline and collectively take the lead from other social sciences.

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[17] Lind's discussion of apology is based on Germany and Japan, both militarily defeated in World War II, with a regime change following. But for a country that is powerful and has not been militarily defeated, yet whose actions and policies have been denounced by the international community, or major segments thereof, apologizing is equally difficult and subject to domestic backlash as "unpatriotic" behaviour. This is clearly shown in President Obama's June 2009 visit to the Middle East to seek a new modus vivendi with Islamic countries; the political opposition in the United States has denounced this diplomatic initiative as needless apologizing and threatens to make it a campaign issue.

To tackle an empirical setting which has had minute treatment in the vast general literature on peace processes, reconciliation, and conflict resolution, I would like to briefly consider the transnational region in which this congress is held, a broad setting of intersecting civilizations and former empires. My remarks will focus on two of its contending social actors, Armenia and Turkey. I leave out wider considerations, such as the relation of Azerbaijan to Armenia and Turkey, the relation of Russia to Georgia and the secessionist republics of Issetia, and Abkhazia, etc.

My concern is to open for discussion what are the possibilities for rapprochement and new identities involved in the relation of Armenia and Turkey. There has seemed with a new American administration an explicit desire to normalize the relation of the two countries, and avoid new ethnic fires being lit, which might escalate into destructive warfare. Positive signs of an improved climate have surfaced in the very recent past with meetings of heads of state last year (2008) and discussions of economic agreements. But it is still not an unilinear direction of accepting "the other". Certain pitfalls must be faced, along with constructive alternatives.

First, the hazards.

If we consider the global setting since 1989, there are as many instances of non-peaceful resolutions of conflicts as of peaceful ones: civil wars in Yugoslavia (and smouldering conflicts in post-war entities like Kosovo and Bosnia), continuing tensions between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, a violent ending to Tamil separatism, and the continuing violence involving Israel and Palestine. Further, national identity issues are also replete with conflicts and clashes regarding the meaning of the past and responsibility and guilt for past actions, all these capable of derailing an ongoing peace process.

Some might see developing historical amnesia, a "starting from scratch" as the course to take (as some observers think has typified Japan, though others might say the same of the United States and its historical treatment of Native Americans). Some might see on the contrary, a total mea culpa, a collective wearing of the biblical sack cloth, as necessary for the redemption of wrongs (as Germany seems to have donned). Neither of these polar positions is likely to be very fruitful as a satisfactory standpoint. The first because one will not be allowed by the international community to blot out misdeeds of the path[18]. The second because, while suitable for an order of religious penitents (or individual pilgrims), it will not be politically realistic to carry out in a democratic nation-state, especially one where a nationalistic faction exists that can mobilize public opinion. And, to complicate matters, one must also take into account that in a situation where one group has been violated, traumatized or severely hurt psychologically and materially, that group will have developed an identity of victimhood, with persons and organizations seeking to maintain that identity, for moral, economic, and political reasons.

Lastly, and certainly not least, where present, the diaspora community in various instances of conflicts "back home" have been strong proponents of direct action and armed resistance. Wittingly or not, the diaspora community, gaining

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[18] In our immediate setting, the 1989 events at Tiananmen Square have been given much attention on its anniversary twenty years later. Implicitly, China's formidable economic performance in this period has been downplayed by critics of the regime because of its presumed political deficits.

and maintaining a second collective identity away from the homeland, may put obstacles in the process of reconciliation.

From the weight of empirical evidence, it might be far simpler to accept a sort of political realism, if not political fatalism, where in the past the historical record of domination and repression by one has been kept vivid in the consciousness of the other. Deep-seated conflicts may be seen as cleavages beyond the ability of sociology, and beyond the ability of "good will", to repair. In terms of the part of the Transcaucasus of particular concern here, it might be taken as realism that the relation of Armenia and Turkey (even more complicated with the dispute involving Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh) has been cool, if not at a standoff of mutual distrust. Each has fallen, not in the trap of oil nor in the trap of debt, but, to paraphrase President Obama's phrase cited at the head of my paper, in its collective memory and identity has made itself a "prisoner of the past". That is not only the situation of the Transcaucasus but also that of Israel, Palestine and the surrounding region of the Middle East.

Is there at the cross-roads alternative pathways? There are two notable markers of an alternative path, each which might qualify as "good surprises". One is the peaceful and constructive resolution of the seeming intractable Catholic-Protestant conflict in Northern Ireland, whose origins went back to Cromwell's invasion of Ireland in 1649 and the dispossession of the Irish natives; the conflict in recent times flared up in violence in 1968 and continued with victims of paramilitary action on both sides for several decades. Yet, a lengthy protracted peace process involving on-the-scene and behind-the-scenes mediators accomplished a seeming "miracle" with the Belfast Agreement on Good Friday in April 1998, which entered into force 10 years ago. Despite hurdles and frictions, with much trial and error along the way to devolution, the peace process has held, and Northern Ireland has become unified, to the benefit of the civilian population.

The second, and even more dramatic constructive path is that taken by South Africa. The oppressive racist *apartheid* regime, instituted with a surprising white nationalist victory in 1948, had maintained itself in power despite international condemnation and ostracism. As late as twenty years ago, the consensus of social scientists was that the situation of a white minority imposing itself on an African (and Indian) majority could only end in extreme violence and racial war. Yet, as a lesser at the time event of 1989, but one in retrospect as significant, in early 1989 F.W. De Klerk was elected head of the National Party (the one in power since 1948) and later President of the Republic. To the astonishment of the world, he released from jail Nelson Mandela, head of the African National Congress, and undertook negotiations for the peaceful transfer of power in free elections that were held in 1994. That remarkable transfer has been accompanied with important background aspects of the reconciliation process that took form in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in which religious and civic leaders played key roles of giving victims a voice and new dignity while also providing amnesty and even-handed treatment for those accused of human rights violation[19].

I do not want to minimize the difficulties involved in either of the two "good surprises" of Northern Ireland and South Africa. The wrongs and hurts of yesterday, the distrust, and the economic imbalances of the populations involved cannot disappear

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[19] For details, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truth_and_Reconciliation_Commission_ (South_Africa).

overnight. Peace processes, to reiterate, do not come to a rapid end. But yet a new national identity is also emerging on the scene, in Northern Ireland and in South Africa, one which makes "the other" a "neighbor" more than "an enemy".

A catalyst for this is that heads of state meeting one another might set in motion, not a sharpening of conflict but its opposite, a setting in motion of cooperation, as happened when Reagan met Gorbachev several times in the 1980s with a climactic appearance of the Soviet secretary in New York in 1988 announcing unilateral arms cuts and in so many words, the ideological end of the Cold War[20], or when De Klerk met Mandela, and earlier, or when De Gaulle met Adenauer at Colombey-les-deux-Églises in 1958. The "angel of peace" does come when it is least thought possible.

I think that Armenia and Turkey might be able to take this alternative pathway. At the state level, Presidents Abdullah Gul and Serzh Sargsyan, Prime Ministers Tigran Sargsyan and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan might become constructive agents of rapprochement and normalization at some time during the reconciliation process, and preferably, at several points in time.

An important supportive role of civil society in the process is that sociologists – Armenian, Turkish, and others from the international community of sociology like the IIS and the ISA—can show the way by helping to formulate creative collaborative activities, for example, disaster studies for a region that is susceptible to killing earthquakes, or demographic studies of emigration. Meeting together as individual visiting scholars, as national sociological associations, and at international meetings will, in the process of working together overcome a negative national identity each may have had of the other. And in the process, dark aspects of one's own identity might come to light and be remedied.

 To do this requires a lot of preparation, a lot of endurance and stamina for a process of reconciliation and "coming to grips with the past". There is a significant literature to be learned that has not been part of the sociological canon, such as the literature of others who have worked on violent conflicts and peace processes (Darby and MacGinty 2008; Oliner and Zylicz 2008). Integral to the painstaking steps of the peace and reconciliation process is to undertake and sustain a process of dialogue (Saunders 1999). However rich this literature, there remains an important place for "the sociological imagination". Sociology, par excellence as given in its etymology, is the study of social relationships. In the spirit of President Obama's new international initiatives to work for peaceful alternatives to long-standing conflicts, which may involve, as Renan had suggested, some necessary forgetting (and also acknowledging) of the past, as well as some willingness to accept contrition, we can nevertheless take as goal and priority a new process of sociological collaboration at this cross-roads.

Beyond establishing a new dimension in comparative analysis, there may be political and economic gains in a new "win-win" situation for Armenia and for Turkey. For Armenia, Turkey may exercise its considerable influence in cementing the independence an Armenian Nagorno-Karabakh and taking a constructive role (with Russian accord) in the peace process with Azerbaijan. For Turkey, the normalization of relations with Armenia (including the question of Nagorno-Karabakh and opening of frontiers) could lead to a new image of its national identity vis-à-vis the European Un-

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[20] For subsequent documentation of the momentous events of 1988, which paved the way for the implosion of 1989, see "Reagan, Gorbachev and Bush at Governor's Island," http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB261/index.htm.

ion, and finally to its long-delayed acceptance. Armenia might thus play a modern version of Aesop's fable of Androcles and the Lion. It would be fitting for a country that has Christianity as the core of its national identity to show the way in the Transcaucasus by manifesting a willingness for forgiving – not forgetting—past transgressions. Reciprocally, Turkey should also enter the dialogue with a willingness to lay bare, after historical scrutiny, the transgressions that a dying Ottoman empire committed on its own subjects.

Now, another "good surprise" has taken place, when on October 9, 2009, just a few months after the Yerevan Congress of the International Institute of Sociology the heads of states of Armenia and Turkey, in the presence of the Secretary of State of the United States, signed an accord in Zurich to establish diplomatic relations. It is a momentous occasion, a rare window of opportunity to start a new era for the Transcaucasus, an opportunity for innovative academic undertakings that can complement state initiatives.

Stemming from my first visit to both Yerevan and Istanbul, I have been in contact with sociologists in both countries to see whether they might be interested in a collaborative project of exchanges. I have been encouraged by the positive responses of those that I have initially contacted. What I have called "Rapprochement, Reconciliation, Cooperation –Sociological Enhancement of the Peace Process in the Transcaucasus Region" would be a three-year pilot exchange program involving Armenian and Turkish sociologists. Workshops, visiting lectureships at universities in both countries, sessions organized by such bodies as the Armenian Sociological Association and the Turkish Association of Sociology, and electronic communications would be vehicles for sociologists in both countries working on areas of what commonly interests sociologist: demographic studies, community studies (including post-disaster studies), gender studies, sociology of development, national identity, emigration, and so on.

I have submitted this proposal to a major foundation committed to world peace. If it is accepted, the program would start in 2010, first with my revisit to Armenia and Turkey to inform academic and governmental authorities of this program as a scientific one, intended to provide an academic basis to the normalization process. Shortly after an organizational meeting would take place, with an organizing committee of Armenian and Turkish sociologists making a directory of who in each country, with what area of specialty interest, might be interested in collaborative work and exchanges with counterpart colleagues.

I have noted that opposition to such an innovative, collaborative venture may come from nationalist opposition. Not only may this opposition be found within Armenia and Turkey, but also from the outside. On the one hand, Azerbaijan nationalism may well regard with jaundice Turkey being involved in a peace accord with Armenia. On the other hand, some sectors of the Armenian diaspora in the United States and France which have been important political voices in the recognition of the dreadful events of 1915 may equally be loath to see a program of reconciliation and cooperation undertaken before there is a state admission of guilt.

I can understand nationalist arguments, especially those grounded in the wounds of the past. But keeping the wounds open is not a solution. To show that sociologists can work together on common projects, and in their work and in the students they reach that they can pave the way for a better future, socially, economically, and politically – that I continue to think is a better alternative. To discover that "the other" is a "socius" in the

original sense of a "companion" was the intention of Auguste Comte's choosing to designate the science of society by the terms sociology. For Armenian sociologists to discover in collaborative research that Turkish sociologists can be a "socius", and reciprocally, is a bold venture, to be sure. But it is a fit venture for the heirs of Comte.

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ԷԴՎԱՐԴ ԱՇՈԴ ԹԻՐՅԱԿՅԱՆ - *Քսան տարի անց. մարտահրավերներ միջազգային սոցիոլոգիային* - Հոդվածում ներկայացված են հռչակավոր հայյազգի սոցիոլոգ Է. Թիրյակյանի մտեցումներն արդի սոցիոլոգիայի զարգացման հեռանկարների, ծագող հիմնախնդիրների և համաշխարհային սոցիոլոգիայի այդ հիմնախնդիրների լուծմանը նպաստող ջանքերի վերաբերյալ: Հեղինակը խոսում է նաև Հարավային Կովկասի տարածաշրջանի ներքին հակամարտությունների և վեճերի մասին, որոնց լուծմանը պետք է նպաստեն ազգային սոցիոլոգիայի ներկայացուցիչների համագործակցությունն ու համատեղ ջանքերը:

ЭДВАРД АШОД ТИРЬЯКЯН – *Через двадцать лет: вызов международной социологии.* – В статье представлены размышления известного американского социолога армянского происхождения о перспективах развития международной социологии с точки зрения встающих перед ней проблем и тех усилий, которые ей необходимо приложить для их решения. Автор пишет также о внутренних проблемах и конфликтах в регионе Южного Кавказа, решению которых могло бы способствовать сотрудничество представителей национальных социологических школ.