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## **Dimensions of World Making: Thoughts from the Caspian Sea**

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### **The reshaping of sociology**

Sociology is in the midst of a difficult transition from a national focus to a global focus. This coincides with a challenge that has been facing sociologists, in Western Europe at least, for over three decades. Basically, they have been knocked off their relatively comfortable perch within national cultural establishments by the ending of the Keynesian welfare-state consensus and the undermining of tenure in the universities.

In response, sociologists have noticed the increased unpredictability and ‘riskiness’ of the world. Seeing how woeful the global picture is, some sociologists have turned back to themselves, to the individual, to individualization, to the body, to emotions. Ulrich Beck has helped to make this journey easy, providing some conceptual handholds.<sup>1</sup>

Others have focused more on the continuation of glaring injustice in the world and plotted pathways to reengagement with that world through ‘public’ sociology, intervening on and by the side of subaltern groups, the downtrodden and neglected ones. Michael Burawoy has taken the lead here.<sup>2</sup>

These responses have borne good intellectual fruit. However, there is another way, at least as valid. This involves standing back and noticing that we are undergoing an important phase of world-formation or world-making. World-making is that mixture of long-term processes, recurrent cycles, deliberate strategies and unintended consequences that is shaping a world whose parts are increasingly in communication with each other.<sup>3</sup>

National governments continue to be key actors on the world stage. However, political power plays, economic initiatives, cultural forays and religious movements are, increasingly, bursting through and out of national frameworks and operating across continents. These processes are becoming global yet they are not yet contained within a ‘joined up’ global framework of effective and humane governance commanding widespread consent and active support.

My use of the phrase ‘not yet’ betrays the residual optimism of a sociologist initially shaped in the upbeat climate of the 1960s. But perhaps we will never arrive at the happy point just envisaged. Perhaps the world is destined to be a ‘failed (global) state.’ Or perhaps we will indeed arrive at global statehood<sup>4</sup> (‘good’ or ‘bad’) but only after running the gauntlet of a third world war, bearing in mind that World War I

(1914-18) was the precursor of the League of Nations (founded 1920) and the Second World War (1939-45) led to the creation of the United Nations (1945).

If that is a gruesome representation of a possible future, one we would prefer to avoid, perhaps it would be helpful to look at current tendencies in the 'big picture' of world-formation or world-making. That is the task of this paper, which will not only analyse some global trends but also take a more detailed look at a specific incident that illustrates them: the war in Georgia during August 2008. In doing this we might be able to get some sense of what is at issue, how our own stake (as citizens) is likely to be managed by those involved in governance, and, finally, what is our responsibility (as social scientists) faced with the challenge of seeking the 'rose' of effective governance while avoiding the 'thorny thicket' of war.

As we will see, sometimes the thorns strike back after the flower has been plucked, as in the case of the highly controversial 'Rose Revolution' that deposed Edward Shevardnadze, one-time foreign minister of the Soviet Union, from his position as president of Georgia with the aid of financial backing from Georg Soros and the Open Society Georgia Foundation.

To sketch the big picture we need to draw on history and international relations as well as sociology. Luckily, these three disciplines are on increasingly good speaking terms.<sup>5</sup> As will soon be clear, 'draw on' may not be the right word in this case because this paper does not borrow explicitly from the theories or professional judgements of particular historians and international relations experts so much as trespass, with due apologies, upon their intellectual territories.

### **Adapting to a different ball game**

Sociology's adoptive founding parents, Weber, Durkheim and Marx, all lived at a time when a handful of European nation-states dominated the world. Their core concepts, such as rationality, solidarity and class, were embedded in theories and models initially inspired by practical challenges arising in the national societies they knew best, especially Germany and France. Also in vision were simpler aboriginal societies (Durkheim), civilizations (Weber) and imperialism (Marx) but as would-be 'legislative' intellectuals (to borrow Bauman's term),<sup>6</sup> their eyes were mainly on national actors operating within a national framework.

The emphasis on nations and nation-building continued through the hot and cold wars of the twentieth century, reflecting the French revolutionary assumption (post-1789) that national governments had a responsibility to develop their own societies in a 'progressive' direction and, if possible, create a hinterland of like-minded societies in their global neighbourhood, in both cases using whatever means of 'persuasion' were most effective. In this respect, Soviet Russia, Nazi Germany and democratic-capitalist America all did their best or worst (depending on your point of view).

In the early twenty-first century, we are learning to adapt to a different ball game, to use a phrase reminding us how 'American' we have all become (on which more later). This new game is very different from the old games in which, for example, a handful of European nation-states corralled much of Eurasia, Latin America and Africa into its imperial pens (as in the nineteenth century), or two world empires based in Moscow and Washington glared at each other (as in the late twentieth century), or an

American ‘colossus’<sup>7</sup> tried to manage ‘threats’ to its own security by treating the world as if it were a global version of Bentham’s panopticon (as in the 1990s).

The United States can no longer expect to get its own way as a matter of course. Its prestige took a fearful knock in September 2001 following the humiliating success of Al-Qaeda’s attack on the World Trade Center in New York. The war in Afghanistan has become a costly burden, a mission in which ‘success’ is hard either to define or secure. The global recession was delivered to the world by the American economy but overcoming it requires action by China (such as expanding domestic consumption) that Beijing cannot be forced to take if it chooses not to do so.

The United States missed the two main opportunities it had to take a very strong lead in establishing coherent and effective global governance, first in the late 1940s/early 1950s and again in the 1990s. The first occasion produced valuable international institutions such as the UN but energies were quite quickly diverted into what became the Cold War. Not entirely Washington’s fault, of course. Following the end of the Cold War in 1989 a surge of multilateralist enthusiasm came from Washington. For example, GATT was restructured and strengthened as the World Trade Organisation (founded 1995). However, this time energies were diverted by the tremendous opportunities for corporate profit flowing from the collapse of entry barriers to countries that had previously been virtually closed to Western traders.

Niall Ferguson complains that the United States does not have the political capacity to be an effective world empire.<sup>8</sup> In fact, as the destination of migrants from all points of the globe, America had the credentials to be something much better: the founder of a worthwhile democratic world government, repeating on a global scale the performance successfully achieved in 1787 at the Philadelphia Convention and in subsequent decades when the US Constitution was framed, implemented and amended. The inauguration of the United Nations in San Francisco in 1945 could have been the start of such a process.

One of the reasons why this did not happen was the dominant political psychology of the United States as a settler society. In the Western world (without generalising beyond that) colonial settlers tended to be escapees who had felt trapped and damaged in the ‘old’ country, who wanted to build their very own promised land, and who felt the need to have unchallenged domination within the territory they occupied. The outside world beyond their territory was seen as a source of threats that had to be neutralised and resource opportunities that had to be seized. In these respects, America’s political tradition has something in common with those of protestant Ulster, and the Boers of South Africa.<sup>9</sup>

A second factor is that in contrast to China, where the state has kept a tight grip on commerce and traders, and the European Union, where business and government bureaucracy are equally weighted with neither dominant, in the United States big business very clearly rules the roost. As a consequence, the chief long-term concern of the American state, in its diplomatic and military guises, has been to promote the interests of American business rather than to bear the costs of leading a global campaign to turn the world into a humanely-organised developmental polity.

However, whatever its deficiencies and despite its current decline, the American state's period of dominance as a kind of global monarchy has had a major disciplining effect upon the world's national governments.<sup>10</sup> It has turned them from the feuding warriors they were between 1914 to 1945 into smooth and (despite occasional duels) relatively pacified courtiers, a kind of global aristocracy: bureaucratized like the Tokugawa samurai, bourgeoisified like the nineteenth-century English peerage, respectable like Dutch regents or stadtholders.<sup>11</sup>

The 'house of lords' or 'senate' in which this global aristocracy of national governments now meets is the United Nations which has 192 members, each one a sovereign state claiming responsibility for advancing the national interests of its people. To satisfy or protect their citizens these governments have to negotiate with their neighbours on a regular basis. Over the past half-century, inter-governmental business has become increasingly institutionalised and 'clublike'. The European Union is a highly advanced example of this.

The current or (depending when you read this) recent global recession could only be managed collectively, and significantly not by deals struck by the not-yet-existing G2 (USA-China),<sup>12</sup> nor within the G7 or G8,<sup>13</sup> but by negotiations within the G20, a group comprising the finance ministers and central bank governors of nineteen countries plus the European Union<sup>14</sup>, sitting down round a table with leading officials from IMF and the World Bank. The G20 members account for about 90 per cent of global GNP, 80 per cent of world trade, and two-thirds of the world's population.

Gradually the world is becoming, and is being managed as, a 'global society.'

### ***Tout ça change?***

But one recent incident suggests that the world still works in some respects in the same way it did seventy years ago, just after the last great crisis of world capitalism in the 1930s. I am referring to the war in Georgia which served as a rival media attraction during the Beijing Olympic Games in August 2008.

The Russian Federation invaded Georgia where there had been a long-running dispute between the government and the populations in two of its provinces, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, both of which wanted greater independence. After an episode of violent repression in South Ossetia orchestrated by the Georgian president, Mikheil Saakashvili, Russian tanks crossed the border and intervened. They kicked the Georgian army out of the rebel provinces then went on to destroy military bases in mainland Georgia, where US advisors had been training the Georgian army in tactics for dealing with insurgents. The Russian military dug themselves in on the outskirts of key towns like the Black Sea port of Poti with its oil terminal.

On 14<sup>th</sup> August 2008, President Saakashvili told foreign journalists that in his view Moscow was looking for a "Munich-type of deal," in other words, something similar to the German annexation of the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia seventy years ago. As is generally known, in 1938 Hitler insisted that that the German state had the right and duty to look after the interests of ethnic Germans living in Czechoslovakia. He used a mixture of force and diplomacy to get his way. The British, and the rest of Europe, acquiesced in this.

Is there any validity in the comparison? To a limited extent, just as there is a limited similarity with NATO's incursions in Kosovo during 1999. In all three cases (as in Iraq in 2003), the interventions were controversial in terms of international law. However, there is a specific element of resentment-fuelled striking back in the cases of both Czechoslovakia and Georgia. In each case the aggressor felt justified in part by its sense of victimhood and gained the satisfaction of revenge.

In both historical cases, the population of the country biting back (Germany, Russia) saw themselves as badly treated. The Germans after 1918 felt they were victims of unfair war reparation demands and the occupation of their Rhineland by the French during the 1920s. The Germans suffered conquest and relegation. The Russians felt excluded and downgraded in the years since 1989. In both cases, this humiliated condition demanded the cure of forceful self-assertion. In 2008, as in 1938, the punch bag struck back.

Like the Germans in 1938 the Russians in 2008 treated their 'arrogant' foreign critics with contempt. Like the Germans, who rubbed Neville Chamberlain's nose in it, so to speak, the Russians scored a crafty propaganda victory against America and 'got away with it.' The Munich deal that resolved the crisis over Czechoslovakia certainly exposed the limitations of the American dream's early twentieth century ideological predecessor. This was the 'British dream' of 'civilised' imperialism backed by British diplomacy and force, a dream for which Churchill continued to fight, in Washington if not on the beaches, but without ultimate success.

Certainly there were other geo-political considerations in both cases, mainly to do with access to valuable resources and influence over strategically-important territory. However, the cases of Czechoslovakia and Georgia illustrate a dynamic that is closely interwoven with the market forces emphasised by spokespeople for business globalization and other mechanisms such as the balance of power and security dilemma to which international-relations theorists pay attention. I am referring to the dynamics of forced displacement and the various potential responses of individuals, groups and institutions to the experience of humiliation. For example, do they try to live with their punishment, try to escape it, or try to resist, perhaps even strike back? These issues and dynamics are pervasive and operate at several levels.<sup>15</sup>

The paper's task can now be specified a little more precisely. The analytical challenge is to find a way of melding an appreciation of the constants just mentioned (which apply across different historical periods) with an understanding of certain long-term world-formation processes. In confronting this challenge, the next task is to identify some fundamental shifts in the dynamics and framework of world making, in other words the shaping of global society, over the past seventy years: between Czechoslovakia 1938 and Georgia 2008. Let us begin by returning to the American case.

### **The Americanization of the world**

In 1902, the English campaign journalist W H Stead listed three 'American secrets...capable of export' which would bring about the 'Americanization of the world.' These were 'Education...increased incentives to Production and.....Democracy' (Stead 1902, 147). By 'incentives to production' Stead meant continuing technological innovation. In his eyes, 'democracy' consisted of the

universal right to vote, a spirit of equality and the opportunity to improve yourself socially and materially by your own efforts. His words were prophetic, although the aspiration to imitate American ways in the 'old' world was certainly not new, even in 1902.<sup>16</sup>

By the late twentieth century most states in the world were offering their people some version of the American Dream, in other words, they were promising to provide their citizens with the opportunity for their families to have a better material life in this world, with improving opportunities for self-realisation. This normally implies a political commitment to developing urban and rural infrastructures, including education, and giving those who are relatively deprived a better chance than before to access these opportunities and enjoy these benefits. In trying to bring all this about, leaders draw on a pragmatic mixture of corporate investment, state planning and military deployment. As in America itself, this happens against a backdrop of criminality, corruption, natural disaster, and a wide range of social pathologies.

Since 1945, and especially since 1989, the world has been Americanized, using both hard and soft power. Everywhere the status of business has risen. Business schools have become the modern version of medieval theological colleges, producing young executives with the 'right ideas.' The market has been marketed, and high taxation condemned as burdensome and wasteful. Consumerism has been equated with freedom. The English language has become the essential and inescapable language of global communication.

We now live in a world of hybrid national cultures. This mimics the American experience. In the United States many people see themselves as hyphenated: as Irish-Americans, Polish-Americans, Chinese-Americans, and so on. Now that happens world-wide, even if people prefer not to mention it. Almost every national culture has embedded within it ideas and symbols made in America and exported abroad. The Poles in Poland are, culturally, Polish-Americans. The Chinese in China are Chinese-Americans. And so on. These are powerful unifying factors, drawing people together within a common, albeit quarrelling, world.

### **A clash of systems not civilizations**

Many people dislike the cultural price they are paying for being drawn into this new Americanized world.<sup>17</sup> But in recompense we have avoided a return of the all-consuming deadly global wrestling match that occurred during the 1930s and 40s between militarised ideologies backed by powerful states. Compared to that titanic struggle, the so-called 'war on terror,' with its own dubious relationship to energy politics (most obviously in Iraq and Iran), is chickenfeed and has exacted a much smaller price than the sixty million people that died between 1939 and 1945.

In *The Americanization of the World*, Stead pointed out that the 'centre of resistance to American principles in Europe lies at Berlin, and the leader against ... Americanisation is the Kaiser of Germany' (Stead 1902, 66). Not many years previously, Andrew Carnegie had recognised the rivalry between Germany and America, both growing powers being potential heirs of the British Empire's position of world leadership. Read Carnegie's comparison between Otto von Bismarck, maker of the German Empire (founded 1870) and Abraham Lincoln, victor in the American Civil War (1861-5) and 'the greatest political genius of our era.'

Bismarck, wrote Carnegie, has not 'achieved the highest degree of political success; he has not harmonized fused into one united whole the people he has consolidated, as Lincoln did. His weapons have been those of force alone blood and iron his cry; even in peace a master solely by brutal force. Lincoln was as generous, as conciliatory, as gentle in peace as he was always sad and merciful; yet ever immovable in war. Bismarck excited the fears of the masses; Lincoln won their love. The one a rude conqueror only; the other not only that, but also the guider of the highest and best aspirations of his people. With monarchical Bismarck "might made right;" with republican Lincoln "right made might." That's the difference' (Carnegie 1886, 20).

This German-American rivalry, stretching back into the mid nineteenth century, was an important part of the geo-political background to the epic twentieth-century struggle between three rival 'world-making' societies (the Russians having joined in after the Revolution) oriented to competing political systems and ideologies, each one keen to impose its imprint on its neighbours. The most extreme adherents of these three systems loathed each other intensely. German Nazism, Russian communism and (belatedly, in response to the Russian and German challenges) American capitalist democracy each organised itself to achieve global dominance and eliminate the other two. It is only a slight exaggeration to say that for a while the principal common language between them was mutual deception, through diplomacy and the secret services, interspersed with military violence.

The hatred between the most dedicated supporters of these different systems was much more intense than the mutual antipathy that Samuel Huntington exaggeratedly ascribes to neighbouring 'civilizations' today.<sup>18</sup> The result was half a century of hot and cold war to the death, felling first Nazi Germany (in 1945) and later Soviet Russia (by 1991). As a consequence of the eventual victory of the United States, most nations are now held together by the promise of material development and social justice achieved through a mixture of corporate investment and state action, sometimes military in nature. This is the model learned from America. Unlike 1914, when every officer on every side in the 'Great War' was taught to believe he was fighting for sacred cultural values against a devilish enemy, in the early twenty-first century there is not much popular belief in or enthusiasm for a clash of civilizations.

### **De-globalization and re-globalization**

Concurrent with the hot and cold wars has been a rather jerky 'stop-go' process of 'political de-globalisation,' in other words, the breakdown of the overarching framework of global governance provided, both for better and for worse, first by the European empires, and later, by the Cold War regimes managed from Moscow and Washington. This process was, of course, already underway during the First World War which led to the break-up of the Ottoman empire and the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924, a result about which Bin Laden has complained bitterly. Ironically, this long process of political de-globalisation helped create the conditions that released two radically innovatory forces both interested in forms of 'creative destruction' (to borrow Schumpeter's phrase): the 'globalizing' multi-national corporation, aggressively breaking through barriers within the marketplace in the name of Mammon and Al-Qaeda, aggressively breaking through barricades around police stations and embassies in the name of Allah.

At the same time, world building (or rebuilding) processes to fill the governance gap left by the end of the Cold War are under way, including global-regional ventures at various stages of development with the European Union having the most substantial existence. There is also a substantial and growing patchwork quilt of global bodies from ASEAN to the UN, providing political, moral and judicial regulation in a wide array of specific situations. But there is no permanent global police force supported by the active consent of governments and citizens throughout the world. There is, indeed, a long way to go before we could say we have adequate global governance.

### **Resource politics**

In the 1930s and 1940s the object of many powerful regimes and their supporters was to conquer or eliminate rival political structures and those who supported them. By contrast, in the early twenty-first century, in spite of '9/11', the overriding object of most political activity is not to challenge competing systems (since there is now so much similarity between societies in their value and objectives) but to come out victorious in the international struggle for resources to satisfy the demands of your own state and your own population.

At bottom there is a key link between two things: a state's success in the struggle for material resources, especially energy but also other key resources such as oil, gas, water, minerals and timber; and the kind of lives that a nation's leaders can offer to its people.

In the early twenty-first century, for example, Russia is making the most of its political advantage as a gas and oil supplier, knowing this advantage may not last for more than a decade or so as new pipelines get built, and neighbours develop new energy strategies. Oil and natural gas from Central Asia will become increasingly important as the North Sea and Alaska dry up in the next decade. For example, there are rich deposits under the Caspian Sea and in the territories of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan just west of the Caspian.

Hunting for oil and gas in Central Asia is not just a three-way game between the United States, Russia and the European Union. China and India are also on the prowl. India is late in the game and keen to find secure supplies; 75 per cent of its oil is imported. China began the same quest ten years earlier. Its main strategic ally in the Caspian region is neighbouring Kazakhstan. Kazakhi oil flows to China through a pipeline running from Atasu to Alashankou. They are also building a natural gas pipeline.

India and China have been competing with each other for oil and gas production companies operating in Russia, as they come onto the market. However, pipeline politics can sometimes bring old enemies together. For example, India and China both have stakes in the Yadavaran gas field in Iran. Meanwhile, India has been negotiating with Pakistan to build the so-called 'peace pipeline' that will bring gas into the Indian subcontinent from Iran. Both sides are blowing hot and cold and it is not yet clear whether the sub-continental neighbours will be able, in the end, to do business with each other. What happens in Kashmir, especially when Afghanistan cools down, may be crucial.<sup>19</sup>



The race in nuclear arms has been supplanted by the race for oil and gas. The Russian company Gazprom has responded to these new pipelines by involvement in the rival Blue Stream project that will take natural gas from Russia to Turkey. As is well known, Russia's president, Dmitri Medvedev, was till recently the president of Gazprom. An intense and largely covert game of international 'arm wrestling' is under way in the region with balance and relative advantage changing repeatedly. Anything written here is likely to be already out of date and woefully incomplete.

But the point is that once you dive below the bubbles of political rhetoric, be it nationalistic, ethnic, religious or market fundamentalist, you find politicians and companies acting as long-term players in the same game. That is the game of getting the best resource deal they can for themselves and those they represent.

That is where Georgia comes back into the argument. As far as both the West and Russia are concerned, Georgia, bordering the Caspian Sea and lying just south of Russia, just north of Turkey, is a key transit state, a very valuable piece on the chessboard of resource politics. The United States and the European Union are keen to have pipelines that will bring oil and gas from the Caspian region through Turkey to Europe. They want routes that avoid Russian territory and do not cross Armenia where pipelines are vulnerable to rebel attack.

Two new pipelines running through Georgian territory have just been opened. One carries crude oil from the port of Baku, capital of Azerbaijan to Tblisi, capital of Georgia, then on to Ceyhan on the south coast of Turkey. This was opened in 2006. Another pipeline opened in 2007 carries natural gas along the same route to Tblisi but then goes to Erzurum in Turkish Anatolia. In 2010 work should start on the Nabucco gas pipeline, which will take this gas from Turkey to Europe.

Why does this all matter?<sup>20</sup> Because broadly speaking, there are two kinds of politics nowadays: the politics of aspiration and hope and the politics of humiliation and revenge. A nation's success in the resource struggle is a major determinant of the kind of politics it gets. Crudely, more resources mean more hopes can be satisfied. The politics of hope is one that gives substance to social rights, that can afford a decent education system for all, good health care and all those prospective benefits that were so visibly on offer during Barack Obama's presidential campaign in the United States. When hopes are disappointed, there is an alternative politics on offer: the politics of resentment and revenge. Its practitioners often begin in opposition to the politicians of hope, seizing upon their failures. Anyone researching in this field might look for such politicians beginning their careers often outside the capital city, working among the discontented, perhaps using the indigenous language to cultivate a discourse of distrust towards the metropolitan elite with its international connections.

Sometimes a national politician, even a president, will sense his or her ability to feed the people's hope draining away and decide the best survival tactic is to feed the people's anger instead, and try to pose as their angel of retribution. So it was in Georgia to which we now return. We will shortly see that the dynamics of humiliation and response within that country interwove with another humiliation cycle under way involving Russia and the West.

### **Defiance and contempt**

Everyone agrees that the pictures of the opening ceremony at the Beijing Olympiad were deeply significant as a symbolic declaration of China's arrival (or, rather, its return) as a powerful and competent world power. However, in the same month there was an equally powerful demonstration that Russia, too, was a big player on the block.

The most significant media image of August 2008, apart from the Olympic flame in Beijing, was a front-page photograph that appeared in the Moscow press shortly after Russian tanks moved into South Ossetia. The photograph took up the whole front page. It showed a defiantly upturned middle finger. This digital communication clearly showed that the invasion of Georgia was a Russian gesture of contempt for NATO and the West after two decades of humiliation.

The breakdown of the Soviet Union between 1989 and 1992 had been followed by a wave of multi-coloured and multi-textured 'revolutions' on its doorstep, bringing Western-oriented regimes to places like the Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan and Georgia. Western NGOs and 'think tanks' like the Open Society Institute and the Soros Foundation gave these movements significant practical support, a fact strongly resented in Moscow. Meanwhile, old constituent republics of the USSR such as Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia joined NATO, following ex-satellite states such as Hungary, Poland and Bulgaria.

Moscow felt surrounded and excluded. Was it an insider or an outsider in the world run by Washington? In 1993 Russia applied to be part of the international club that in 1995 became the World Trade Organisation.<sup>21</sup> Fifteen years later, in 2008, Russia was still waiting at the door, cap in hand. This was indeed humiliating. Enough was enough. The upturned finger was rammed home on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2008. On that day the leaders of South Ossetia declared that they planned to become part of Russia as soon as possible. They would welcome Russian military bases onto their soil.

Even before the credit crunch and bank failures of 2008-9, the crisis in Georgia showed that the 'American dream' of universal free-market globalization backed by US diplomacy and force is becoming increasingly difficult to implement. The Russians were bold in Georgia because they saw that the West is uncertain and divided. This uncertainty and division arises from the fact that a 'freezing' of relationships with Russia will not lead back to the familiar Cold War scenario of two armed camps in a stable relationship with each other. Now there are not two but half a dozen global or global-regional players including US, EU, China, Russia, Japan and India. The game is no longer sumo wrestling, steady and even stately. It is tag team wrestling, with the teams constantly changing.

Present-day Russia may look to ex-US ambassador Robert Hunter like 'Saudi Arabia with trees'<sup>22</sup> but Russia's leaders certainly know an opportunity when it is handed to them on a plate, as it was in the case of Georgia. Faced with the consequences of President Saakashvili's recklessness and Russia's defiant boldness, the American calculation may have been roughly as follows: 'It is true that the Georgian president is "one of us" – after all, he is a graduate of Columbia Law School and a friend of John McCain. But this is an uncertain business. Perhaps better to accept that the rebel provinces of South Ossetia and Abkhazia will move closer to Russia, for the moment at least, rather than risk further disruption within Georgia; after all, more violence and

suffering amongst the population could lead to protests and rioting which might unseat the existing regime and allow the Russians to get even more influence in Georgia.’ Beneath such a calculation, or something similar, surely lay pipeline politics and no doubt much else half-hidden in the interstices of the region’s Great Game.

### **From hope to humiliation**

Why did Saakashvili send his troops into South Ossetia, the action that triggered the Georgia crisis? One plausible suggestion is that he was trying to divert Georgians from their economic frustrations by giving them the satisfaction of humiliating an unpopular minority. Having fed their hope and disappointed them, he was trying the alternative strategy of feeding their anger.

In 2004, the year Saakashvili won the presidency, he celebrated what he called the ‘new feeling of hope and unity’ that would ‘change our country for the better and make it a truly European state.’<sup>23</sup> Three years later he was already hedging his bets. Here is an extract from a speech the president made in January 2007 on the third anniversary of his inauguration, after repeated violent, albeit relatively minor, clashes with South Ossetia, a number of bomb attacks on members of the Georgian police, and persisting bad relations with Moscow.<sup>24</sup> In this speech Saakashvili weaves together the rhetoric of hope with the politics of humiliation, giving him scope in future to shift between the two depending on the problems confronted by his administration:

‘On that day, 25 January 2004, when I took the oath of office outside the parliament building, I addressed a people full of hope for the future and united in the desire to overcome Georgia's past humiliation. I addressed you, the proudest people on Earth, who in front of the whole world refused to reconcile yourselves to injustice, violence, hopelessness and decay. However, at the same time I became president of a people who had been battered and brought to its knees. ...Three years ago, on 25 January, I looked out on a people whose eyes were full of hope. I became president of a country where there was no such thing as salaries or pensions, where not a single social protection mechanism functioned ...If you could not pay money, you could not hope to get medical treatment or achieve success, you could not take your child to school and you could not get access to medical services for your family members.’

The president declared that ‘much has changed over the past three years. ... We have destroyed and replaced the way we lived at that time. Bribe-taking is no longer a part of our way of life. We no longer have state corruption. ...This is the new, just order that has been established. ...Now we have a new way of life. According to our way of life, laws are enforced and criminals are punished accordingly. No matter how much they may resist us or call us names, we will not turn back. ... Our new way of life is that if we have problems we can ...receive free medical assistance or...get help from the police. Our new way of life is that the whole world respects us and stands behind us.

In the event, President Saakashvili was unable either to practice the politics of hope in the long term or deliver the new way of life he promised in this optimistic narrative of a new way of life being born. He could not easily overcome the challenges posed by the resolute awkwardness of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the temptation to bypass

democratic procedures, and the interference of powerful neighbours, both East and West. Ironically, the beginnings of economic growth brought new inequalities and renewed protests against corruption. Already in this speech of January 2007, he was providing an alternative narrative, one which drummed up hostility to the inhabitants of Abkhazia using words that are reminiscent of the rhetoric once used by Slobodan Milosevic inciting Serbians to attack the people of Kosovo:

‘Our Abkhazia is in the hands of people who impudently and for the whole world to hear declare that they will never let in the people whose great grandparents and ancestors' ancestors are buried there and who were unconscionably expelled from there. Georgia will never reconcile itself to that. Georgia will also never reconcile itself to the fact that, even today, in the streets of our neighbouring country, people who had been kicked out of Abkhazia are being killed and deprived of life only because they dare to speak Georgian. All of this will come back to haunt the people who did this tenfold and a hundredfold while we will be victorious. ... We must go forward, towards the final reunification of our country. Our generation has been given a unique chance to be a generation of unity and strength, a generation like the one that prevailed at the Battle of Didgori,<sup>25</sup> a generation that will be remembered with gratitude for the next thousand and two thousand years. Nothing can stop us on this path.’

By late 2007, the president was facing accusations of personal corruption and worse. In November 2007 there were six days of street demonstrations followed by vigorous police action and the declaration of a state of emergency. In January 2008 Saakashvili called an election and secured a new five year term. This was followed by success for his supporters in the parliamentary elections in May, the same month that Moscow sent three hundred unarmed Russian troops into Abkhazia. Seen against this background, the ensuing events of August 2008 seem less surprising.

### **In summary**

Let us draw these thoughts together. We now live in a world that is largely Americanized but in which the influence of the United States is gradually declining, a world in which, paradoxically, enhanced business globalization, the free-market would-be *nirvana* described by Thomas Friedman in *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, is a product of wholesale political *de*-globalization (post-imperial, post Cold War) which has only been partly and patchily repaired.

The unfettered capitalism that emerged in the politically *de*-globalized post-1989 world led us towards the global recession that became evident in late 2008 and early 2009. That massive shock appears not to have substantially altered either the ‘greed is good’ culture of global bankers and traders or the strong commitment of ordinary folk to the materialistic ideal embodied in the American (now the global) dream.

However, there are likely to be significant changes of emphasis if global economic conditions do not radically improve. National leaders are increasingly likely to present the pursuit of prosperity as a zero-sum game with clear winners and losers: in other words, it will be seen as being more difficult to make the whole world grow rich together.

Globalization will no longer be marketable as win-win for all. Increasingly, politics will be cast in an overt 'we win, you lose' framework. The ambition of achieving greater material development may be overtaken by the overriding desire to hold on to what has already been achieved, seen as under threat on all sides.

Despite immediate short-term trends, the politics just described is one where the balance between corporate freedom and state power will shift towards the latter. Governments will get more powerful and overbearing. This is, unfortunately, all too compatible with a politics of humiliation that quickly turns into the politics of revenge and victimization. Even more unfortunately, such a politics leads us quickly away from the regime of human rights towards the honour code (in which, as Carnegie put it, might is right), an approach that lurks beneath the surface in politics throughout the world, from Tehran to Texas.<sup>26</sup>

Where, it may be asked, is climate change in all this? A great deal depends on how well the United States and China can learn to cooperate with each other during the next twenty years. For the next decade at least, the European Union is likely to be preoccupied with absorbing the many new members it has acquired in recent years. Despite its large aggregate GNP, the EU will find it difficult to attain the degree of unity and purpose in foreign relations possessed by both Washington and Beijing. This will weaken Europe's voice at the top table but, in compensation, a two-way negotiation between Beijing and Washington may be easier to manage than a three-way dialogue. The Americans may have to give more than a little to pull the Chinese into closer relations. The renewed sparring over Taiwan in January 2009 represented, perhaps, some of the opening shots in that negotiation, one which will obviously involve defence matters and trading relations as well as climate issues.<sup>27</sup>

China and America in unity could effectively promote a climate change strategy and much more besides. Before that day arrives there is a clear danger that a zero-sum politics of resentment and revenge, intensified by resource conflict, may overwhelm us.

### **The research agenda**

What can sociologists do in these circumstances, when there are two key struggles animating the world: first the struggle for resources, exacerbated by global warming; and second, the contest between the politics of hope and the politics of humiliation?

As I have argued, these two struggles are closely related to each other. In brief, I think that those sociologists who choose to work amongst citizens who are angry and discontented because of the social injustice they confront should not only provide what sociological knowledge and wisdom they can muster about the levers of change and how to pull them. They should also, in my view, carry with them an acute awareness of the humiliation trap: in other words, the tendency for those who have been humiliated to impose humiliation on others, to perpetuate cycles of humiliation. This was, indeed, the principal message propounded by Nelson Mandela when he spoke to fellow South Africans after being released from Robben Island.

But there is also vitally important sociological work to be done among political, business and professional elites. The fate of the politics of hope depends greatly on the management of the global struggle for resources. And that is closely linked to the

further strengthening of global governance which should provide a buttress for the regime of human rights, currently under threat from the politics of humiliation.

Empirical research is needed on the perceptions and intentions of a particular group of men and women whose own career plans must surely be intimately affected by their own calculations about how world-making processes will develop over the next quarter century. I am talking about people now in their 40s in the middle-to-upper ranks of business, government (including the military), the leading NGOs, and institutions of global and global-regional governance such as UN, WTO, EU and ASEAN.

These people are, or should be, a new global establishment in the making.

A '*global*' establishment in the sense that they accept a clear professional responsibility to consider what is necessary to make global society work in an effective, civilized and humane way. The terms 'civilized and humane' in that sentence are an expression of hope, a hope that an effective public sociology able to work with and amongst that elite would be able to nurture and help turn into a reality.

A global '*establishment*' in the sense that they will learn to communicate, cooperate and cohere across national and institutional boundaries. Indeed, making themselves into that global establishment, and getting it to deliver what the growing urban populations of the world want and need is their own best chance for professional survival and success.

Sociologists and other social scientists should not be working exclusively amongst subaltern groups, finding out what their problems are, feeding in their own analyses of means, ends, and obstacles, and suggesting potential ways forward.

They should also find ways of doing the same thing for the people who are going to be taking crucial decisions in government, business and the professions, decisions that will shape subaltern lives (and not-so-subaltern lives also) throughout the world.

We must find ways to listen and talk to, the elites, the rulers, especially those who are still being shaped and finding their way. Obviously access is often very difficult, just as it is when penetrating the arena of production. Inventiveness, intelligence, experience, stamina, time, patience, tact and sheer good luck are obviously all helpful when confronting such challenges. Armed with these, and other, necessary resources, we need research that

- generates new data about agenda-setting within key national and global elites, especially amongst large and influential national governments (eg US, China, Russia), multinational companies (eg Wal-Mart, Royal Dutch/Shell), multinational bodies (eg EU, UN, WTO) and international NGOs (eg Third World Network, Greenpeace International);
- relates information about the agendas of these institutions to the perceptions of the men and women working within them about their own identity, interests, objectives and strategic intentions, paying particular attention to key strategic advisers; and
- develop a detailed and sophisticated analysis of world-formation processes that is richly informed by an improved understanding of the motivations and

perceptions of national and elites and those in multinationals, NGOs and multilateral bodies.

The main point of this research would be to get behind the ideology and emotionality that bedevil discussions of ‘globalization,’ (a term that, increasingly, obscures rather than clarifies analysis). The object would be to get a clearer idea of how those who manage the powerful and active organisations shaping global society see their own situation and how they intend to sustain or transform that situation.

A thickening layer of politics, culture and society is developing ‘above’ and ‘between’ nation-states and in that arena institutions and rules are being forged that will, increasingly, regulate our lives. Meanwhile, national and global elites are becoming ever-more densely interwoven, forming an arena of immense power and influence with great capacity to do both good and evil.

The spirit of ‘public sociology’ is needed amongst the powerful as well as the weak, amongst the rich as well as the poor. By getting more and better evidence about the way the elites who occupy these key institutional spaces see their own interests and objectives, and by adding this knowledge to our own improving understanding of world-making processes, we will improve our own capacity, as sociologists and citizens, to inform and advise those who govern us, the men and women who hold our lives in their hands.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Beck 1992. Castells should also be mentioned. His guiding premise may be summed up as follows: informational capitalism, which is made possible by new information technology, is generating identity crises within families, communities and national states. For elaboration, see Castells 1997; Castells 1998; Castells 2000.

<sup>2</sup> For a recent statement see Burawoy 2008a.

<sup>3</sup> A term like world-making is helpful because it has become increasingly difficult to use the idea of globalization in a neutral way. The latter carries too much political and emotional baggage. You can try, as some have done, to make the word globalization mean something more neutral and general like the forging of links between groups and societies over the centuries (see, for example, Smith 2006). But in practice, globalization is almost always taken to mean the international spread of large-scale business backed by the American state, as practised in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. In other words, the approach advocated by writers such as Thomas Friedman (in *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*) and Thomas Barnett (in *The Pentagon's New Map*). It is worth noting that the breakdown of the European empires and the end of the Cold War has led to political *de*-globalization, in other words a *reduction* in governance and regulation at the global level. The point is, perhaps, that although big business has been international for centuries political *de*-globalisation took it off the leash and allowed it to roam the world in a more aggressive and unhindered way than previously. This point is developed later in the paper.

<sup>4</sup> The term 'statehood' is being used deliberately without precision at this point. Since at least 1789 we have been in an age of constitutional experiment: the French revolutionary regimes, the American Republic, the German Empire, the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China and the European Union (a 'polity' but not a 'state' exactly) are some examples. Certain constants persist here also, of course, such as the requirement for effective taxation and law enforcement, although not everyone accepts that these are either worthy or necessary objectives, including supporters of other experiments such as the Zapatista movement. If the project of effective (and humane?) global governance fails, the latter's time may well eventually come.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, the special issue of *International Politics* on 'Historical Sociology and International Relations' (vol 44, issue 4, July 2007), edited by George Lawson, the valuable text edited by Stephen



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Hobden and John Hobson (Hobden and Hobson 2001), Smith 1991 and also, of course, the work of Martin Shaw, eg Shaw 2000.

<sup>6</sup> See Bauman 1987; Smith 1999a.

<sup>7</sup> As in Ferguson 2004

<sup>8</sup> See Ferguson 2004, 28-9.

<sup>9</sup> Some might add Israel to this list. See Smith 2006, 121-6.

<sup>10</sup> Due credit (or, some would say, blame) for exercising disciplinary control over national governments within their orbit must also go to the Soviet Union and the European Union.

<sup>11</sup> On this see Smith 1999 and, more generally, Smith and Wright 1999.

<sup>12</sup> China naturally wants to have its cake and eat it, ie exercise great influence, especially veto power, while claiming the need for special consideration since it is still a developing country. During President Obama's visit to Beijing, *The China Daily* for 18<sup>th</sup> November headlined on its front page the views of Prime minister Wen Jiabao: 'China disagrees to so-called G2'. It is likely that China is going to 'disagree to' quite a few things in next few years. [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009-11/18/content\\_8998039.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009-11/18/content_8998039.htm)

<sup>13</sup> The G7 (Group of Seven) consists of finance ministers from Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom and United States. The G8 consists of the heads of government of those countries plus Russia. The absence of China is quite striking.

<sup>14</sup> Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Republic of Korea, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States of America, plus the European Union, represented by the rotating Council presidency and the European Central Bank.

<sup>15</sup> See Smith 2006 for elaboration.

<sup>16</sup> As early as 1835, Richard Cobden, a prominent English radical, declared 'We fervently believe that our only chance of national prosperity lies in the timely remodelling of our system, so as to put it as nearly as possible upon an equality with the improved management of the Americans.' Cobden 1835, 101. Stead recognised the power of American wealth, commerce and inventiveness but also paid due attention to cultural influences such as religion, literature, journalism, sport and the theatre, factors that Joseph Nye later labelled as 'soft power' (see Stead 1902; Nye 2004).

<sup>17</sup> Here, for example, is one rather extreme but evidently heartfelt Norwegian response (by journalist Eric H Thoreson): 'Global fast-food companies will put small restaurants out of business, allowing Europeans to enjoy the security of knowing that no matter where they travel, the food will always taste, smell and look identical and be served by minimum wage, uniformed high school kids or pensioners. McDonald's, Burger King, KFC, Subway and other franchises will eliminate the anxiety of restaurant choice. As all European towns will look the same once the franchises and strip malls have been installed, Americans will no longer have to visit six countries in 10 days during their once-in-a-lifetime overseas trip. Stand a group of Europeans next to a group of Americans, and it is obvious the former are nutritionally deprived. Once fast-food restaurants take over, Europeans will grow to their proper size.' The full text of this article, which was published in 2002, shortly after the administration of President George W Bush published *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America 2002* emphasising their intention to maintain global strategic dominance. See [http://www.nytimes.com/2002/09/20/politics/20STEXT\\_FULL.html?pagewanted=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2002/09/20/politics/20STEXT_FULL.html?pagewanted=1)  
A copy of Thoreson's article, also entitled *The Americanization of the world*, can be found at [www.uni-bielefeld.de/lili/.../intComm01\\_americanization.pdf](http://www.uni-bielefeld.de/lili/.../intComm01_americanization.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> See Huntington 1997.

<sup>19</sup> One possibility is that certain interests in Pakistan, mindful of the desirability of maintaining peace on the home front and loath to cope with more bombing campaigns in their big cities, might draw to the attention of warriors returning from Afghanistan the continued existence of 'unrighted wrongs', as they might see it, in Kashmir. Trouble in that region would provide the Indian government with an additional headache, an outcome, however undesirable, that might not be totally without advantage for Pakistan and China.

<sup>20</sup> Recent surveys of some issues discussed in the previous section may be found in Klare 2002; Klare 2008; Noreng 2002. See also, for typical media reports: <http://www.oilprice.com/article-india-facing-fierce-competition-in-its-search-for-oil-and-natural-gas-resources.html> (24 December 2009); <http://www.neurope.eu/articles/82173.php> ( 26 January 2008); <http://www.inform.kz/eng/article/2209774> (4 November 2009);

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<sup>21</sup> Previously the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)

<sup>22</sup> Hunter was speaking on the BBC programme *Newsnight* on 14th August 2008. See <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/blog/2008/aug/14/livegeorgiaconflict1>

<sup>23</sup> Speech delivered by President Mikheil Saakashvili on Georgia's Independence Day, 26 May 2004. <http://www.president.gov.ge/?l=E&m=0&sm=3&st=210&id=151>

<sup>24</sup> The following two extracts are from the speech delivered on January 25 2007 released by the Press Office of the President of Georgia (<http://www.president.gov.ge/?l=E&m=0&sm=3&st=540&id=2122>)

<sup>25</sup> The battle of Didgori in 1121 secured Georgia's freedom from the Seljuq Empire. It plays a role in Georgian tradition similar in importance, though different in meaning, to the part played for Serbians by the Battle of the Blackbirds in 1389.

<sup>26</sup> A hint of the honour code's residual power could be seen in the Pakistani elections in 2008 when the main opposition slogan was 'Democracy is the best revenge.' On the honour code, see Smith 2006, 25-9.

<sup>27</sup> See the issue of *Current Sociology* (vol 56, no 3, May 2008) containing extended dialogues both on public sociology and the challenge of climate change, eg Smith 2008a and Smith 2008b.