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Enmity in the Intellectual World: Global Perspectives and Visions

Abstract This paper follows the perception of enmity relations in the recent online contributions of 20 global intellectual 'superstars', such as Habermas, Klein, Žižek and others. We observed two, very general distinctions; the first one includes several geopolitical oppositions such as Germany vs. the rest of the EU, Russia vs. the West and national vs. supranational, while the second is between the majority and privileged few/elites. We argue that contemporary intellectuals are still influential public figures, and that their efforts are more directed at empowerment and reform of the societies through the existing system than at promoting and advocating alternatives to the existing neoliberal socio-economical order.

Keywords: Intellectuals, enmity, public, elites, change

Anyone attempting to provide a general, consensual working definition of intellectuals or their role and impact in/on society faces a daunting task, and is easily reminded of the famous verse from Ecclesiastes: "For with much wisdom comes much sorrow". The proverb applies both to intellectuals and those wishing to study them, for their *differentia specifica*, relevance, public and emancipatory role have all been a matter of both their own internal and also broader scholarly disputes.

For those like Alvin Gouldner, intellectuals are our best card in history (Gouldner, 1979). Perhaps claiming that they pave the way for humanity is an overstatement, but they do indicate social change and its directions. They are a valuable part of societal landscape, providing legitimation (or sometimes delegitimation) of the prevailing order. Less enthusiastic but nonetheless instructive are Baert and Shipman, who rightfully point out that a significant number of current, high profile intellectuals come from the academia – e.g. J. Butler, N. Chomsky, P. Krugman, E. Said, A. Giddens, etc. (Baert and Shipman, 2012: 187).

On the opposite end, we find now rather frequent assumption that the role of intellectual is on the wane, especially when compared to earlier moral authorities like Zola, Solzhenitsyn, Sartre etc. (Jacoby, 1987; Posner, 2001). The paradigm itself comes from a perception that intellectuals more and more fail to "speak truth to power" (Havel, 1985; Said, 1996), and fail to address

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the public as they once did. In recent years, yet another set of arguments claiming the fall of intellectuals has emerged, which we could name as the set of *structural arguments*. These arguments are linked with social conditions of knowledge production, claiming that extremely increased specialization of knowledge has led to limited space for intellectual engagement on one side (Jacoby, 1987). A similar line of reasoning also notes that universities, a large source of intellectual work, have interests intertwined with other social realms, like economy and politics, which increasingly limits the scope of engagement of intellectuals (Nisbet, 1997). This is, of course, related to the normative argument that intellectuals should be independent and ought to "speak truth to power", but that they become instruments for production of social order and ultimately for satisfying the economic needs of society.

Pushing this outlook further ties us back to a reputable self-critical intellectual tradition that, to say the least, disputes the view of intellectuals as a vanguard of subversion and emancipation. Nearly a century ago, Antonio Gramsci dared to label intellectuals insistent on independence as utopian: "this position assumed by the social complex of intellectuals [and] can be defined as the expression of that social utopia by which the intellectuals think of themselves as 'independent', autonomous, endowed with a character of their own, etc."; instead, he claimed that "[e]very social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields" (Gramsci 1989: 112-113). Only a few years later, Robert Michels wrote in similar fashion that observing intellectuals as immanently revolutionary is not in accord with the facts (Michels in Karabel, 1996: 206). Quite to the contrary, intellectuals are the officers and subaltern of all arms and armies, of those revolutionary, reactionary and even of reformative political forces. We therefore cannot claim that intellectuals were ever independent from social conditions of their societies (or global society lately), nor that they (as a social network) could claim moral characteristics of few individuals who were perceived as the protagonists. Karabel voices this current of thought as follows:

> "It is thus misleading to assume, as does much of the existing literature, that intellectuals will typically adopt an oppositional stance towards the existing order; most of them have, after all, attained a relatively privileged position within it, and their well-being often depends upon the acquisition of resources controlled by political and economic elites with whom they are socially and culturally linked. From this vantage point, what needs to be explained is less why intellectuals reach accommodations with the status quo than what it is that *causes some of them, at certain historical moments, to rebel*" (Karabel, 1996).

This contested framework calls for some moderation. There are authors who oppose the paradigm of intellectual decline and find it deceiving, but at the same time acknowledge structural changes of society and different functions of the intellectuals (Baert and Shipman, 2012; Bauman, 1989; Bourdieu, 1988; etc.). The proponents of this view could be said to subscribe to Bourdieu's notion of intellectuals as *the dominated fraction of the dominant class* (Bourdieu, 1990), and yet point to new channels of intellectual engagement with the public that did not exist before and are frequently missed in analyses. Indeed, it can be argued from this vantage point that public space has been democratized in the previous two decades, allowing significantly more equality in participation and expression, particularly if we observe the online realm. Of course, one needs to be very careful when making such conclusions on a global scale, but even with issues such as censorship of the Internet in some parts of the world, there is a general possibility of an unbounded online public engagement that cannot be easily disregarded.

Whom to consider as intellectuals?

In moving forward towards addressing the question of contemporary intellectuals and their perception of enmity, we tried to avoid the pitfalls of overarching definitions by relying on material less likely to be thought of as controversial by either intellectualophiles or intellectualoclasts. Patrick Baert suggests that Pierre Bourdieu (1988), Charles Camic (1987) and Randal Collins (1998) could be named as fathers of the sociology of intellectuals, while at the same time acknowledging the lack of research dealing with the public engagement of intellectuals (Baert and Shipman, 2012). By naming them *public* intellectuals, Baert seeks to stress their role in society as well as their engagement in the public realm as terra incognita that should be explored since we need to know how ideas, theories and concepts find their way to the wider public and into public discourse. However, we subscribe less to this distinction between public and *other* intellectuals, and rather hold that being public is intrinsic to being an intellectual. Having in mind this public aspect of their work, we emphasize an even greater lack of studies on contemporary intellectuals, not only the founding fathers.

We perceive intellectuals as *the loose elite network of specific social actors who possess advanced knowledge or creativity recognized in the cultural field of academia and/or art*. They draw certain authority or power to be heard from their position in the network. Finally, they are publicly engaged in a way that they address the public beyond their professional audience (Pudar Draško, 2016). In this sense, we readily recognize the public aura surrounding contemporary thinkers such as Butler, Chomsky, Žižek and others, but without imbruing them with an a priori positive or emancipatory public role. Therefore,

while recognizing their public presence and, arguably also influence, we still wonder whether the intellectuals with the strongest public profiles indeed sow the seed of social change through their discourse? And if they do, what is the direction of this orientation: emancipatory or conservative, reformist or consolidative? This question is far from trivial. Indeed, with due respect to great examples of intellectual defiance and courage, some of the authors we have mentioned have argued rather convincingly that actually the opposite of courage and defiance tends to be the rule.

In our text, we have focused on online publications of global intellectuals, many of whom work at universities and/or hold academic titles or positions. We have thus left out a substantial, and certainly important, aspect of their endeavour within national and state borders. Intellectuals we cover here are precisely *global intellectuals*, since they enter the online global public space and publish in renowned English language newspapers and magazines. For a convenient and representative sample of global intellectual writings on enmity, we relied on the contribution of 20 intellectuals proclaimed to be "world thinkers" by British Prospect magazine in 2013, 2014 and 2015[1]. The analysis focused on their articles, blogs and op-eds published online in the period from 2012 until August 2016. In the first step, all contributions still available online were collected (app. 390) and a sample of 25% per each person was included in the analysis. These 106 contributions were then submitted to critical discourse analysis. We searched for narratives and framings that operationalize enmity relations and/or those pinpointing the desired change. We were particularly attentive to the US and THEM distinction, alongside with the corresponding markers such as pronouns ("we", "they", "us", "them", "our") but also deixes like "here" and "there", as the most fundamental discursive markers (van Dijk 1993; 2009: 52). For the sake of clarity, enmity relations in this article denominate all those oppositional relations, where we could identify a clear distinction between *us* and *them* and between desirable and non-desirable.

1 Included intellectuals, in alphabetical order, with the number of collected postings: Arundhati Roy, writer (28), Esther Duflo, economist (6), Daniel Kahneman, psychologist (8), Amartya Sen, economist and philosopher (24), Anne Applebaum, publicist (40), Anne-Marie Slaughter, political scientist (24), Ha-Joon Chang, economist (29), Hilary Mantel, writer (12), Jürgen Habermas, philosopher (9), Mao Yushi, economist (13), Marilynne Robinson, writer (8), Martha Nussbaum, philosopher (15), Naomi Klein, journalist (29), Paul Krugman, economist (41), Peter Higgs, physicist (5), Raghuram Rajan, economist (19), Rebecca Solnit, writer (23), Roberto Mangabeira Unger, philosopher (7), Slavoj Žižek, philosopher (35) and Thomas Piketty, economist (26). The list of included intellectuals is based on their presence in the list for at least two out of three years. This means that some intellectuals whose contribution spiked in only one year, like Yanis Varoufakis, were excluded from consideration.

How do "world thinkers" operationalise otherness in their narratives?

Several oppositions or enmity perceptions spark across the included articles of prominent contemporary intellectuals. For analytical purposes, we make the distinction between geopolitical enmities and structural/systemic enmities. The first category includes identified oppositions between different geopolitical entities and leans very much on culture as the root of distinction. The second category introduces elites – privileged bearers of economic and socio-political power relative to others, especially to marginalized groups of citizens. In the following section, we will illustrate these two enmity categories and intellectuals' perception of their causes and possible progressive change.

a. Systemic geopolitical oppositions

The geopolitical opposition is a three-fold one. First, these intellectuals distinguish *Germany from the rest of the European Union*, which coincides with the break out of the Grexit crisis and the war in Ukraine in this period.

> "Germany is a reluctant but *insensitive and incapable hegemon* that both uses and ignores the disturbed European balance of power at the same time (emphasis added)." (Habermas, 2016)

> "Germany — not the European Union, and certainly not the United States — has convened all of the important meetings, pushed through sanctions and conducted most of the diplomacy designed to allow Russian President Vladimir Putin to 'deescalate' or to 'give him an off ramp' or whatever formulation is currently fashionable. Although it isn't clear that this diplomatic effort has borne fruit, no one doubts that *Germany has played a central role* and will continue to do so (emphasis added)." (Applebaum, 2014a)

Germany is thus perceived as the key player on the European scene, the nation whose strong diplomacy without any doubt defines the direction of EU politics. This power also bears responsibility, and intellectuals tend to hold Germany responsible for the future of the EU more than any other (nation) state.

Second, it seems that old and implicitly backward nineteenth-century arguments regarding the supremacy of Western(ised) world vs. Other have returned to the scene in intellectual discourse. Again, the geopolitical context placed a strong focus on Russia as the personification of the Other. This significant Other is implicitly characterized with non-Europeanism – the lack of democracy, oligarchy and dominance of the ethnicity as opposed to the Western model of citizenry.

> "For Russia, the point of the war is not to achieve a victory. The point is to prevent the emergence of anything resembling a prosperous, European Ukraine because such a state would pose an ideological threat to Putinism." (Applebaum, 2015)

> "If Ukraine ends up with a mixture of ethnic fundamentalism and liberal capitalism, with oligarchs pulling the strings, it will be as European as Russia (or Hungary) is today." (Žižek, 2014)

In addition, or rather contrary to such narratives, racism is identified as being ever-present, receiving a new face of climate ignorance which directly endangers marginalized races of the non-Western world.

> "Thinly veiled notions of racial superiority have informed every aspect of the nonresponse to climate change so far. Racism is what has made it possible to systematically look away from the climate threat for more than two decades." (Klein, 2014)

Finally, the third geopolitical opposition revolves around the *national vs. supranational* distinction as a relatively new axis in international affairs. Contemporary thinkers criticize phenomena such as the rise of right-wing populism and crisis of values within the EU as the regression to nation states, seen as resilient or resurrected political units.

> "This colonialization of societies, which disintegrate from within and take up rightwing populist positions against each other, will not change as long as no political power can be found with the courage to take up the cause of achieving the political aim of *universalizing interests beyond national frontiers*, if only within Europe or the Eurozone (emphasis added)." (Habermas, 2015)

> "The rise in national self-interests has undoubtedly prevented Europeans from adapting their institutions and their policies." (Piketty, 2016)

> "One result of European monetary integration, without a political integration, is that the population of many of these countries has no voice. Economics is delinked from the political base." (Amartya Sen in Storbeck, 2012)

Thus, the prevailing opinion among intellectuals is that the current state of affairs on European level is not satisfactory, meaning it does not lead to real unification or "universalizing interests beyond national frontiers". National elites still hold the lion's share of power; this prevents the development of functional EU institutions that would otherwise not be as alienated from citizens nor divorced from democratic control as they appear to be at present.

b. Minority vs. Majority: "the Enemy is the People"

The second category of structural/systemic enmities could also be presented as multidimensional. Its core is definitely the opposition between common,

marginalized people, or better put, the *majority*, and the privileged few or the *elites*. This is best summarized in the words of Arundhati Roy that "either way, the Enemy is the People" (Roy, 2016).

> "We are stuck because the actions that would give us the best chance of averting catastrophe – and would benefit the *vast majority* – are extremely threatening to an *elite minority* that has a stranglehold over our economy, our political process, and most of our major media outlets (emphasis added)." (Klein, 2015)

> "...[t]alks a lot about the need to make tough decisions, which somehow always involves demanding sacrifices on the part of *ordinary families* while treating the *wealthy* with kid gloves (emphasis added)." (Krugman, 2013)

> "Anyone who argues that doing something about global warming will be too expensive is dodging just how expensive unmitigated climate change is already proving to be. It's only a question of whether the *very wealthy* or the *very poor* will pay (emphasis added)." (Solnit, 2014)

Intellectuals emphasize that the enmity among ordinary citizens and powerful elites is raised to a level rather familiar in history – the "commoners" are intensively portrayed as lazy, morally unsuitable and generally speaking to be blamed for their own poor destiny. However, in distinction to the earlier instances of this antagonism, contemporary thinkers emphasize the unlikelihood, if not the impossibility, of an uprising or upheaval that would turn the tables round and truly endanger the elites.

> „What's happening here at the moment is really ugly. The government portrays *poor and unfortunate people as being morally defective* (emphasis added)." (Hilary Mantel in Scheuermann, 2014)

> "Gone are the days when the upper classes were terrified of the angry mob wanting to smash their skulls and confiscate their properties. Now their *biggest enemy is the army of lazy bums*, whose lifestyle of indolence and hedonism, financed by crippling taxes on the rich, is sucking the lifeblood out of the economy (emphasis added)." (Chang, 2013)

Predictably, intellectuals hold that, in addition to the public being manipulated by the elites, the system itself is corrupt and subject to the will of the powerful and wealthy for the sake of their own interests. Such a situation is recognized by various intellectuals, from those who advocate moderate state intervention for the benefit of citizens, to those who lean strongly towards the free market (i.e. M. Yushi).

> "The biggest reason to oppose the power of money in politics is the way it lets the wealthy rig the system and *distorts policy priorities* (emphasis added)." (Krugman, 2016)

> "So it is true that we live in a society of risky choices, but *some people (the managers) do the choosing, while others (the common people) do the risking* (emphasis added)." (Žižek, 2013)

> "They get extra income because of … privilege power. Big state enterprises are vested interest groups. They collude with politicians." (Mao Yushi in Montlake, 2012)

While the aforementioned "solutions" of either redistribution or further liberalisation fundamentally rest on the implied faith in the neo-liberal framework, the causes for this situation, set to work for the privileged elites, are identified with the structural factors of the capitalist system and its inability to resolve socio-economic problems, particularly visible in periods of crisis. Any downturn of the economy exposes latent social tensions where "people are unable to solve their social and unemployment and domestic problems through peaceful policies" (Piketty in Kumar, 2015). Such crises destroy social cohesion of societies and bring into the surface the injustice of the system, making "a mockery of the self-conception of democratically constituted societies" (Habermas, 2015). In addition, globalization cannot be overlooked, especially those of its consequences that alienate citizens from power ownership, causing regression to intolerant, isolationist and nationalist sentiments, which are then removed from any serious discussion on the political level.

c. What is to be done?

The leading contemporary intellectuals certainly advocate strongly for power to be given to the people, oppressed by the powerful elites. They also openly claim that mass movements and protests in general are a way to effect change. This trust in the social movements is obvious and largely a consequence of the new rising wave of movements from the USA, across the Arab world to Europe. Also, social movements are seen as a source of possible political alternative, which could enter the political scene and take power, pumping fresh blood into old liberal democratic systems, in order to heal but also change them in a way that would satisfy citizens' needs more than previous systems have done so far.

> "*Mass movements work.* Unarmed citizens have changed the course of history countless times in the modern era. When we come together as civil society, we have the capacity to transform policies, change old ways of doing things, and sometimes even topple regimes (emphasis added)." (Solnit, 2014)

> "A street movement's success isn't determined by the crowds it can mobilize, the clever slogans its members chant or even the government ministers it persuades to resign. *Success is creating a real political alternative* — and then getting that alternative elected to power (emphasis added)." (Applebaum, 2014b)

In their most progressive instances, intellectual narratives thus invoke a vision of change identified with bringing voice and power back to citizens. They advocate public engagement related to and invested in the movements, but also the necessity of a more general cultural change for reclaiming ownership of society. Personal responsibility, on one side, and securing basic common ground for living in a society on the other, are the prerequisites for achieving a better society in which even "the enemy itself starts to use your language, so that your ideas form the foundation of the entire field" (Žižek). Accordingly, some voices advocate a more progressive approach, which would allow citizens to truly participate in the decision and policy-making where "institutional arrangements need to be left open to experimentation and revision according to what works for the project of the empowerment of humanity" (Roberto Unger in Keliher, 2012).

Conclusion

As we argued, irrespective of whether one sees intellectuals merely as messengers of other social groups or real actors of social change, their perception of enmity relations and their own positioning provides insight into possible directions of social change in society. Thus, we understand intellectuals as those actors who give meaning and visibility to enmity through their discourse and narratives. Arguably, the main enmity relations and distinctions identified here could be taken as a personification of the ideological clashes in the globalized contemporary world.

In such circumstances, several intellectuals place emphasis on their own role and responsibility. They stress the need to use their resources in order to identify and present the vision for the society, to employ what has conveniently been labelled as "*structural imagination* – imagination of how structural change takes place in history and of how we can understand the prevalence of the existing arrangements without vindicating their necessity or their authority" (Social Science Bites, 2014). What is more, they imply that the work of intellectuals thus appears to bring changes to the ideas and values which may seem "insignificant or peripheral until very different outcomes emerge from transformed assumptions about who and what matters, who should be heard and believed, who has rights" (Solnit, 2016).

In general, intellectuals seek greater mobilization of citizens through social movements and other forms of bottom-up engagement that need to be built into the core of the system. *Bringing power back to the people* is a leitmotif of their discourse. Their perception and perspective is clearly international, insofar as they see this empowerment as restrained in two ways – through geopolitical enmities depicting clashes between different levels of (inter)national organizations of states, and other structural/systemic enmities portraying

the inherent clashes of capitalist societies between the elites and the rest. As we have mentioned, the emphasis on racism within the Western discourse about climate change was arguably very important for understanding the standing points of the majority of the intellectuals, who implicitly tend to expect the West to enlighten and take care of the rest of the Earth. The vision of their desired society thus posits a more significant role for the state, which needs to develop a more balanced power structure in order to diminish inequality and allow for greater citizens' participation.

Yet, critical and attuned as they are to political and economic elites' use of power for their own (selfish) benefits, intellectuals still overall rarely question liberal democracy as such. Nor do they question its basis in the market economy, focusing instead on the *empowerment of humanity within this system*. Perhaps, as some aforementioned authors have claimed, it is precisely their comfortable position of leading mainstream intellectuals that might be preventing them from seeing and offering more radical alternatives to the system and imagining a different society. Nonetheless, insofar as this article contributes in identifying the basic mainstream positions and antagonisms in the contemporary intellectual discourses, it does recognize traces of more radical thinking that could emerge into mainstream public discourse via intellectual engagement amidst clashes that shake and shape the contemporary world.

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Neprijateljstvo u intelektualnom svetu: globalne perspektive i vizije

Apstrakt

U ovom radu se dotičemo percepcije neprijateljskih odnosa u skorašnjim online prilozima 20 globalnih 'zvezda' intelektualaca kao što su Habermas, Klajn, Žižek i drugi. Zabeležili smo dve vrlo opšte distinkcije; prva uključuje nekoliko geopolitičkih protivstavljanja kao što su Nemačka vs. ostatak EU, Rusija vs. Zapad i nacionalno vs. nadnacionalno, dok druga pravi razliku između većine i privilegovane nekolicine/elita. Tvrdimo da su savremeni intelektualci još uvek uticajne javne ličnosti i da su njihovi napori više usmereni ka osnaživanju i reformi društava kroz postojeći sistem nego na promociju i zagovaranje alternatia postojećem neoliberalnom društveno-ekonomskom poretku.

Ključne reči: Intelektualci, neprijateljstvo, javno, elite, promene