ZULFIKARPASIC'S PASSING: A TIME TO REFLECT ON THE IMPORTANT BUT DIFFICULT ROLE OF THE HYPERINTELLECTUAL

By Rory J. Conces
University of Nebraska at Omaha Fulbright Scholar, University of Pristina, Kosovo

Last, the intellectual is an insider, that is, someone who exhibits a certain mindfulness and commitment to the society in question. So the intellectual takes a critical stand and a caring attitude toward a society, but from within his or her own subjective situation within that society. Being empirically informed about the society is crucial to being engaged, but it is also important for the intellectual to be some-
shows him to have been a man of action. And his insiderism and virtuous being were shown in his concern for the future of the people of Bosnia whether Muslim or not. This is no better expressed than in the following passage: "The times and our situation require us to forgive one another, to rise above the level of insults and offence, if offence there has been, and to transcend all the regrettable things that have happened to us, for it is only in this way that we shall succeed." In short, fraternalism, reconciliation, and cooperation were a part of his caring attitude toward Bosnia and its people. No doubt his absence will be felt within Bosnia and its intellectual community.

Regardless of whether a strong case has been made for Zulfikarpasic the hyper intellectual, there is much work for such an intellectual within Bosnia and Kosovo, and elsewhere in the Balkans, given the degree of divisiveness that continues to be generated by ethnic nationalism and the strong interventionism employed by the International Community (IC). Since democratization is about inclusive-ely, entrenched divisiveness between peoples will tend to fragment groups in terms of, for example, class, gender, ethnicity, and religion, leading people to extreme political movements and parties, and anti-democratic forms of political participation.

Although people in every society can choose labels that parcel out group identities to individuals around them, thereby causing a certain degree of divisiveness and disharmony within their communities, some identities may be more troublesome than others. This is especially true when identities such as ethnicity and religion have become internalized within competing ideologies that have been linked to past violence. When group identities are formed to secure communities from their competitors, the formation of this communal cohesiveness often creates, for example, disdain for the ethnicity and religion of the other. This disdain is exhibited in the xenophobic psychology and chauvinistic morality that is sometimes prevalent within communities.

In the cases of Bosnia and Kosovo, however, the antagonism generated from this fear of and moral superiority over the other that played a part in the civicide of the 1990s and that continues to polarize Bosnian and Kosovar societies is also colliding with efforts from within those societies as well as from the IC to promote democracy building. Those with nationalist leanings see these attempts as incursions that weaken their self-determination and undermine their ethnic identity. On the other hand, those supportive of democratization view the meddling of nationalists as an attempt to undermine formal agreements and institutions that have been set in place to bring about peace, civil society building, and democratization.

It is in such an argument rich environment that we find intellectuals who are ideologues for their respective sides. Clearly, there is no shortage of social criticism and willingness to educate the public about the shortcomings of their opponents. But the continuous tension between, for example, ethnic nationalists and cosmopolitanism interventionists, has created an opening for the hyper intellectual as a transformative agent between these apparent rivals. It is the hyper intellectual, who through a reciprocating critique and defense of both the nationalist enterprise and strong interventionism, as well as being a man of action and a compassionate and empathic insider, strives to create a climate of understanding and an enlargement of moral space so as to reduce the divisiveness between opposing parties. Unlike the chauvinistic morality that shrinks or closes the space within which people navigate in respectful ways, the morality of the hyper intellectual is one that enlarges moral space by finding empathy (and hospitality) to be more important than simply tolerating the presence of the Other.

It might seem odd that empathy should be accentuated, especially since we seem to be living in an age of tolerance. But without the emotion of empathy, our moral norms and principles remain impotent. For our moral deliberations to come alive, we must "see" someone's situation as a morally relevant one. Empathy allows us to put ourselves in the place of the other, to develop an appreciation of how the other experiences his or her situation. Unfortunately, a person's inattentiveness or indifference to the moral circumstances of another's situation will have devastating results for passing moral judgments. This is particularly true when hatred and anger have overwhelmed the empathetic response. Perhaps those who are ideologues of ethnic nationalism fall victim to this worst kind of inattentiveness, a malevolent form that inhibits empathy and turns them against the other.

Of course, even the combative nationalist can regain a moral connection with the other through the reinvigoration of attentiveness or empathy. Becoming empathic allows the person to once again recognize the Other's moral significance and well-being. However, societies suffering under the weight of xenophobia and chauvinism of ethnic nationalism inflict on their members situations in which moral space may be compressed, if not closed. So how is it possible to expand or open moral space that will eventually allow people to see the morally relevant circumstances of others' situations? Of course, practical measure of intercultural education, storytelling, and moral imagination all play a role in expanding moral space. NGO's such as the network of Nansen Dialogue centers have been successful at bringing together different peoples in order to deconstruct stereotypes and to enhance understanding between them. Their investment in civil society building is in terms of re-establishing relationships on the interpersonal level. But the question remains, how is attentiveness to be triggered so that the programs undertaken by the Nansen Dialogue centers can stir up the empathic responses of its participants?

Perhaps it is occurs by an individual risking hospitality toward another. Hospitality is the receiving of a stranger, someone who may be disliked or even hated. This occurs to some degree when Nansen centers invite persons to participate in their programs, but more so when those same individuals apply what they have learned in their own communities. It is when they stray from the protective workshop and offer hospitality to others that they face the difficult challenge of re-establishing relationships with their neighbors.

However, this could also be the hyper intellectual's most important contribution. By not taking sides, the hyper intellectual is behaving courageously and taking a risk of extending an invitation to everyone as other. It is through defending and criticizing positions of all parties at some point that the hyper intellectual offers the gesture of hospitality. It is risking hospitality in its broadest sense that the hyper intellectual contributes to democracy building. Of course, I do not presume that the hyper intellectual can be the cure of all the political and social ills of the Balkans. In fact, the heavy price to be paid by the hyper intellectual is none other than estrangement. It is when colleagues do not respond to emails and return phone calls, producers cancel television interviews, editors ignore submissions, and officials of a university or other institutions question their loyalty and, thus, their usefulness that the impact of the hyper intellectual within civil society begins to shrink. Perhaps at some point a threshold is reached whereby the hyper intellectual is silenced.

This was not the fate of Zulfikarpasic. Zulfikarpasic was unique insofar as he was able to establish an institute and a loyal following that supported his efforts through the years. In doing so, however, he may have become less the hyper intellectual and more the ideologue, albeit one that crusaded for a united Bosnia and Herzegovina. Perhaps the effectiveness of any single hyper intellectual, including Zulfikarpasic, is short-lived, but the collective impact of a growing number of hyper intellectuals may have long-term consequences for democratization efforts. If enough of the right people within Bosnia and Kosovo become convinced by the hyper intellectual that the world is not black and white, these troublesome places may become more democratic and humane.