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# CHARLIE HEBDO ATTACK: AN ANALYSIS OF CONSEQUENCES AND THE ROLE OF POLITICAL ISLAM IN THE EU

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Pamir Halimzai Sahill<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** Was the attack on Charlie Hebdo offices in January 2015 an act of violence against media freedom or was it an act of revenge for presumed blasphemy? This article, employing a poststructuralist discourse analysis tries to find a broader meaning for Charlie Hebdo Attack (CHA). In this article, texts from EU, media, militant organisations and scholarly works are selected and it is argued that CHA was an act of political violence aimed at achieving certain political goals. It is claimed that post-CHA statements, narratives and discourses from EU or militant organisations create 'self/other' dichotomy as dividing practices which have certain power effects and implications. The 'identity/difference' debate is elaborated through existing discourses and scholarship showing that the 'self/other' dichotomy is multi-layered and multi-fold. This article analyses the role of political Islam in Europe through scholarly discourse and argues that the practices of Muslims in Europe are better understood if seen as political and not as religious or cultural. Finally, the article argues that the *security risk* narrative in Europe is magnified that brings the faulty *Clash of Civilisations* discourse into action which is in sharp contrast to the EU foundations and ideals of freedom and integration.

**Keywords:** Charlie Hebdo Attack (CHA), media freedom, reflectivism, poststructuralism, Foucault, discourse analysis, identity, identity/difference, EU.

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# 1 Overview

On January 07, 2015 two gunmen attacked offices of Charlie Hebdo – a satirical magazine – in Paris, killing 12 people. Media, quoting eyewitnesses, reported that at the time of shooting, the gunmen chanted ‘Allah is Great’ and ‘we have avenged the Prophet Muhammad’ in Arabic (BBC 2015) because Charlie Hebdo was planning to publish cartoons of the prophet of Islam<sup>2</sup>. French media released names of two brothers – Cherif Kouachi and Said Kouachi – involved in the attack. Next day, a gunman killed a policewoman in Paris suburb of Montrouge. On January 09, another gunman, Amedy Coulibaly, ‘took several people hostage at a kosher supermarket at Porte de Vincennes in the east of Paris after a shootout,’ and threatened to kill all hostages unless Kouachi brothers – who were hiding in a café – were allowed to go free (BBC 2015). All three gunmen were finally killed. Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) claimed responsibility for the attack (BBC 2015).

In the wake of events in Paris, French president François Hollande named attackers as ‘terrorists and killers’ and appealed the French people to join hands to defend ‘democracy, freedom and pluralism’ (Hollande 2015). Former French president Nicolas Sarkozy said it was an attack against the ‘civilisation’ and that people must unite against ‘barbarism’ (Sarkozy 2015). Many world leaders condemned the attack as an assault on liberty and press freedom (Vale 2015, The Spectator 2015, The Economist 2015). While Pope Francis defended freedom of expression he also stressed on its limits and political correctness (Francis 2015). Journalists, cartoonists and bloggers as well as masses in France and across the world showed solidarity with Charlie Hebdo and published articles and cartoons defending freedom of speech. Many identified themselves with French phrase *Je Suis Charlie*<sup>3</sup> (The Telegraph 2015, The Guardian 2015). On January 11, many world leaders as well as almost three million people rallied across France to express unity and to defend liberty and the right of free expression (BBC 2015). The next day, thousands of people under the banner of Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West (PEGIDA)<sup>4</sup> protested in Dresden against attack on Charlie Hebdo (Jackson 2015).

Framing of Charlie Hebdo Attack (CHA<sup>5</sup>) as an assault on freedom of expression, however, is problematic. That is why, this article assesses whether it was an attack on freedom, press, expression or speech or it was an act carrying broader meaning than that? As noted, the attackers claimed that their attack was an act of revenge for Prophet Muhammad – keeping that in view, the article evaluates the claim and looks into motives and objectives of such acts of violence which are not highlighted in the superficial discourse of mainstream media or at times are presented in reduced form thus restricting broader and comprehensive representations and interpretations. Furthermore, it looks into the consequences of such attacks and finally analyses the role of political Islam in the context of frontier-less European Union (EU) to see if it is a

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<sup>2</sup> In 2011 Charlie Hebdo had published cartoons of Prophet Muhammad. Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) operating in Yemen issued a hit-list in March 2013 which included Stéphane Charbonnier of Charlie Hebdo (Inspire 2013) who was killed in the attack on Charlie Hebdo offices. Furthermore, the magazine came under threats and attacks in the past as well (The Economist 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Trans. ‘I am Charlie.’

<sup>4</sup> Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West is a German far-right political organisation, its German name is *Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes* and is abbreviated as PEGIDA. It was formed in October 2014 and demands strict immigration laws in Germany and Europe. The organisation began rallying on weekly basis in Dresden since October 2014 and at times the number of participants in marches has reached to 25000 (see: Jackson 2015).

<sup>5</sup> Charlie Hebdo Attack will be abbreviated as CHA from this point in the rest of the article.

security problem or otherwise. Politicians and media see CHA and similar acts of violence as a *problem* that needs to be *resolved* at any case. It is, however, argued that such approach itself is problematic and that an alternative theoretical and methodological International Relations' (IR) framework is necessary to provide a better understanding and see how official, opposition and media discourses construct various and at times, paradoxical realities.

## 2 Theory and methodology

This article employs a poststructuralist theoretical approach, mainly because rationalist and positivist tools of analyses do not delineate CHA and its consequences in efficient and comprehensive forms. For example, a bulk of statements from mainstream media, EU politicians and governments as well as some analysts reduce CHA to a level that it becomes merely an act of *religious terrorism* targeting media freedom. Post-CHA dominant discourse analysed in this article shows that in order to protect liberty from the 'evil' threats and acts of 'terrorism', the EU, European governments and media all feel the need of collective security measures. The problem-solving approaches, as Cox argues, see the world 'with the prevailing social and power relationships' aiming to address the issues so that the relationships and institutions 'work smoothly' (Cox 1981, 128-129).

When it comes to terrorism, such kind of approaches are neither new nor confined to individual acts like CHA. In fact, after September 11, 2001, the dominant discourse in the US and Europe functions in the same way and adheres to problem-solving, preventive and securitising strategies. Since that time, leaders and many scholars – seeing, understanding and analysing global politics from essentialist and foundationalist standpoints and implying causalities – have come up with discourses discussing why and how important it is to form a global alliance to fight against terrorism (Blair 2006). Some try to find ways to prevent violent crime and terrorist attacks (Bjørge 2013) and some conclude that to stop and end suicide attacks, the US should reduce militarily intervening in other countries unless it is unavoidable due to serious threats to national interests (Pape and Feldman 2010).

It is argued that rationalist perspectives and positivist epistemological convictions provide a 'very limited view of international politics' and the causality that they entail, results into reductionism (Dornelles 2002) which ultimately informs shallow and paradoxical discourses that not only shape the views of the populations but also – in the context of governmental practice – further reinforce and strengthen them. This process, at the end, does not even serve the problem-solving purpose but rather masks important phenomena and due to its dominance, suppresses alternative meanings and perspectives and that is what happened after CHA. Once the leaders and the media portrayed and represented CHA as an act of terrorism, it enraged European societies which, endowed leaders with authority and legitimacy to fight against it. Such representations and post-CHA discourse, however, is problematic. That is why, this article – ontologically speaking – sees CHA as a political act having a broader meaning and motives that transcend frontier-less EU and other states.

Methodologically, this paper is using discourse analysis as a framework to understand CHA as a political act with broad meaning and explores the post-CHA arena constructed through media discourse. The reason is, to put it in Der Derian's (1989) words:

International relations requires an intertextual approach, in the sense of critical inquiry into an area of thought where there is no final arbiter of truth, where meaning is derived from an interrelationship of texts and power is implicated by the problem of language and other signifying practices (6).

In addition, as positivists may assume, social reality does not exist *out there*, but is rather formed and made through representations that ‘are not descriptions of a world of facticity, but are ways of making facticity’ (Shapiro 1989, 13-14). The justification for utilising discourse analysis, precisely is due to the reason that texts, statements and words are built into narratives and discourses so that their interpretation gives a representation of the social reality in an inclusive way. In order to find better explanation and answers to questions raised in the previous section of the article, this study follows an accurate and specific method.

Texts for this study are selected using the *second* delimiting model provided by Hansen which is about utilising texts from official or government, opposition and media sources for analysis (2006, 57). In this regard, most of the texts are selected from the day Paris events took place and post-CHA statements, agreements and decisions of the leaders. In addition, some texts from as organisations (like Al-Qaida) are also be used for better understanding and explanation.

The reading and analysis of those texts enables this article to see how certain statements are selected and constructed in media and what those narratives represent. For this purpose, the selected texts from various media outlets are analysed and a broader meaning (Neumann 2008, 61) for CHA is explored. Second, based on the political representation of CHA and writings of Muslim scholars, the motives of militant organisations and significance of such attacks for them are analysed. Finally, the article uses existing literature to explore the role of political Islam in context of the EU.

### 3 CHA and the narratives

As noted in the descriptive timeline of events in the beginning of the article, many EU and non-EU leaders and media outlets interpreted CHA as a terrorist attack on freedom of expression. Multiple news stories, opinion articles, statements and cartoons (briefly discussed in the beginning) established the view that the attack demonstrated nothing but to silence the practice of free expression particularly in France and the EU in general (The Economist 2015, The Guardian 2015, The Spectator 2015, The Telegraph 2015, Jackson 2015, Vale 2015).

Addressing the nation, French president François Hollande stressed that this act of violence had nothing to do with Muslims and appealed his country fellows to stand united, mobilise and be vigilant to defend the ideals of liberalism (Hollande 2015). Former French president Nicolas Sarkozy, however, asked ‘civilized men’ to fight against ‘barbarism’ (Sarkozy 2015) while far-right politician and opposition leader Marine Le Pen said ‘we have to have courage to face reality; terrorism is only a means of Islamic fundamentalism. Behind terrorism is an ideology which developed in our land, our cities’ (Fleming 2015). She said that due to ‘fear and political correctness’ France is in denial of the reality of Islamic fundamentalism. In an interview with BBC journalist Fleming, Le Pen suggested that Schengen agreement should be suspended because without ‘controlling our territory’ the problem of fundamentalism cannot be addressed (Ibid., 2015). She constructed a ‘self/other’ dichotomy by saying that the vision of life of fundamentalists is ‘not ours, their values are not ours, their way of life is not ours. Those who live in our country must follow our rules, our way of life.’ She suggested that ‘massive, uncontrolled immigration’ must be stopped (Ibid., 2015).

Apart from French government and opposition, leaders from EU member states condemned CHA and showed their sympathy and solidarity with France. While reaffirming that Europe will protect the values of pluralism and liberalism, German chancellor Angela Merkel made statements which were aimed at PEGIDA and its anti-Islam marches. She said ‘Islam belongs to Germany,’ and that Berlin is doing everything to integrate migrants into German society ‘regardless of their religion’ (Ghouse 2015).

It is argued that the reaction from the EU somewhat resembles that of two French politicians – Sarkozy and Le Pen. EU commissioner for immigration and home affairs Dimitris Avramopoulos said in a press release ‘Europe must be united to defend its values and freedoms – including freedom of expression and of the press – against those who reject our way of life; those who hate democracy’ (Avramopoulos 2015). He said that events like CHA are a challenge to the EU and beyond, suggesting that EU member states should cooperate and coordinate to end money laundering that finances terrorism, prevent radicalisation and to set up a system to collect passenger data. ‘*Charlie n'est pas mort. L'Europe est Charlie*<sup>6</sup>, (Ibid., 2015)’ he concluded.

On January 19, Foreign Ministers from EU member states met in Brussels to discuss strategies to prevent further attacks. After the meeting, EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini announced in a press briefing that EU member states will launch anti-terror projects. She said ministers agreed to take multiples measures like:

[O]n one side, to have security attachés in the European Union Delegations in relevant countries. This means regular contact among professionals on our side and on the country that is hosting the delegation's side to develop cooperation on security issues and counterterroris[m] issue[s]. On the other side, the second thing that I want to do is to improve our communication with Arabic speaking populations, be it in the European Union – we have large communities that are Arabic speaking<sup>7</sup> – and with the larger Arab communities in the World. I think we need to improve our capacity to speak Arabic, read Arabic, [and] explain to the Arabic-speaking population our policies and also to listen to the messages that are coming from the Arab world (Mogherini 2015).

Federica Mogherini said that the ministers have agreed to ask European Parliament (EP) to ‘work on the passengers name record, the PNR,’ and to increase cooperation to prevent financing of terrorist acts, not only within EU but with other countries like the US, Canada, Australia, Japan, Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and UN agencies (Ibid., 2015).

Earlier in a meeting with the delegation of European Jewish Congress (EJC) in Strasbourg Mogherini had said that in terms of security, there should be no divide between EU’s internal and external actions, and that:

The EU is built on a belief that we can combat cross-border phenomena – from combatting the rise of anti-Semitic incitement on the internet, to tackling extremist ideology abroad, one of the priorities in developing a comprehensive strategy to combat emerging threats in the Middle East (Mogherini 2015).

The texts quoted here from media reports and EU political leaders’ statements show how the statements were made and how they finally resulted in a policy discourse. In the beginning news stories suggested that CHA was nothing but an assault on media freedom, so was the initial response of EU and non-EU leaders. Afterwards, on policy level however, EU leaders agreed to combat *terrorism* by taking further security measures. It is argued that the reading of media reports, statements from government officials and EU leaders makes way to advance the debate to identity/difference.

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<sup>6</sup> *Trans. Charlie did not die. Europe is Charlie.*

<sup>7</sup> *This line ‘we have large..... speaking’ was omitted in the text of the statement issued online. However, Mogherini says it in the video version of the statement.*



## 4 'Identity/difference' in post-CHA EU discourse

In 1990s, as (Hülse 2006) argues, many IR scholars 'discovered that the questions of collective identity are important to the understanding of international politics'. Hülse maintains that among the aspects of identity where agreement existed first was that, collective identities are socially constructed, and second, identity and difference imply each other (Ibid., 398). This means that collective identities are mutually constitutive (Clarke 2008), or in the words of (Lebow 2008) 'the 'us' is maintained at the expense of 'others'' (Ibid., 475). Furthermore, sometimes the identity construction takes place as 'us/them' binary and/or sometimes it results into the demonisation of the 'other' (Ibid., 474) through which, dominant or hegemonic collective identity seeks homogenisation. In this regard (Connolly 1989) gives a good example of Christianity that how it constitutes itself as the universal and superior religion thus constructing its barbaric, savage and pagan 'other'. In an effort to create a homogenous social structure, there are two ways: either to conquer and destroy the 'sinful other' or to convert it to Christianity (Ibid., 328). This means that the political process of identity formation entails divisions and sub-divisions in its detail. This process of identity/difference formation and representation constructs borders in a social setup (Neumann 1999, 36) which not only make the 'other' a 'monstrous evil – an evil more monstrous than state-centred violence because it threatens to expose self-subverting characteristics in the global system unless it itself is defined to be the monstrous source of that subversion,' (Connolly 1989, 334) but also further exposes the 'other' to both coercive and productive power relations (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* 1991) in an effort to veil the contradictions within the system. For example, in some states – like Pakistan – due to the *problem* of militancy, government has created a 'self/other' dichotomy by saying that extremism and terrorism are foreign and have roots beyond the borders of the state. Government argues that the 'foreign' ideology of militancy is pursued by a minority within the state and that military operations against the minority residing in the tribal areas of the country as well as de-radicalisation (or normalisation) of captured militants will continue. This way, not only the 'other' (in this case, Pashtuns in Pakistan) are killed indiscriminately, monitored, observed and scrutinized continuously but also the state is covering its dominant discourse – that is itself responsible for *radicalising* members of society – sponsorship of transnational militancy and massacres in the northwest of the country. Furthermore, demonising the 'other' speeds up the process of converting the state into a tightly controlled, security entity. Putting it in context of the EU and keeping in view media reports and statements of government officials, opposition and EU leaders, it is argued that after CHA four scenarios of identity/difference emerge in the EU.

First is the 'self/other' dichotomy within the borders France which is represented by the statements of Marine Le Pen. Her 'self/other' binary is twofold. One is the 'French self' which is threatened by the 'Islamist-migrant-other' and the second one is the 'French self' which is destabilised and unable to cope with the problem of fundamentalism because it is located and is part of the 'EU other'. That is why, in Le Pen's view the solution is to freeze Schengen agreement and to stop immigration.

Second scenario presented by Sarkozy brings back *Clash of Civilizations* (Huntington 1996) into the debate by constituting a 'civilised/barbaric' conflict which does not recognise the geographical boundaries within EU or in the world and which constructs two worlds facing each other in oppositional and conflictual relationship. Sarkozy uses the term 'civilised men' that creates an exclusion of women and other genders of the society from his equation.

Third setting is provided by German chancellor Angela Merkel which is confined to German borders. Facing the challenge of PEGIDA marches Merkel owned Islam as a religion that

belongs to Germany however, her 'self/other' binary emphasizes on the integration of all 'others' into 'German-self society' regardless of their religion. In Foucauldian terms (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* 1991), it shows how German government wants to use the technology of productive power to normalise and discipline the 'other' in a way that it becomes compatible with the spatio-temporal ideals of the 'self'.

Fourth and the most important representation of 'self/other' binary is set by the EU. It is the most important scenario due to two reasons. One, the 'self/other' formation takes place on a supra-national level with the construction of the supra-national European identity and second, based on that, a discourse takes shape which essentially is 'language in action' (Danaher, Schirato and Webb 2000, 31). Once such discourse dominates in a society, the authorities or governments (in this case the EU) then have the opportunity to regulate, control and direct thoughts and actions (Ibid., 31-32) of populations and exercise their sovereign power through policies and directives. Immediately after CHA, EU leaders issued statements condemning the attack, vowing to protect citizens and defend members of the EU against any threats. The statement by the Commissioner of Immigration and Internal Affairs assigned *Charlie* identity to the entire EU thus reaffirming the frontier-less structure of the Union and recommended a set of measures to address the problem of 'radicalisation'.

Post-CHA statements issued by EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini are of high importance and upon analysis, show three layers of 'self/other' formation. The first and second layers of identity/difference are located within EU. One is the 'self' which is driven by its values and beliefs and will do everything to protect the 'Jewish-other' which is challenged and threatened by the 'evil-other'. Second layer of 'self/other' is within EU which Mogherini said is predominantly 'Arabic-speaking-other'. This way, in the frontier-less EU where Schengen agreement is in force and individuals of the union can freely move, reside and work in any member state, borders within member states, cities, towns and neighbourhoods are formed. In other words, EU Schengen states may not have frontiers but the 'self/Arab' dichotomy is a phenomenon that creates social borders among individuals and communities; such borders are embodied and personified. The third and final layer of 'self/other' formation transcends the geographical boundaries of the EU. This layer represents the 'EU-self' and 'Arab-other' binary which is threatening the security of the union.

In order to deal with looming threat(s) from Arabic speaking territories, EU member states agreed to take measures like appointing security professionals (i.e. intelligence officials), cooperating with allies to prevent the flow of finances to militants organisations; asking European Parliament to collect passenger data (which paves the way for profiling and surveillance) and to learn Arabic to *engage* the Arabic speaking world and communities in a dialogue and to understand 'their' *messages*. It is argued that Mogherini's statements are dividing practices isolating the 'Arabic-speaking-other' from the 'European-self'. These dividing practices not only allow EU to influence thoughts and actions of the populations but also gives it power and authority to decide matters. Furthermore, the formation of 'evil other' – threatening the Union and Jewish communities there – in essence blankets the internal discrepancies and flaws within EU system.

The 'us/them' divide within the EU and beyond serves interests of the militant organisations like Al-Qaida and Islamic State<sup>8</sup> that are waging a transnational war; as well as of Eurosceptic political groups (O'Hehir 2015); for example the political parties that Nigel Farage and Marine

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<sup>8</sup> Also called *Islamic State of the Iraq and the Levant* or *Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS)*. The group formally changed the name to *Islamic State (IS)* after announcing its Caliphate (*Khilafah* or *Khilafat* in Arabic) in June, 2014.



Le Pen represent who want to break away from the EU to establish sovereign nation-state structures. The 'us/evil-them' dichotomy is not only contradictory to the EU efforts and ideals of integration but in fact strengthens Eurosceptic discourse especially at a time when far-right political parties and their manifestos are gaining acceptance and when the economic situation in some EU states is fragile. In order to establish and elaborate how militant organisations are benefited through social boundaries within EU, it is important to understand the motives and objectives behind militant attack on Charlie Hebdo and the message it delivers.

## 5 Was CHA only a matter of revenge?

As quoted in the beginning of the article, the two gunmen who attacked Charlie Hebdo premises had claimed that they have taken revenge for the cartoons of Prophet Muhammad. AQAP, which had threatened to attack Charlie Hebdo journalists in 2013, claimed responsibility for the attack. Looking at the media reports and some initial statements, one can simply say that Charlie Hebdo was attacked so that its journalists are punished to death for the blasphemy because it had published cartoons in the past and was going to publish in future. However, it is argued that AQAP or the three gunmen who targeted Charlie Hebdo and a supermarket did not do so *only* to defend Prophet Muhammad. Al-Qaida and other militant organizations operating under the banner and ideology of political Islam have had launched similar attacks in the past as well. Among them the most important one was the attack in New York and Pentagon in September, 2001 that is widely known as 9/11. That attack, culminated in US-led 'war on terror' which has ever since spread its tentacles to the Middle East and Africa. This article claims that CHA was a political act of violence having political motives and objectives. In this regard, analysis and understanding of phenomena of political violence needs utilisation of academic, Islamic and militant organizations' literature as well as media sources.

As the events in Paris were unfolding, media outlets began to publish stories on lives and connections of three attackers namely Cherif Kouachi, Said Kouachi and Amedy Coulibaly. Almost all reports suggested that they had criminal background, were known for Islamist militant activities like recruiting young men for a militant group fighting in Iraq and had connections with AQAP based in Yemen. Reports and analysts suggested that Kouachi brothers were born, raised and *radicalised* in Paris. Cherif Kouachi and Amedy Coulibaly had met in prison after they were convicted and jailed for their support of Islamist militancy while Said Kouachi was trained for attacks in Yemen where he had met Al-Qaida leader Anwar al Awlaki and another militant Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab who was convicted and jailed in the US after his attempt to explode a Nigerian plane in 2009. Reports said that all three attackers were radicalised by Djamel Beghal, a Muslim cleric who was jailed in France on terrorism charges for 10 years (BBC 2015, Coker and Almasmari 2015, Hosenball 2015, Chrisafis 2015, Yahya 2015, Bahout 2015).

Media reports cited above represent how French officials, whether in prison or in the society, failed to prevent CHA despite charging, convicting and jailing two of the attackers. Media reports discussed the social conditions in which three attackers were living and how they were involved in crimes. Viewing it from Foucauldian standpoint, it reveals how social conditions, structures, institutions and power relations are involved in objectifying and subjectivating (Neal 2009) modern subjects. In case of attackers, the teachings of Beghal and media reports on Iraq war are of prime importance (Bahout 2015, Yahya 2015, BBC 2015) because based on that the attackers established connections with AQAP. Furthermore, reports show that militant organisations are well-connected with their members and continue their struggle to wage war against those who are their ideological opponents.

The reason lies in the ‘self/other’ debate on the side of those militant groups who are fighting against their own people and the west with a mission to establish Islamic state across all predominantly Muslim countries. The concept of fighting against those who are different in the Muslim countries resembles the ‘identity/difference’ example Connolly provided (1989, 328; as cited before: Christianity against the ‘savage, pagan other’).

The ‘self/other’ dichotomy presented and promoted by militant organisations has its roots in the academic literature and teachings of Muslim scholars. For example, Sayyid Qutb and Abu A’la Maudoodi in their works (*Milestones* 1981, 2006, and *The Process of Islamic Revolution* 1955) present their ideas of *Ummah* i.e. Muslims of the world share common religion and thus are part of one Ummah or loosely one civilization or one community. This concept forms the basis of brotherhood, one Ummah and advances with the concept of shared homeland which is one Islamic Caliphate or loosely state. During 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries scholars created narratives pertaining to identity and concept of nation in Islam, according to which, race, ethnicity, colour, geographical location and language do not determine nationality and/or identity of a human; rather its religion i.e. Islam which makes all Muslims of the world one nation (Iqbal 1934; 1986; 2006). This way, a large binary is formed which divides the earth into two worlds. One is the self, Islamic or Muslim world that is embedded together – regardless any geographical border or location, and the second world – defined and identified through religions – constitutes a large ‘other’.

These statements and narratives took form of Islamist discourse which consequently strengthened the concept of one Ummah and brotherhood in many Muslim countries and that is what Al-Qaida, Al-Shabab, Ansar al-Dine (AAD), Boko Haram, Taliban and now IS; as well as political organizations like Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Salafis, and Islamist political parties in Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and elsewhere follow.

Based on that discourse, Osama bin Laden – leader of Al-Qaeda who was killed by US Special Forces on May 02, 2011 in Pakistan – was urging people in predominantly Muslim states to fight against their regimes and unite as one Ummah. He was observing uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa and praised those developments, stating:

We watch with you this great historic event, [...] and we share with you joy and happiness and delight and felicity. [...] We are happy for what makes you happy, and we are sad for what makes you sad. So, congratulations to you for your victories (Wilner 2011).

Following him, Ayman Al-Zawahiri – the current leader of Al-Qaida – also repeatedly called on Muslims to fight in order to liberate their lands (Ahram Online) and then unite to form a unified and one Caliphate. In essence, the ‘identity/difference’ dichotomy is further strengthened when for establishing Islamic Caliphate armed struggle begins. It is argued that the ‘self/other’ binary envisaged by militant Islamist organisations is inward and outward. The inward ‘other’ is defined as every force, group or community which is either resisting or is not compatible with the discourse and practice of establishing an Islamic Caliphate. This oppositional ‘other’ can include the state, government system and institutions as well. Islamist militant groups refuse liberal democracy as a system of governance and aspire a government that is based on the teachings of Quran and Prophet Muhammad. The outward ‘self/other’ binary is beyond borders and represents forces, communities and countries who oppose, struggle or fight against the creation of Islamic state. Quite often, militant groups like Al-Qaida and Taliban describe the west as occupiers and ask their followers to attack western interests, cities and people (Ali 2009, Desai 2007, Fatah 2008). In this sense, the western or European

'other' is represented as an oppressor and evil. This way, militant organisations try to show the Muslims that their fight against the west is a retaliatory, defensive and resistance-based.

It is, therefore, argued that CHA was not just an attack aimed to punish journalists and cartoonists who were accused of committing blasphemy. In fact, it was an act of violence having deep roots in the political ideology and discourse of Islamist militants. For them Prophet Muhammad is a symbol of the Islamic system governance which they want to establish and impose on populations. The attackers who targeted Paris magazine premises in January, as rightly argued by (O'Hehir 2015), targeted the pluralistic liberal society of France to reveal and construct divisions which can serve their political interests. And to some extent, AQAP succeeded in that because the immediate response from EU leaders and later on, the official statements represent the re-production of a larger 'self/other' divide. Militant organisations take advantage of such divisions by gaining sympathy of those who are officially constructed as 'other' within European communities. Furthermore, such official identity/difference fissures provide foundations for Muslims in Europe to alienate themselves from societies, governments and states, as whole.

Until now, it is clear that EU and militant organisations construct and deepen the 'identity/difference' dichotomy through their discourse and certain practices. In other words, acts of violence like CHA reinvigorate and refresh the 'us/them' divide which is inherent in the discourses of both the EU and militants. It was argued that following CHA, the EU discourse accused the 'alien-other-within' and 'outside'. But apart from creating inside/outside social and political borders, the EU discourse also instils fear in the societies by predicting a looming threat of terrorism that needs to be tackled. The analysis so far showed that when such identity/difference cracks are made visible by discursively constructing the 'evil' side of the 'other' then, it is easy for the governments to legitimise their *future* actions under the pretext of providing security.

However, a key question in this regard is whether the EU really faces threat of fundamentalism and terrorism from *within* or is it a way to construct an enemy and put the blame on it for Union's internal failures, inconsistencies and contradictions? In order to find an answer to this question, it is necessary to look at the scholarly debate concerning notions of extremism and fundamentalism of Muslims in Europe to know where EU discourse on 'radicalisation of Muslims' takes roots from. It is argued that a discourse is not formed in vacuum. No matter how dominant a discourse is, it always is, as Foucault argues, historical and transmits power (1980) that influences people.

## 6 Role of political Islam in the EU

Scholars argue that Muslims are the largest religious minority in Europe (Cesari 2007, Pauly 2004) and by country the largest number of Muslims are based in France (Hamel 2002). Majority of Muslims came to Europe as migrants during 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. As far as Islamist movements or Islamism in the West is concerned, there are two predominant views. Adhering to the first view, scholars agree that the first generation of Muslims peacefully coexisted in Europe however the first phase of radical Islam's penetration into European societies occurred during 'the late 1980s and the first half of 1990s' (Vidino 2011) when

Muslim immigrants established jihadi<sup>9</sup> base in Europe. Vidino describes the logic for the establishment of the base in Europe:

Seeking to avoid repression in their native countries, veterans of the Afghan jihad against the Soviet Union and members of various militant organizations from the Middle East and North Africa sought, and in most cases received, political asylum in several European countries. Europe's freedoms, the presence of large diaspora communities, and a lack of attention from local authorities made Europe an ideal logistical base from which militants could continue their activities (Ibid., 1).

In Vidino's view, Muslim militants' base in European countries evolved into a network of having a well-organised structure and chain of command, however, they did not intend to target Europe. The second phase of *jihadism* in Europe was shaped when Osama bin Laden established Al-Qaida as a transnational militant organisation. Under the banner of Al-Qaida's ideology, all Muslim militant groups united to fight together 'against both secular regimes in the Muslim world and their protectors in the West' (Ibid., 2). He argues that although post-9/11 military actions damaged Al-Qaida, but the linkages between extremist groups in Europe increased. Due to the increased linkage, individuals belonging to various groups but sharing Al-Qaida and its affiliate groups' worldview, travelled to Pakistan's tribal areas for training and returned to Europe and the US to launch attacks (Ibid., 25-27).

Keeping in view the rise and consolidation of extremist groups in Europe, Bassam Tibi in his work (Political Islam, World Politics and Europe 2008) claims of a 'civilisational conflict' within Europe between European and Muslim civilisation. While disassociating himself from Huntington's notion of the *Clash of Civilisations*, Tibi, however, does not deny the existence of a conflict which has historical roots (Ibid., 164). The main contrast between Vidino and Tibi's views is that former sees connections beyond borders of Europe and argues Al-Qaida and like-minded groups' worldviews were *imported* by certain groups of Muslims to the Europe to fight against the west; the latter however postulates that Muslims within Europe strive for 'a free space of Islam within Europe' (Ibid., 162) and confirms that the Muslims of Europe are 'embedded in the networking of transnational religion that shapes the worldview and the action of the people'. Tibi maintains that political Islam is putting secular Westphalian order into question. While Europe accepts Muslim immigrants as European citizens, Islamists and Salafis teach Europe-born Muslims that 'they are members of an imagined Ummah, not a European citizenry' (Ibid. 166-167). Tibi adds that Islamists seek to re-establish their Islamic rule and supremacy through de-westernisation and thus a competitive model of globalisation. To some extent a similar view is shared by Meghnad Desai who sees the ideology of global Islamism as the foundation for the activities of Islamist militant groups. This global agenda – predominantly executed by Al-Qaida – confronts the entire world through acts of terror. Global Islamists call Muslims of the world to defend their Ummah (Desai 2007, 97) and to establish a worldwide Islamic governing system.

Since the war in Afghanistan, Iraq and Yemen disrupted Al-Qaida's network and many of its main leaders – including Osama bin Laden – were killed, the importance of that organisation for the revival of Islamic rule (as viewed by the scholars quoted above) has shifted towards IS that emerged in Iraq and Syria and captured large swathes of land during 2014. In the first issue

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<sup>9</sup> The word *jihadi* is used by (Vidino 2011) as a synonym to 'holy war' which is misleading because *jihad* in Arabic means struggle. In context, struggle can be peaceful and violent. The word for violent or armed struggle in Arabic is 'qitaal'.

of magazine called Dabiq (Dabiq 2014), IS declared Caliphate (*Khilafah* in Arabic) in Iraq and Syria which aims at the ‘unification of Ummah’ (Ibid., 38) as well as destruction of democracy.

Scholars of the second view however think that radicalisation is a consequence of the marginalisation of Muslims in Europe. For example, Maha Yahya argues that Muslims of North African descent living in France ‘suffer from considerable inequalities’ (Yahya 2015). In Nielsen’s view ‘the histories, policies and legal structures of the various European countries impose varying constraints on the way Muslim communities and individuals orient themselves’ (2007, 42). By constructing a typology of Muslims’ sense of community in Europe, Nielsen shows that as a result of social marginalisation some gangs of Muslim youths have appeared in a number of districts in European cities. At one side if there are young Muslims who obtain European education and become part of the society; there are Muslims, on the other side, who are involved in organisations and are actively taking part in Islamic activities in order to secure social and political space for themselves in Europe. Apart from other groups, there is a ‘small minority’ of Muslims who want to take ‘radical Islamist political action’ (Ibid., 43). Additionally, Chouki El Hamel in an article in the context of French immigrant Muslims writes that in any country ‘laws are made to serve people including minorities; therefore France has to accommodate the new cultural demands of a significant and crucial community’ (Ibid., 299). With a somewhat similar but interpretivist approach Jocelyne Cesari conceptualises that the relations of domination have in fact placed Islam and West in opposition and that a discourse is imposed on Muslims which at the end makes Islam a security risk (Cesari 2007, 49-53).

The literature reviewed here represents a strong ‘self/other’ representation on both sides i.e. Europe and Muslims. This ‘self/other’ dichotomy, in some scholars’ (cited above) view is the product of European countries’ policies towards Muslims. However, some scholars suggest that it’s not Europe but Muslims (both within Europe and abroad) who are creating oppositional relationship with the West as whole to reach their goal of establishing a worldwide Caliphate. In order to address the problem of Muslims’ integration in Europe (Tibi 2008) suggests a complete shift in Muslims’ ideas and worldviews which he terms as *Europeanisation of Islam*, others like (Pauly 2004) require efforts to be made on both Muslims’ and majority Europeans’ side to coexist peacefully; while some suggest (Hamel 2002, Nielsen 2007) the creation of cultural and social space for Muslims in Europe.

It is argued that the ‘self/other’ binary is magnified by the dominant discourse in the EU which further deepens the divide. Many scholars analysing the role of Islam or Muslims in Europe in essence do not view the actions, activities and narratives of Muslims politically; rather they are seen in religious and cultural contexts. In fact, all actions (even those with a pretext of religion) are political; in some ways some narratives and actions take form of resistance to the existing dominant discourse in Europe. For example, it is a political act on behalf of government to ban veil or *hijab*, the response to such action is also political. If some women, despite the ban, wear a full veil, they are in fact defying the law and protesting for their right of *free choice*. Similarly, the struggle of Muslims for wider space in Europe is also political; they exploit the ideas of multiculturalism and liberalism and demand a space where they can represent and identify themselves freely. Furthermore, the idea of establishment a Caliphate does not exist within Europe and thus does not qualify to be labelled as a security risk.

## 7 Conclusion

This article, using a reflectivist, or precisely, a poststructuralist approach analysed CHA through discourse analysis by selecting texts from media and statements of EU leaders and militant organisations. The article argued that in contrast to what is reported by media, CHA



was a political act of violence aimed at gaining support of Muslims based in Europe. Based on academic work of scholars, this article analysed the formation of ‘identity/difference’ as a result of official statements from EU leaders. It was discussed how the construction of ‘self/other’ dichotomy within EU and abroad takes multi-layered forms.

Furthermore, through reading and analysis of ideas, concepts, statements and literature of Muslim scholars and militant organisations it was briefly shown how the concept of Ummah and Caliphate evolved and how militant organisations like Al-Qaida use such concepts to achieve their goals and are constructing a broad ‘identity/difference’ scene. The article elaborated two strands of scholarship analysing the role of Islam within Europe i.e. scholars who think that global Islamist ideology was imported to Europe and scholars who view marginalisation as a source of radicalisation of Muslims in Europe.

This article concludes that rationalist and positivist approaches do not represent and analyse events like CHA in a broad and comprehensive sense and are not effective in understanding the dividing practices as a result of dominant discourses. Such discourses not only cover or veil flaws in the governance structures of the EU but also provide means and reasons of alienation of Muslims living in Europe. Additionally, positivist approaches analysing attacks and problems of Muslims’ integration in Europe or threats to Europe reduce complex phenomena to micro levels and fall short of paying attention to the details – which are not only important to understand those phenomena but also uncover the hidden consequences of reductionist and exclusive discourses for societies.

Finally, it is concluded that the EU, as a supranational entity has long strived for further integration and Europeanisation but as a result of magnification of Islamist security risk, the EU authorities will end up with serving interests of far-right political groups and will introduce security apparatuses which are in sharp contrast with the idea of freedom which will thus have negative consequences for the process of EU integration.

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