

REFLECTIONS ON IDENTITY AND TERRORISM: A TALE OF MISFIT

Linda Peasah Owusu¹, Thomas Prehi Botchway², Elijah Tukwariba Yin³ and
Constantine Kojo Mawuena Kudzedzi⁴

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the relationship between discursive exclusion practices and terrorism. The changing linguistic meaning of civilisation, the structure of modern discourse and the objectivity of knowledge claims undergirding western civilisation have contributed immensely to the construction of the idea of terrorism. The paper argues that these expressions of self and practices define the individual and give credence to their existence. Using some examples of violent acts, the paper illuminates the biases in the usage of the term terrorism and its implications on the apparatuses adopted to minimise it.

Keywords: Identity, Muslim, Civilisation, Terrorism, Counter-Terrorism

1 Center for Migration Studies, University of Ghana, Legon

2 Department of Political Science Education, University of Education, Winneba

3 Faculty of Law, University of Cape Coast

4 Faculty of Law, University of Cape Coast

Introduction: Re-conceptualising the world and intellectual formations

A question as simple as ‘who are you, and where are you from?’ may be both problematic and revelatory. This mostly stems from the fact that the expected answers to both questions may be premised on the complex issues of identity and power structure. Commenting on the book ‘Who are you and should it matter in the 21st century’ by Gary Younge, Safraaz Mazoor recounted his experience when he remarked,

Neither my passport nor my accent nor the fact that I had spent virtually my entire life in Britain qualified me, in this woman’s eyes, as British. Since she appeared not to be persuaded by my honest answer that I was British I eventually explained that my family was originally from Pakistan, and this satisfied her.⁵

Indeed one realises his identity when he/she is told of what he/she is. As ‘Black Africans’, we never had to explain who we were and what we are among our kin and there was ‘no need of consciousness’ of self until we left the shores of Africa. Thus, we mostly experience our being through other.⁶ Younge⁷ correctly notes that identity is dependent not only on the individual but also the behavior of the wider world. Most of the things we have come to know and understand about ourselves like history, sexuality or even our very existence or humanness are narratives told in the classics and history as written by the victors. Like the proverbial African adage goes, ‘until the lion finds his own historian or tells his own story, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.’

A story is never complete until one hears from both sides. The one who does not have the voice is often the loser. The current history has been told and written from the dominating class’ perspective in such a way that the victims’ voices are silenced. The task of this essay is to shed light on real history; that is history as we have lived it, to deconstruct some of the mainstream assumptions and theories that have occupied the centre stage of our academic discourse and to further appreciate how inter civilisation exchanges and heterogeneity have been very pivotal in human interactions at different epochs in human history. Thus, there are discourses that constrain the production of knowledge, dissent and difference. Also, as indicated by Pennington⁸, “there is a common Aristotelian

5 Manzoor (2010), “Who Are We – and Should It Matter in the 21st Century? By Gary Younge: Sarfraz Manzoor considers a world in flux,” Available: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/may/29/gary-younge-who-are-we>. [Accessed 1 October 2018]

6 Fanon (2000), “The Fact of Blackness,” in *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader*, Abingdon and New York, Routledge pp. 257-260.

7 Younge (2011), *Who are We - And Should it Matter In the 21st Century?*, New York: Nation Books.

8 Pennington (2012), *Teaching Religion and Violence*, B. K. Pennington, Ed., Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, p. 4.

structure' and 'a mythic aura' to the stories of violence usually portrayed in the media. Thus, there is usually a kind of bias in reportage on violence conflicts, and terrorism. Thus, the questions that arise within this framework, are to do with how some discourses have maintained their authority, how some 'voices' get heard whilst others are silenced; who benefits and how? We thus seek to analyse the construction of threat perception and how the idea of terrorism has come to represent a certain religious group and its adherents.

Consequently, telling our own story implies rejecting the idea of a single story – that is we reject the discriminatory and oppressive expressions used to describe certain groups and particularities. The Nigerian writer, Adichie⁹ rightly sums it up – 'single stories create stereotypes. The problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue but they are incomplete.' This is especially true for some identities like being a Muslim in the 21st century. The narrative of a Muslim identity has, in recent times, always been associated with mass violence, and terrorist tendencies. The way we came to perceive ourselves since our contact with the West has drastically changed the way we look at reality; as succinctly put by Ryan McIlhenny 'reality is a social construction, and "truth" is nothing more than what our academic colleagues let us get away with.'¹⁰ For instance, the way we see ourselves today as Blacks, Ghanaians, Christians, colonised, poor, Third World citizens, etc. was absent in Africa a century ago; so is the narrative of a Muslim being told. As individuals having all these attributes, not only are we expected to behave in a certain way, but we come to think about ourselves in that way. Thus, our worldviews are somehow tending to be defined by these attributes. This way of portraying ourselves by the dominant culture is a contributory factor to the presumably upsurge of 'Islamic radicalisation' being experienced in recent past.

Like tragedies in the past (the great depression, world wars, etc.), the events of 9/11 are etched in the memories of many people – global security was threatened and a war on terror declared. The increasing upsurge and rampant attacks we experience frequently, the level of mayhem and the destruction of life and property gone down the drain has made terrorism an enigma in this postmodern age. It is no surprise therefore that a lot of resources have been committed into finding a long lasting solution to this canker. Despite these genuine efforts and attempts at solution, the desired outcome has

9 Adichie (2009), "The danger of a single story - Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie," Available: <https://ed.ted.com/featured/TXtMhXIA>. [Accessed 1 October 2018]

10 McIlhenny (2007), "The Postmodern Condition as a Religious Revival: A Critical Review of William Connolly's *Why I am Not a Secularist*, Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincialising Europe*, and Alvin Plantinga's *Warranted Christian Belief*," *Nebula*, pp. 151-163, p. 152.

been very minimal due to the reactionary response methods applied which is mostly propagated and sanctioned by rational theories and objectivity of knowledge claims. [7]¹¹ However, it is proper to acknowledge the few discourses and academics who recognize the intricacies, multi-faceted and deep rooted source of this menace (as steeply embedded in issues of intellectual formations, identity and power) – that is to suggest that ‘a boot for boot’ kind of response which could be partly explained in our rational thought as presented and perpetuated over the years by the extraordinary domineering knowledge claims and rational theories have failed to yield the desirable outcome as far as counter-terrorism is concerned.

Despite that the unanimity of thought has stifled any real progress and development, and has resulted in entrenched subject-positions, there is no attempt at re-conceptualising our way of life. The European/Western narrative is still held onto.^{12 13} Grovogui¹⁴ clearly captures this point:

The idea of a self-contained and superior Europe did not become authoritative until after the seventeenth century when the Christian emporium of Europe was first projected metaphysically as a separate and self-contained civilizational sphere. This professed uniqueness of Europe was upheld by Enlightenment and subsequent ideologies.... Europe alone possessed reason (rationality), science (positivism), and sensibility (pragmatism).¹⁵

And so, as history records, the eighteenth century marked a watershed moment when the autonomy of human reason and deism in Europe characterised the organisation of knowledge, society and the conduct of politics – an emphasis on objectivity of knowledge as a key pillar to the emergent secular age. Thus, Western Europe became synonymous with the idea of rational thought, a proprietor of rationality upon which all other forms of thought and discursive practices was based.¹⁶ According to Spellman¹⁷, most of the

11 Smith (2004), “Singing Our World into Existence: International Relations Theory and September 11,” *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 48, no. 3, pp. iv+499-515.

12 Ibid

13 Ernst (2003), *Following Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World*, Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press.

14 Grovogui (2006), *Beyond Eurocentrism and Anarchy: memories of International order and institutions*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

15 Ibid, p. 27.

16 Merriam Jr. (2001), *History of the Theory of Sovereignty since Rousseau*, Kitchener, Ontario: Batoche Books.

17 Spellman (2011), *A Short History of Political Thought*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 86.

thinkers of this epoch regardless of national or social origins were united in the belief that progress can only come by as a result of the application of human reason. Grovogui¹⁸ in a similar line of thought has argued that,

.... two categories united by the twin belief in the infallibility of “western canons” The first category...who envisions Europe as proprietor of legitimate science.... The other category includes critical and reflexive theorists who position themselves against the historic self-representation.... but they assume themselves of western origination of crucial ones.

Modernity and modern theories in sociology became associated with this period – progress became a corollary of modernity. Development therefore implied the jettison of spirituality/superstition and the acceptance of science or facticity.¹⁹ Prominent scholars outlined a linear pathway to progress, a blue print where all must follow to realize progress.²⁰ Also, Max Weber’s thesis about societies and his dichotomy between traditional societies and modern societies and other enlightenment thinkers like Kant, Hegel, Karl Marx further accentuated the superiority of Western civilisation.²¹ Although this homogenisation and objectivity of thought, knowledge and culture seem natural to the modern mind, this form of thinking is only about five hundred years old. Menon²² has opined that the enlightenment and its corollary that is a constellation of features we term modernity were absent in Europe prior to sixteenth century.

It is worth emphasising that in nonwestern societies, these independent criteria of truth and acclaimed objectivity of scientific knowledge and methods have been strongly contested overtime. It is against this backdrop, these internal voices that these countless numbers of questions are asked; can European civilisation and discourse based on its objectivity and rationality be justified and ascertained? Are cultures pure, traditions self-enclosed or identity monolithic? Can the root cause of terrorism be attributed to the changing linguistic meaning of terrorism and the silence of other civilisations? Is there

18 Grovogui (2006), opt cited, pp. 4-5.

19 Merriam Jr. (2001), *History of the Theory of Sovereignty since Rousseau*, Kitchener, Ontario: Batoche Books.

20 Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Walt Whitman Rostow (2018),” October 2018. Available: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/W-W-Rostow>. [Accessed 10 October 2018]

21 Mitzman (2018), “Max Weber,” 28 September. Available: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Max-Weber-German-sociologist>. [Accessed 10 October 2018] See also Feuer and McLellan (2018), “Karl Marx,” 28 September. Available: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Karl-Marx>. [Accessed 10 October 2018]

22 Menon (2012), *Seeing like a Feminist*, London: Penguin.

only one blue print to progress and modernity? This essay is thus a moderate attempt at comprehending the upsurge, intensity and frequency of terrorist activities in this time past by connecting these themes to identity construction and how some rational methods and approaches have silenced other modes to thinking and expression of self.

The changing linguistic meaning of civilisation

The idea of civilisation has over the years been linguistically linked to western societies and practices and for which reason nonwestern societies and cultures, together with their practices and beliefs have at some times been compelled to fall in line with supposedly what has been referred to as the practices of civilized nations.²³ With civilisation been associated with the West and all others been expected to learn and follow their lead, anything different may be perceived as abnormal – a perception that has been used by some populists and supposedly nationalist politicians and media practitioners in the West. It is this perception that has particularly fueled the tagging of Islam and other cultures as relatively uncivilized and eventually generalizing about Islam and acts of terrorism.

According to Sudipta Kaviraj²⁴, there is a changing linguistic meaning of civilisation; that is a shift in the use of the term civilisation itself. Kaviraj notes that before this conceptual and theoretical change, the European Christian civilisation was contrasted with equally and respected forms of civilisations like Islam and Hindu. European civilisation therefore before this watershed moment was one of the many civilisations that existed and not the sole civilisation. This acknowledgement of the existence of more than one civilisation is well explicated in Huntington's 'Clash of civilization?' where he hypothesized that the next pattern of conflict would be far from ideological or economic lines but rather cultural.²⁵ It is also evident in Sinha's²⁶ writings where he analyses how various civilisations have governed themselves over the ages.

Thus the idea of a single narrative of civilisation became dominant and the only truism to progress through carefully orchestrated events which adopted both coercive means and trickery in the form of colonialism and neocolonialism. This accentuation was further

23 Sloan (2011), "Civilized Nations," April. Available: <http://opil.ouplaw.com/view/10.1093/law:epil/9780199231690/law-9780199231690-e1748#law-9780199231690-e1748-div1-2> [Accessed 14 April 2019]

24 Kaviraj (2005), "An Outline of a Revisionist Theory of Modernity," *European Journal of Sociology*, pp. 497-526.

25 Huntington (1993), "Clash of Civilisation?," *Foreign affairs*, pp. 22-43.

26 Sinha (1993), *Jurisprudence: Legal Philosophy in a Nutshell*, St. Paul, Minnesota: West Publishing Co.

possible because of the intensive role of agency, institutions, discursive practices and legal juridical in legitimating these norms as universal and rational. In a nutshell, European civilisation emerged as a paradigm and a quintessential case of how the rest of the world – that is non-west should be and what path to follow, and outlined ways and means to achieving this end. To put it succinctly, non-western countries needed saving from themselves, and European civilisation offered just that (so we are made to believe). This is well enunciated without mincing words by Kaviraj²⁷:

The move to making a universalistic claim about European civilization on the basis of its self-acclaimed universal principles, that the rest of the world, that is non-western world was future recipients of this civilization and this could be achieved by other societies resulted in simultaneous losing of differentiation and towards homogeneity.

Adding to this Chomsky blatantly puts it:

In fact the main reason why the plague of European civilization was able to spread all over the world in the past five hundred years is that the Europeans were just a lot more vicious and savage than anyone else, because they'd had a lot more practice murdering one another - so when they came to other places, they knew how to do it, and were very good at it.²⁸

In other words, through a mixture of several alternative means, European civilisation has been firmly cultivated and that any seemingly deviation from it may usually be seen as an aberration.

Identity, culture and other expressions of Self

The event of September 11 was phenomenal, simply because it marked a watershed in the history of global security. The very conception and construction of terrorism took a different shape and meaning – terrorism seems to have become associated with any violent attack that is perpetrated by people with Islamic identity. Terrorism was catapulted into the realm of high politics and it also took a global shape – global security was re-defined. Differences, particularities, identities were accentuated and they became more

27 Kaviraj (2005) "An Outline of a Revisionist Theory of Modernity," *European Journal of Sociology*, pp. 497-526, p. 503.

28 Chomsky (2002), *Understanding Power: The Indispensable Chomsky*, P. R. Mitchell and J. Schoeffel, Eds., New York: The New Press, p. 136.

pronounced. The construction of terrorism as an existential threat therefore took the form of campaign against a target group, identity and religion; the danger of what one might call the 'making of terrorism' (MOT). This stems from the fact that virtually all the perpetrators had a common identity. Up until this point, the severity and terrorist organisations had not erupted and fine lines between 'us' and 'them' were not as sharp though terrorism had been around for quite a while. It is very easy to lose sight of how terrorism since time past has been defined and how we derive the boundary and category of what, who and which group are clamped as terrorists or potential terrorists.

With increasing violence and fear, the question has been how to solve this problem of radicalisation and various suggestions seem to concur on the relevance of doing away with particularities and differences by forging stronger national identities. The question this sort of thinking begs is whether particularities, differences and identity necessarily mean conflict? What we should be investigating is how the construction of meanings such as the concept of terrorism is determined by time and space and how certain words mean differently at different epochs in history. If words do change meaning as the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure tells us about the arbitrariness meaning of words and representations²⁹, then the real issue is not about getting rid of differences but how universalisation and normalisation of certain kinds of ideas and thought have stifled interaction, engagement and open mindedness about the other.

Europe as we are made to believe, traces its foundation and development to the renaissance and ancient Greece. The term renaissance however suggests, as Marks³⁰ strongly points out that, it meant philosophy was dead until it was reborn in Europe. Making clearer her point, she argues that there was a time in history where Arabian Philosophy freely engaged with the philosophies of the Jews, Christians, and Turks. Hence European history contain within it live philosophy, science and culture of the Medieval Muslim world. It is said that concepts found in Islamic philosophy were largely relied upon which included the concept of univocity of being borrowed from Abu Ali Husayn ibn Sina (980-1037), a Persian Philosopher. These exchanges and contributions to European culture and thought especially from Middle Eastern and North Africa were lost through racism although late Medieval Christian scholars recognized what they borrowed from Muslim contributors.³¹ Thus, European philosophy was established by

29 Joseph (2017), "Ferdinand de Saussure," June. Available: <http://linguistics.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199384655.001.0001/acrefore-9780199384655-e-385>. [Accessed 8 October 2018]

30 Marks (2013), "A Deleuzian Ijtihad: Unfolding Deleuz's Islamic Sources Occulted in the Ethnic Cleansing of Spain," in *Deleuze and Race*, Edinburg, Edinburg University Press pp. 51-72.

31 Marks (2013), "A Deleuzian Ijtihad: Unfolding Deleuz's Islamic Sources Occulted in the Ethnic

European thinkers as independent of the many borrowed contributions, additions and subtractions from other civilisations with its foundations from Greek philosophy. Indeed the turmoil of the evolution of cultural achievements would have been forgotten by the time they become sufficiently established in public consciousness as to be taught in schools, thus making room for the concealment of confluences of culture and the eventual installment and homogenization of foundational myths in their place.³²

Today's Western science is derivative of knowledge developed in the non-Western world, and lacks originality because many people perfected long ago understandings of nature that modern science is only now recognizing. The intellectual and practical accomplishments of traditional societies were distinct, well advanced and exceptional. Thus, Trojanow and Hoskote³³ reveal to us misconceptions about cultural purity and the popularly conceived notion of fixed identities. Before European enlightenment, there were exchanges between cultures and borrowing of ideas from other cultures; confluence is the lifeblood of culture. Going back to original formations or condition of culture and identities illuminates on how distinct civilisations have co-existed and impacted and influenced one other. Thus, "... individuals are plural selves, extending themselves through apprenticeship and camouflage, shifting identities tactically, or as the social context demands...." and that culture and identity should be understood as "that part of human experience and expression which cannot be co-opted into the banality of polar confrontation."³⁴

Similarly, Said³⁵ has argued in *Orientalism* that culture is developed through the presence of other and defined in terms of the other. Said asserts the fact that the Orient played an instrumental role in the construction of the European cultures. According to Said³⁶, 'the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience.' There is therefore no single narrative to history. The evil arguments and negative connotations and tag we have been made to believe are inherent in identity politics and needs to be rejected. We have to guard ourselves against excessive homogenisation, identifying particular strands of globalisation and especially identity politics that disregard the reality of difference. However, to be free of identity as promoted by the neo-culture we are presently located in, perspective of the naturalisation

Cleansing of Spain," in *Deleuze and Race*, Edinburg, Edinburg University Press pp. 51-72.

32 Trojanow and Hoskote (2012), *CONFLUENCES: Forgotten Histories from East and West*, New Delhi: Yoda Press, p. 4.

33 Ibid

34 Ibid, p. 115

35 Said (1979), *Orientalism*; London: Penguin Book.

36 Ibid, pp 1-2.

that our education system has perpetuated or, the society promotes, the thought, affect and the passions whipped 'in the name of difference' need to be critically assessed and debated as advocated by Pennington and his co-authors.³⁷

According to Mignolo³⁸, there is a growing awakening of these concealed truth and an awareness on the need to think less in terms that universalise, globalise or blanket different colonialities into one cultural formation. A pluralisation of ways of being and knowing is underway.³⁹ Thus, one can safely argue that there is neither single way of thinking nor a single expression of self. Likewise, our culture, conventions and our knowledge claims are not context free.⁴⁰

Considering the above, there is no clear distinction between context sensitive thoughts and context free thoughts. Thus, recognising the existence of equally valid alternative explanations and knowledge, as well as understanding and appreciation of differences does matter.⁴¹ Real progress and development is only achieved through diversity and recognition of the other's existence. The present hierarchical organisation of the nature of knowledge and of self has bred intolerance and violence among differing groups and cultures. Equal premium and authority should be put on knowledge emanating outside of western thought, expressions of self beyond western ideals and modes.

Religion, Identity, Politics and Power

With advancement in science and technology and the pronouncement in communication, the world has eventually become one small village. Indeed, globalisation has made the world claustrophobic and the resultant effect has included among others exacerbation of inequality, abject poverty and injustices. Group formation, identity politics and social movements are some major characteristics of the modern world. And this is so because many years of subjugation of certain classes, cultures and how some voices and

37 Pennington (2012), *Teaching Religion and Violence*, B. K. Pennington, Ed., Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

38 Mignolo (2011), *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*, Durham: Duke University Press.

39 Ibid, p. 23

40 Anzaldúa (2002), "Now Let Us Shift... the path of conocimiento... inner works, public acts," in *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*, New York and London, Routledge, pp. 540-579. See also Appiah (1992), "Inventing an African Practice in Philosophy: Epistemological Issues," in *The Surreptitious Speech: Presence Africaine and the Politics of Otherness 1947-1987*, Chicago, University of Chicago, pp. 227-237.

41 Mignolo (2011), opt cited.

knowledge over the period have been silenced and concealed have led to the relevance of the need to organise ourselves. However, with an increase in societies organising themselves for proper representation, this has less reflection on deepening democratic processes and practices. The chasm of 'we' versus 'them' mentality has been on the ascendant and motivations for societies organising themselves have mostly been divisive. Acts and threats of violence have been mostly associated with this phenomenon.

Among the various ways of being and knowing, religion is one of the potent means by which individuals express their being and through which some knowledge claims are made. Religion is a way of life and it presumably dictates to people how to live. Culture and religion interact and can be described as mutually constitutive at certain points. For instance, whereas European civilisation is deeply rooted in ideas of Christendom, Western civilisation on the whole is mostly founded on Christian morals, ethics, practices and principles (notwithstanding that secularity is on the ascendancy). Indeed, secularization is a thesis of Christianity.

Though people look towards religion to inspire, guide and bring hope, the pervasive notion that religion divides us and causes more harm than good has yet to diminish in various public conversations. In spite of this popular notion, it is worth emphasising that no religion is inherently good or bad, neither violent nor peaceful – for all religions seek peace, irrespective of how that peace may be construed. It is thus people who by their actions and inactions may cause a certain religion to be deemed by others as violent or peaceful. The point is that those people who may through their actions and inactions misrepresent a certain religion do not make that religion violent – for such individuals may be an aberration of what ought to be.⁴² Thus, violence has been with the human race throughout the ages (irrespective of religion). Moreover, the issue of religious violence does not exist in a vacuum – there are socio-economic, political and cultural roots to the problem – roots that are not limited to Islam, but to all other forms of beliefs. For instance, history reveals that the popes through the Crusades were on the quest to strengthening their own political power.⁴³

For many years' religion has been relegated to the realm of the private sphere; a major distinguishing feature of secularism and modernity.⁴⁴ Most philosophers both in the past and present argued about the inevitable decline of religion and believed in the progressive idea of society, hence, the inescapable decline of religion. These scholars also mostly

42 Armstrong (2014), *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence*, London: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. See also Pennington (2012), opt cited.

43 Armstrong (2014), opt cited.

44 McIlhenny (2007), opt cited.

called for a strict separation of the private from the public. Thus, matters of faith, affect, passion and other expressions of self like traditions have no place in public space – at least, that is what most scholars assumed. For instance, in his *Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas treated religion primarily from a sociological perspective, as an archaic mode of social integration. Yet, the recent resurgence of, and intrusion of religion into public space and politics have caused scholars who strictly adhered to the foundational premise of secularism as a separation of the private from the public like Habermas to have a rethink. Not only has he revised his earlier views, but he has also questioned the idea of public sphere in the West.⁴⁵ Religion and its relations with politics, after the September 11 attack became more relevant in public space.

Despite the negative tag on religion, rise of anti-religion, new atheist discourse, religion continues to survive. Previously perceived expressions of tradition hampering the progress of modernity, conceptions of modernity and the complexities of the relationship between modern political life and religion which was rarely investigated have gained currency. As indicated by Khan⁴⁶, one of the ‘enduring myths of modernity’ has been ‘the false assumptions of pure politics and pure religion’ – that religion and politics are separable. It is said that ‘neither the conception of the individual self nor collective self is free from political or religious considerations.’

Indeed, it is not wrong to agree with Khan⁴⁷ that ‘as long as religion plays a role in the identities of people, it will play a role in politics.’ Thus, as stated above, religion is among the many ways of self-expression, meaning and belonging, hence playing an essential role in identity formation. Adopting from social constructivists, the individual is made up of multiple identities among which religion and politics are a part of. Issues of politics and religion affect both the individual and the collective group. Politics is as much religion, as religion is as much politics and both thrive on power-relations. Consequently, tagging any religion with terrorism harbors the implications that every follower of that religion is a potential terrorist.

45 Habermas (1986), *The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, vol. 1, Cambridge: Polity Press. See also Habermas (1989), *The Theory of Communicative Action: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, vol. 2, Massachusetts: Beacon Press. And Habermas (1996), *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

46 Khan (2015), “Can Religion Play a Positive Role in Politics?,” 29 05. Available: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/muqtedar-khan/can-religion-play-a-positive-role-in-politics_b_7466144.html. [Accessed 2 October 2018]

47 Ibid

Some religions have gained notoriety due mainly to the narratives being presented by dominant groups. So presently, Islamism has gained unpopular and violent tag. But surprisingly, we seem to forget that some of the most horrific violent acts done on the face of this Earth have been perpetuated by some so-called 'Christians' and other religions. The crusades by the Catholic Church, the Holocaust that claimed many Jewish lives, the Lord's Resistant Army in Uganda, the Spanish inquisition, European Colonialism in Africa and the White supremacists (KKK) – all these acts were carried out by people who claimed membership to Christianity or other forms of religion. And in present times Israeli soldiers keep killing 'innocent' Palestinians virtually on a daily basis. The use of violence is therefore not limited to Islam, but also Judeo-Christians, as well as Buddhist-Hindi-Shinto, etc.⁴⁸ Yet, probably, not much of this other side of history is being told because Western and European thought is characterised by the 'will of power' and the 'impulse to dominate' – a clear exposition of power differential.

Consequently, modern society is not just making a 'scapegoat of faith' as argued by Armstrong⁴⁹, it is actually making scapegoat of the Islamic faith to be specific, particularly when issues of terror are involved. Thus, the exaggeration of differences – in terms of religion, serves as an avenue for creating enmity and widening the gap between the supposedly 'Islamic terrorist' and the wider society in which they live. This in turn does not help in the effective building of trust that will enhance a more positive outcome on the war on terror. In other words, the so-called 'Islamic terrorists', like the ritualistic Jewish scapegoat, 'licking its wounds in the desert... with its festering resentment' would eventually 'rebound on the city that drove it out.'⁵⁰

One of Gary Younge's⁵¹ strongest points, reiterated at various points is that identification with a more powerful group often pretends it is not an identity at all and that people generally do not think much about being straight, European, or male. Thus, for such people, theirs is the default, objective, neutral position. Consequently, it is only after one has been effectively been dislocated from and has come to an understanding of the power associated with their particular identities that they may come to certain realisations. The situation is also not helped by the fact that everyone has a remarkable ability to think themselves the victims. Younge is right when he asserts that 'the more power an identity carries, the less likely its carrier is to be aware of it as an identity at all' and that 'because their identity is never interrogated' some people 'are easily seduced

48 Pennington (2012), opt cited.

49 Armstrong (2014), opt cited.

50 Armstrong (2014), opt cited, p. 24.

51 Younge (2018), "The Politics of Identity: from Potential to Pitfalls, and Symbols to Substance," *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, pp. 1-11, p. 2.

by the idea that they do not have one.⁵²

There is indeed ‘always identity in politics’ as none goes into ‘politics from a vacuum’ since individuals always ‘arrive with affiliations’ that tends to mould their ‘world-view.’⁵³ There is therefore an obvious relationship between power and identity construction following from the stated argument above. The caveat, however, is that this interaction between power and identity is non-linear. Thus, power is made manifest through notions of identities and social cohesion (a sort of organising phenomenon). Simultaneously, identity is constructed according to the interest of power. So questions of how some discourses and discursive practices have shaped and created meaning systems that have gained the status and currency of ‘truth’, and dominated how we define and organise both ourselves and our social world subsequently becomes a question of how power and interest are being used and being played through our meaning systems and our understanding of self. On the other hand, other alternative discourses that are deemed as ‘decolonial options’, yet having the potential to offer grounds where hegemonic practices can be contested, challenged and ‘resisted’ are marginalised and subjugated.⁵⁴ This is notwithstanding the fact that people are ‘both many things’ and ‘just one’ – themselves, and that ‘identity is in its very nature intersectional.’⁵⁵ Thus, being a Muslim, Christian, Black or White or Brown, or what other social construction may be assigned, does not in itself make a person evil (or terrorist).

The point must be reemphasised that ‘identity is not seeking a role in politics’, nor does it seek ‘a role in our lives.’ As Younge argues, it is already located in these avenues and that ‘for better’ or ‘for worse and usually for both it is an integral part of how we relate to people as individuals and as groups.’ The choice however becomes ours as to ‘whether we want to succumb to its perils amidst moral panic and division or leverage its potential through solidarity in search of common, and higher, ground.’⁵⁶

The State and violence

The sociologist, Max Weber in defining the state designated and attributed the legal use of force to the state. Thus, the state is the sole entity sanctioned to use force. In his ‘Politics as a Vocation’, Weber mentions that one of the defining characteristics of the state is its

52 Younge (2011), *Who are We - And Should it Matter In the 21st Century?*, New York: Nation Books.

See also Younge (2018), opt cited, p. 2.

53 Young (2018), opt cited, p. 2.

54 Mignolo (2011), *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*, Durham: Duke University Press.

55 Younge (2018), opt cited, p. 3.

56 Younge (2018), opt cited, p. 11.

ability to employ legitimate violence as a means of control in a given territory.⁵⁷ In another definition, he states that the state is a human community where people struggle with one another for what is ultimately a greater share of the legitimate use of power to apply force.⁵⁸ This does not mean however, that the state is the only actor that uses violence but rather, the only actor that sanctions or legitimizes the use of violence. As remarked by some scholars⁵⁹, this distinguishable feature of the state with its existential need to persist, assigning heroes and villains and for self-definition through inner cohesion and outward enmity, dismisses alternative and mutable narratives. However, this monopoly of the use of physical force can also be challenged by non-state actors. The present upsurge of terrorism and insurrections can be seen as an overt opposition to the state's use of violence.

In recent past, scholars like Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben and others have argued vehemently about other forms of state power in complying obedience.⁶⁰ They argue that violence or physical force is not the only way; instead, it is one amongst the rest of techniques employed by states to ensure compliance and obedience from its citizens. States ought to use other forms of power to assert their authority and ensure compliance within the international system.⁶¹ By using knowledge, as reasoned by Foucault, the state is able to perpetuate and increase its control over the subjects through the process of normalisation. Thus, through the use of violence and normalising practices, the state coerces subjects into complying with the desires and directives of the elites and the few groups who have stakes and interest in the status quo. Any challenge to the authority of the state is mostly repressed through prohibitions and punishment, and also with continual expression of the existence of the state in friend-enemy terms – a scenario quite reflected in the modern state's relation with terrorism (which has quite unfortunately been linked to 'radical Islam').

Chantal Mouffe⁶² draws our attention to Carl Schmitt's concept of the political, that the concept of state presupposes the concept of the political. This implies that a state can

57 Weber (1919), "Politics as a Vocation," Duncker & Humblodt, Munich.

58 Astore (2016), "Defining the Legitimacy and Power of the State through Weber and Foucault," *INQUIRIES*, vol. 8, no. 5, pp. 1-2.

59 Trojanow and Hoskote (2012), opt cited, p. 5.

60 Agamben, *Homo Sacer* (1998): Sovereign Power and Bare Life, Stanford: Stanford University Press. See also Astore (2016), opt cited, pp. 1-2.

61 Botchway T. P. and Kwarteng A. H. (2018), "Developing International Law in Challenging Times," *Journal of Politics and Law*, vol. 11, no. 3, pp. 53-63.

62 Mouffe (2005), *On the Political*, New York: Routledge.

only be legitimate if its legal boundaries embody a clear friend-enemy distinction and that every aspect of consensus therefore involves an exclusionary process.^{63 64} Mouffe⁶⁵ has indicated that,

Schmitt is right to bring to our attention the fact that the political is linked to the existence of a dimension of hostility in human societies, hostility which can take many forms and manifest itself in very diverse types of social relations.

Mouffe⁶⁶ exploring Henry Staten's idea of 'constitutive outside' notes that the concept helps to highlight the fact that 'the creation of an identity implies the establishment of a difference, difference which is often constructed on the basis of a hierarchy: for example between form and matter, black and white, man and women, etc.' The point of this remark is that, social relations, be it identity or 'othering' can become a site for antagonism and violence. She further opines that political identities are always collective identities and by identifying them as such we are recognizing the existence of an 'us' and 'them.' She cautions however that this does not mean such a relation is by necessity an antagonistic one. But it means that there is always the possibility of this relation of us/them becoming one of friend/enemy. When difference and particularity are perceived as threatening the cohesion and existence of the other, social relations which otherwise were less harmful become toxic.⁶⁷ This is evident in the modern state's need to survive coupled with its monopoly on the use of violence and the war on terrorism which basically identify Muslims as the fundamental elements of terrorism.

This categorisation and 'othering' processes accentuate and promote enmity in social relations, allowing certain groups with power to inflict and instill fear in others. For instance, in recent times, some prominent world leaders have waged constant campaigns on branding Islam as evil and the root cause of terrorism. Key among such individuals is the US President – Donald Trump who has on countless occasions made derogatory remarks about Islam including questioning the religious beliefs of his predecessor – Barack Obama, and at a point branding some Muslim refugees as 'ISIS' and a potential

63 Mouffe (2005), opt cited.

64 Vinx (2014), "Carl Schmitt," 1 October. Available: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/schmitt>. [Accessed 2 October 2018]

65 Mouffe (2009), "Democratic Politics and Agonistic Pluralism," 18 December. Available: http://consellodacultura.gal/mediateca/extras/texto_chantal_mouffe_eng.pdf. [Accessed 2 October 2018] p.6.

66 Ibid, p. 7

67 Mouffe (2005), *On the Political*, New York: Routledge. See also Mouffe (2009), "Democratic Politics and Agonistic Pluralism," 18 December. Available: http://consellodacultura.gal/mediateca/extras/texto_chantal_mouffe_eng.pdf. [Accessed 2 October 2018]

'Trojan horse look like peanuts' and eventually introducing an executive order that bans Muslims from entering the US.⁶⁸ In France there is the populist major opposition figure Marine Le Pen who has also been making anti-Muslim rhetoric and inciting people against Islam.⁶⁹ In Canada mention can be made of Jean-Francois Lisee (the former leader of the nationalist Quebec Party [Parti Québécois]) who once advocated for the banning of Muslim veils in public spaces since according to him Muslim women could hide machine guns underneath their burkas.⁷⁰ Several western politicians have also followed this trend.⁷¹

There have also been several television shows that advocate the killing of Muslims and bombing 'their countries.' A clear example is Jeanine Pirro's several accounts that makes hasty generalisations about Muslims and call for their mass destruction.⁷²

Construction of violence, terrorism and threat perceptions

The discourse of violence has focused mostly on partial and specific notions of violence.

68 Johnson and Hauslohner (2017), "I think Islam hates us': A timeline of Trump's comments about Islam and Muslims," Available: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2017/05/20/i-think-islam-hates-us-a-timeline-of-trumps-comments-about-islam-and-muslims/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.b3f7f1b54408. [Accessed 16 April 2019]. See also Rucker and Phillip (2017), "Trump campaigned against Muslims, but will preach tolerance in Saudi speech," 19 May. Available: https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-campaigned-against-muslims-but-will-preach-tolerance-in-saudi-speech/2017/05/19/6357c60c-3ca7-11e7-9e48-c4f199710b69_story.html?utm_term=.e6424605904d. [Accessed 16 April 2019]

69 McAuley (2017), "Growing anti-Muslim rhetoric permeates French presidential election campaign," 18 April. Available: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/growing-anti-muslim-rhetoric-permeates-french-presidential-election-campaign/2017/04/18/1049c928-1ef8-11e7-bb59-a74ccaf1d02f_story.html?utm_term=.7855a0623209. [Accessed 16 April 2019] Also refer to Buchanan (2015), "Marine Le Pen to face court for comparing Muslim prayers in the street to Nazi occupation," 23 September. Available: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/marine-le-pen-to-face-court-for-comparing-muslim-prayers-in-the-street-to-nazi-occupation-10513920.html>. [Accessed 16 April 2019]

70 Shapiro (2017), "Canadian Leaders: Rhetoric Around Muslim Immigrants Has Grown Too Ugly," 31 January. Available: <https://www.npr.org/2017/01/31/512702725/canadian-leaders-rhetoric-around-muslim-immigrants-has-grown-too-ugly>. [Accessed 16 April 2019]

71 Reinl (2018), "Dozens of US mid-term candidates using anti-Muslim rhetoric, study shows," 22 October. Available: <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/dozens-us-mid-term-candidates-using-anti-muslim-rhetoric-study-shows>. [Accessed 30 April 2019]

72 Ohlheiser (2019), "Jeanine Pirro's anti-Muslim comments earned a rebuke from Fox News. They weren't her first," 11 March. Available: https://www.washingtonpost.com/arts-entertainment/2019/03/11/jeanine-pirros-anti-muslim-comments-earned-rebuke-fox-news-they-werent-her-first/?utm_term=.a6b0ad246f27. [Accessed 30 April 2019]. See also Fox News (2015), "'They're Coming Here to Kill Us!': Pirro, Geraldo Spar on Guns, Radical Islam," 4 December. Available: <https://insider.foxnews.com/2015/12/04/theyre-coming-here-kill-us-pirro-geraldo-spar-guns-radical-islam>. [Accessed 30 April 2019]

For many years there has been the reign of positivist or rational method of enquiry in social science, natural science – subsuming difference and identity into sameness. Though the demise of the Soviet Union called into question the universal rationality underlying these popular assumptions and called for the need to revisit and reexamine the foundations of these orthodoxies, the writings of Fukuyama's *End of History*, Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* and Michael Doyle's *Democratic Peace* and other seemingly skewed international relations scholarships still dominated, influenced and perpetuated the superiority of Western and European ideals.⁷³ Above all, this has been done in the name of legitimate social science, very narrowly defined.

In the language of terrorism, violence has been defined restrictively to refer to physical harm inflicted by specific group of people or identity. Acts of 'terrorism' are arguably only confined to non-state actors since the state claims the exclusive use and control of violence. Now, the question about what crime is committed has been supplanted by who committed the crime; hence acts of violence and crime are understood in the context of the person; explained in this same fashion. What this means therefore is that, the same crime with probably the same motivation will be eclipsed with different rationalisation thus uncovering the actual failings of society.

The problem with rationalist thoughts and the world today is how we explain social and political phenomena on the basis of intrinsic values and render such judgments as objective. An illustration of this in the construction of violence and the discourse of terrorism is clearly demonstrated by the media's use of terrorism to describe events of violence. For instance, the Boston attack that happened on April 15, 2013 when two homemade cooker bombs detonated during the annual Boston Marathon killing three and maiming several others was properly designated as a terrorist attack. The culprits, Tamerlan Tsarnaev (26 years) and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev (19 years) were identified by the FBI in latter investigation.⁷⁴

73 Smith (2004), "Singing Our World into Existence: International Relations Theory and September 11," *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 48, no. 3, pp. iv+499-515. See also Grovogui (2006), *Beyond Eurocentrism and Anarchy: memories of International order and institutions*, New York: Palgrave Macmilan. And Botchway, T. P. (2018), "International Law, Sovereignty and the Responsibility to Protect: An Overview," *Journal of Politics and Law*, pp. 40 – 50.

74 Estes, Abad-Santos and Sullivan (2013), "Explosions at Boston Marathon Kill 3 — Now, a 'Potential Terrorist Investigation'," 15 April. Available: <https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2013/04/boston-marathon-explosions-live/316233/>. [Accessed 5 October 2018] See also Shane (2013), "Chechen Refugee Questioned in F.B.I.'s Inquiry of Bombing," 16 May. Available: <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/17/us/boston-bombing-developments.html>. [Accessed 5 October 2018]. And Boston (2015), "Boston Marathon Bombing Trial Jury Sees Photos Of Tsarnaev Boat Note," 10 March. Available: <https://boston.cbslocal.com/2015/03/10/jury-in-boston-bombing-trial-sees-photos-of-writing-in-boat/>. [Accessed 5 October 2018]

Also, it was announced on June 12, 2016 that Omar Mateen, a 29 year old security guard raised as a Muslim had killed about 50 people and wounded 53 others – an act referred to as terrorism.[54]⁷⁵ Again at Charleston Church, Dylann Roof, a 21-year-old white supremacist murdered nine African Americans on the evening of June 17, 2015 and this was reported as mass violence/hate crime.⁷⁶

On October 1, 2017, Stephen Paddock, a 64 years old American fired more than 1,100 rounds of bullets from his suite on the 32nd floor of Mandalay Bay hotel which eventually killed 36 women and 22 men (58 people), and seriously wounding about 851 others. Notwithstanding the magnitude of the casualty (as compared with terrorist acts such as the Manchester train station stabbing, France's Christmas market attack, Melbourne's 2018 knife attack, etc), this event never qualified to be described as a terrorist act though it has been described as 'the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history.'⁷⁷

When Nikolas Cruz massacred 17 people on Valentine's Day at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, it has well been accepted as a 'school shooting.'⁷⁸ We are quite certain the descriptions would have been different if the perpetrator had a different name or even different citizenship status. Many of such linguistic biases are propagated and accentuated by the international media enunciating the restrictive use of the descriptor violence and terrorism.

Noam Chomsky⁷⁹ has on a number of occasions reiterated that the war on terrorism was actually not declared in the year 2001 but was 'redeclared using the same rhetoric as the first declaration twenty years earlier.' He indicates that the Reagan administration

75 Katersky, Meek, Margolin and Hayden (2016), "What We Know About Omar Mateen, Suspected Orlando Nightclub Shooter," 12 June. Available: <https://abcnews.go.com/US/omar-mateen-suspected-orlando-night-club-shooter/story?id=39790797>. [Accessed 2 October 2018]

76 Shah, Hanna, Shoichet and Savidge (2017), "Dylann Roof jury: Death penalty for Charleston church shooter," 10 January. Available: <https://www.cnn.com/2017/01/10/us/dylann-roof-trial/index.html>. [Accessed 2 October 2018]

77 Los Angeles Times Staff (2017), "Las Vegas shooting victims: Portraits of the fallen," 6 October. Available: <http://www.latimes.com/projects/la-na-las-vegas-shootings-victims-list-20171002/>. [Accessed 7 October 2018] See also CBS News (2018), "Vegas Strip lights dim as shooting's first anniversary marked," 6 October. Available: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/las-vegas-shooting-anniversary-strip-lights-dim-first-anniversary-marked/>. [Accessed 7 October 2018]

78 Brown (2018), "Florida school shooting suspect shouted 'kill me' hours after taken into custody," 7 August. Available: <https://www.foxnews.com/us/florida-school-shooting-suspect-shouted-kill-me-hours-after-taken-into-custody>. [Accessed 8 October 2018]

79 Chomsky (2009), "History of US Rule in Latin America; Elections and Resistance to the coup in Honduras," See also Chomsky (2010), "The Journalist from Mars," 6 October. Available: <http://libcom.org/library/journalist-mars-noam-chomsky>. [Accessed 3 October 2018]

arrived in office 'announcing that a war on terror would be the core of US foreign policy' and subsequently fated the perceived 'evil scourge of terrorism.' War on terror was one of the two principles the administration hoped to achieve by critiquing Carter's human right policy as utopia which undermined US security interest. Also Reagan declared communism as an act of terrorism.⁸⁰ The main focus of terrorism, thus perceived, was state sponsored terrorism in the 'Islamic world.' The implication was the official tagging of terrorism as a branch or a practice pertaining to the Islamic faith. Hence terrorism became synonymous with Islam and vice versa.

Defining terrorism has been cumbersome. US code and army manual defines it succinctly as 'the calculated use of violence or the threat of violence to attain goals that are religious, political, and ideological in nature... through intimidation, coercion or instilling fear.'⁸¹ The difficulty stems from the fact that such a definition would include violent activities pursued in the name of interest and national security. This would include state sponsored terrorism and the state use of violence. It is worth emphasizing that the state sometimes manufacture terrorism and thrives on the fear of terror it creates thereby deepening the chasm of us against them. The fear of terrorism serves the interests of many such as businessmen, political ruling classes etc. Is the state's response to perceived and presupposed terrorist acts not more violent considering that the state wields all the apparatuses of violence and power?

In all fairness and justice, a definition of terrorism should meet a proper response by fulfilling the minimal moral truism and a response to an act considered terrorism should commensurate the level of mayhem perpetrated. However, such standards are not met, if ever they are defined. Terrorism is defined parochially to realise objectives – objectives which are mostly influenced by the state's sense of superiority and power. Agamben⁸² was right to point out the curious contiguity between democratic and totalitarian states. Agamben also identifies how state violence has been downplayed and ignored – ignored in the sense of legitimating state violence through rhetoric – by powerful leaders and metaphorical expressions by the media which we see in recent times in its hegemonic fashion; explicitly exuded and led by the United States.

The underlying expression of power and its hegemonic influence is apparent if an act of violence could be legitimated but not the other. The moral relativity about terrorism being

80 Carleton and Stohl (1985), "The Foreign Policy of Human Right: Rhetoric and Reality from Jimmy Carter to Ronald Reagan," *The Johns Hopkins University Press*, pp. 205-229.

81 Chomsky (2010), "The Journalist from Mars," 6 October. Available: <http://libcom.org/library/journalist-mars-noam-chomsky>. [Accessed 3 October 2018]

82 Agamben (1998), *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

motivated by religious fundamentalism and state violence/sponsored terrorism does not hold. State violence and sponsored terrorism seem not to have been captured and identified within the rubric of terrorism or what is to be considered a terror act. Malcolm Bull⁸³ brilliantly captures this in his review of 'State of Exception' as he points out that,

We are no longer citizens but detainees, distinguishable from the inmates of Guantanamo not by any difference in legal status, but only by the fact that we have not yet had the misfortune to be incarcerated – or unexpectedly executed by a missile from an unmanned aircraft.

Another important example to buttress the aforementioned is the example of the US activities in Nicaragua.⁸⁴ As Chomsky⁸⁵ mentions, Nicaragua terrorism was far more devastating than September 11 attack and it would not be wrong for them to declare a war against the United States and the leaders who declared the new war on terror. The only difference is they cannot do that because that would be considered terrorism in itself. But the US can and as we know have indiscriminately abused its power as the so-called super power. The point is that there is virtually nothing or little being said and investigated about these same acts of terror being perpetrated by the United States. War on terrorism therefore does not meet the minimal moral truism – applying the same standard to others as applied to you.⁸⁶

Existential Despair and 'Islamic Radicalisation': The Narrative of a Misfit

We have indeed sang our world into existence.⁸⁷ Innocent Muslims are mostly referred to as potential terrorists; a qualifier we find very problematic because it presupposes that the individual Muslim is a terrorist by default, thus the right conditions need to be there and we may see them blowing themselves up. This is the greatest fallacy of the post 9/11 attacks. The irony however is we have never walked out of a classroom or wore bullet proof jackets because we might meet a Muslim at some point in the day.

83 Bull (2004), "State of Exception by Giorgio Agamben, translated by Kevin Attell," 16 December. Available: <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v26/n24/malcolm-bull/states-dont-really-mind-their-citizens-dying-provided-they-dont-all-do-it-at-once-they-just-dont-like-anyone-else-to-kill-them>. [Accessed 2 October 2018]

84 International Court of Justice (1986), "Case Concerning Military and Paramilitary Activities in and against Nicaragua (Nicaragua vs. United States of America)," International Court of Justice, The Hague.

85 Chomsky (2010), "The Journalist from Mars," 6 October. Available: <http://libcom.org/library/journalist-mars-noam-chomsky>. [Accessed 3 October 2018]

86 Chomsky (2009), "History of US Rule in Latin America; Elections and Resistance to the coup in Honduras". See also Chomsky (2010), opt cited.

87 Smith (2004), "Singing Our World into Existence: International Relations Theory and September 11," *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 48, no. 3, pp. iv+499-515.

There have been almost two decades long siege, violence, aggression and human rights abuses directed at Muslims and sustained by demonizing Islam in the media. Why is a white American not regarded as a potential terrorist? Why the biases in the linguistic usage of the term terrorism? Simply! We do not consider such a thought. Bruce Hoffman in the new edition of his seminal book 'Inside Terrorism' identifies the threat that white American supremacist pose to the security of the United States.⁸⁸ This clearly is an indicative of the essential zing character of the campaign against terror which is defined and directed at a specific group of people belonging to a particular religion. Islamism has become synonymous with violence on the basis of such construction of terrorism. And those who differentiate Islamism from radical Islamism only do so hypocritically, because their variables and explanations end up alluding to the same thing.⁸⁹

Today, many Muslim youth across the globe may be identifying with terrorist networks not because there is an inherent violent in them or the religion, but because of the antagonising environment in which they find themselves and how society has turned out to be violent towards them and their identity. In point of fact, terrorist attacks carried out in the United States and other Western countries have less to do with religion or faith per se. This is not a war between religions or a 'clash of civilizations.' These attacks are outcomes of the limitations of rational choice theory and a universal knowledge claims. Every sort of difference or identity is explained away and a common progression of humanity towards one end – as seen in modernisation and theories of globalisation lauded.⁹⁰ Reiterating the above point, Steve Smith⁹¹ remarks,

This notion, which underlay Fukuyama's notion of the 'End of History', sees subjectivity and difference as temporally defined and as limited to as phase of history's unfolding. Ultimately, human nature is seen as a constant, which both allows statements about regularities and merges difference into sameness. Under this gaze, 'others' are essentially like 'us', and any differences in world views or values are seen as evidence of underdevelopment, or of the fact that these societies are at an earlier stage of development. The notion that they are not in progression towards becoming like 'us', like the West, is rejected and instead these differences are explained away as 'merely' hangovers from some earlier historical form of consciousness.

88 Hoffmam (2006), *Inside Terrorism*, Columbia University Press.

89 Ibid.

90 Smith (2004), opt cited.

91 Ibid, p. 505.

Today, home grown terrorism has become an enigma due partly to the explanation of the loss of sense of identity and hope. One of the defining propositions of existentialism is that existence precedes essence, which means that the individual is first and foremost an individual – an independently acting and responsible conscious being rather than the labels, roles, stereotypes or whatever category attributed to him/her. By this, through their own consciousness, individuals create their own values, identity and meanings of self to life. Thus, individuals define and express themselves by what meaning and identities they give themselves. This gives a sense of belonging and purpose. Whenever there is a breakdown in one or more of the defining attributes or values of one's self identity, despair sets in and this explains in part why home grown terrorism is rampant and some innocent Muslim youth are seemingly being radicalised in the name of common brotherhood and brotherliness – with Western society and Media constantly vilifying and demonizing Muslims and any person who identifies with Islamism and with Muslims being coerced to integrate and assimilate.

Mainstream Western thought and most policy makers have no way to entertain the thought that victims of terrorism are not only confined to those physically and directly affected by it but, also, those who are insecure, victimised, fearful as a result of the attack, and this illuminates why recruitment is probably on the ascendancy. Terrorism has become synonymous with Islamism and the Muslim identity despite the existence of thorough and enormous literature on the lack of correlation between the two.⁹² One's name and religion are no longer semantics in the West regardless of the many decades of cultural assimilation and integration. There is a deep felt alienation of the Muslim community in the West, yet we have failed to recognise and accept that they are also victims of these inhumane and horrific acts.

Highlights on Muslims as victims of terrorist acts brings to light their experiences as Muslims living in the West and how deep rooted alienation and hate living in such communities pushes some to identify with the course of these terrorist groups. Terrorism is therefore on the ascendant, indicative of failure of counterterrorism due partly to the very construction which leads to essentialising and alienation. It is important we note once again that Muslims are as much victims to these acts and feel the fear like any other would. Justice is truly served when perpetrators and offenders are brought to book, but not when innocent people suffer for the wrongdoings of some people who have perverted jihadism and who have taken a portion of the Quran to serve their whims and

92 Pape (2005), *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, New York: Random House. See also Pape (2006), *Dying to Win: why suicide terrorists do it*, London: Gibson Square. And Pape and Feldman (2010), *Cutting the Fuse: The Explosion of Global Suicide Terrorism and How to Stop It*, Chicago and London: The Chicago University Press.

caprices; a clear case of misrepresentation.

As Noam Chomsky⁹³ satirically asserts:

The depraved opponents of civilization itself in the year 2001 were in the 1980s the freedom fighters organized and armed by the CIA and its associates, trained by the same special forces who are now searching for them in caves in Afghanistan. They were a component of the first war against terror and acting pretty much the same way as the other components of the war against terror.

According to Chomsky⁹⁴, as far as the US and its allies are concerned, there has been the convention that 'it's only terrorism if they do it to us. When we do much worse to them, it's not terrorism.' Consequently, terrorism becomes only what an 'inferior' person or group of persons have done to a presumably 'superior' entity. Thus, the several attacks mounted by some 'superior' states and entities against others that are deemed relatively 'inferior' cannot be termed as terrorist acts. But when seemingly disaffected individuals and groups, with a certain supposedly religious affiliations or names act in a certain manner, it becomes a terrorist attack. Indeed we will agree with Sir Steven Smith when he opines that 'there is no view from nowhere' and that 'all views make assumptions about actors, identities, and interests, and all of them mix together statements about what is and what ought to be.'⁹⁵

Conclusion

Indeed identity, as asserted by Younge⁹⁶ 'is like fire. It can create warmth and comfort or burn badly and destroy. It can make connections over oceans, languages, generations and cultures. But it can also sow division among those who live side by side.' Consequently, the recent practice of identifying and associating all terrorists' acts to the Islamic religion is in a bad taste, unwarranted, despicable, untenable, and a sheer fallacy. This practice does nothing meaningful to society; it instead heightens hate, distrust, and alienation in society. The earlier policy makers, especially in the western developed nations, reconceptualise the meaning attached to terrorism and identity, the better it would be for our world and generations to come. As far as humanity is concerned, 'we are all more alike than we are unlike' and that even 'the ways in which we are unlike' (in terms of

93 Fn 413

94 Chomsky (2010), opt cited.

95 Smith (2004), opt cited, p. 503.

96 Younge (2018), "The Politics of Identity: from Potential to Pitfalls, and Symbols to Substance," *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, pp. 1-11, 12 September, p. 4.

identity) equally matters.⁹⁷

As can be readily seen from the discussion, the purpose of the authors has never been an attempt to overlook or side-step the essence of identification, be it individual or group identity, nor have we advocated for an identityless society. We have equally not made it our priority to over emphasise the relevance of any single identity over the other, neither have we sought to defend terrorism. Instead, what we sought to do (and believe have done) is to point out to the shameful identification of terrorism with Islam – making it seem as if that is all the religion and it followers teach – this is wrong; a terrorist is a terrorist and as such, labels such as ‘Islamic terrorism’ and the likes should be discarded. Instead of classifying groups as terrorists and targeting them in their daily lives, we believe more progress can be made by seeking to understand why people do what they do; knowing what motivates them; seeking the root causes of terrorist acts and addressing them appropriately without labels and tags. Efforts should be made to build trust, unity and cooperation among people of different backgrounds. Inequalities that results from perceived identity and other unnecessary social constructs should be tackled head-on.

Indeed, all identities, as indicated by Younge⁹⁸ ‘are created by us to make sense of the world that we live in.’ Thus, if we have come to the realisation that some of these social constructions are harmful, then there is the need to revise and deconstruct them. In other words, there is the need to delink ourselves from the forces and influences of the current structure of the world that has constrained and chained our minds and thoughts to a different understanding of the self, knowledge and history. This we can do better when we come to the knowledge that ‘there has never been a time in human history when someone hasn’t been trying to rally one group against another on the basis of their difference.’⁹⁹ It is this realisation that should ring the wakeup call for deconstructing these tales of misfit, especially on the question of the so-called ‘Islamic terrorism.’

In conclusion, we assert that the Boston attack by the Tsarnaev brothers and some terrorist attacks in recent past compared with other equally or even much heinous violent attacks is a clear case of a tale of misfit. Thus, by emphasising the idea of difference, acceptance and greater tolerance for particularities, the notions of an underlying universality of truth and a singular form of modernity being propagated and accentuated by discourses and discursive practices over the century have helped with the rising incidence of these atrocities.

97 Ibid.

98 Younge (2018), opt cited, p. 8.

99 Ibid, p. 10.

There is indeed the need to approach Islam with a ‘nonfundamentalist understanding’ – an approach that will not make hasty generalizations about terrorism and peoples’ religious identity.¹⁰⁰ Thus, ‘the modern debate about Islam in America and Europe’ which according to Ernst¹⁰¹ has ‘been conducted primarily on sensational journalism and ideological attack’ needs a serious rethinking. Indeed, the lack of understanding of other cultures on the part of the western societies (particularly Islam) partly contributes to the seemingly persistence misconception about terrorism and Islamic identity – what Ernst¹⁰² has rightly described as ‘the extraordinary mismatch between Euro-American ideas of Islam and the realities lived by Muslims.’ Equating Islam with global terrorism is indeed problematic. It is therefore necessary that efforts are made to eradicate ideas that reinforce in some Muslims the conviction that indeed the war on terrorism is a war against Islam. The fact that some extremists ‘hijack Islam’ and use ‘Islamic doctrine and law to legitimate terrorism’ does not make all Muslims terrorists.¹⁰³ A better understanding of religious violence and how they can be effectively dealt with is only possible once we focus on a more critical ‘richly descriptive, analytical, and explanatory’ approach while shunning ‘simplistic and binary’ accounts of violence and conflicts.¹⁰⁴

100 Ernst (2003), *Following Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World*, Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, p. xiii

101 *Ibid.*, p. xv

102 *Ibid.*, p. 4

103 Esposito (2002), *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 22.

104 Pennington (2012), *Teaching Religion and Violence*, B. K. Pennington, Ed., Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 3-4.