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Beyond Islamophobia and Islamophilia as Western Epistemic Racisms: Revisiting Runnymede Trust's Definition in a World-History Context

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The media have become obsessed with something called "Islam," which in their voguish lexicon has acquired only two meanings, both of them unacceptable and impoverishing. On the one hand, "Islam" represents the threat of a resurgent atavism, which suggests not only the menace of a return to the Middle Ages but the destruction of what Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan calls the democratic order in the Western world. On the other hand, "Islam" is made to stand for a defensive counterresponse to this first image of Islam as threat, especially when, for geopolitical reasons, "good" Moslems like the Saudi Arabians or the Afghan Moslem "freedom fighters" against the Soviet Union are in question. ... But rejection alone does not take one very far, since if we are to claim, as we must, that as a religion and as a civilization Islam *does* have a meaning very much beyond either of the two currently given it, we must first be able to provide something in the way of a space in which to speak of Islam. Those who wish either to rebut the standard anti-Islamic and anti-Arab rhetoric that dominates the media and liberal intellectual discourse, or to avoid the idealization of Islam (to say nothing of its sentimentalization), find themselves with scarcely a place to stand on, much less a place in which to move freely. (Said, 1980:488)

INTRODUCTION

It is now almost three decades since Edward Said penned the above pertinent words in his essay "Islam Through Western Eyes" published in *The Nation* soon after the publication of his *Orientalism* (1979). Apart from the not so insignificant political changes since that time—such as how the Afghan Moslem "freedom fighters" fighting the Soviet Union turned from Western powers' regional allies into their global sworn enemies in the new clothing of Al-Qaeda—the simplistic dichotomy of the two images of Islam in Western eyes as noted by Said has not drastically changed, perhaps has only been further amplified. What the decades in between clearly illustrate, in fact, is how Western Islamophobia and Islamophilia are two sides of the same coin and how readily they can become one another in the ebb and flow of imperial global geopolitics.

Is it possible that what the West regards as its ultimate foes and friends in Islam today, manifesting its Islamophobic and Islamophilic tendencies, are both, at least partly, contradictory byproducts of its own centuries-old and contemporary global imperial expeditions? Is it possible to regard both Islamophobia and Islamophilia as found today as by-products of two sides of the same phenomenon brought on by Western imperial policies pursued around the globe especially during the post WWII era? What

remains an urgent project yet to be accomplished nearly three decades after Said penned his words is the carving out of what he called a “place to stand on, ... a place in which to move freely”—here, free of readily hurled Islamophobic and Islamophilic charges—in order to peruse, among and in critical dialogue with other intellectual and spiritual world traditions, Islam’s own genuine contributions to the task at hand of maneuvering away from and beyond the treacherous or caricatured landscapes of Islamophobia and Islamophilia.

Revisiting the definitional framework offered by The Runnymede Trust in 1997 for Islamophobia, in this paper I draw on and seek to critically contribute to a conceptual framework advanced by Grosfoguel and Mielants (2006)—as informed by the works of Grosfoguel (2002, 2006, 2007), Maldonado-Torres (2004, 2006), Dussel (1994, 2004), Mignolo (2000, 2006, 2007), and Tlostanova (2006), among others—to understand and help transcend Islamophobia in a world-history context. I will argue that both Islamophobia *and* Islamophilia should be regarded as forms of Western religious, cultural, orientalist, and epistemic racism that similarly other, oversimplify, essentialize, and distort our views of the ‘really existing Islam’ as a plural *weltanschauung*—one that, like any other, has historically produced contradictory interpretative, cultural, and socio-political trends involving liberatory and imperial/oppressive aspirations.

The essential thesis advanced here is that Islamophobia and Islamophilia, far from being Western reactions to an independently developing Islamic tradition, are direct byproducts of how Western imperial (more recently, oil-based) geopolitics have helped overdevelop the static, oppressive and ultraconservative interpretations of Islam—which have often been in fact the breeding grounds of Islamic fundamentalisms and terrorisms—at the expense of marginalizing and misrepresenting its dynamic, liberatory and egalitarian interpretations as exemplified, for instance, by Sufism. I will argue that aspects of the Runnymede definition of Islamophobia represent Islamophilic tendencies that need rethinking and de/reconstruction. An alternative definitional framework for Islamophobia/Islamophilia will thereby be proposed.

In what follows I will first overview the definitional framework offered by Runnymede Trust for Islamophobia. I will then summarize the conceptual framework advanced by Grosfoguel and Mielants, et al., regarding the nature of Islamophobia as a form of religious, cultural, orientalist, and epistemic racism that is not merely additive but constitutive of the “modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system.” Then I will turn to a reexamination of the above conceptual framework followed by a critical reexamination of the Runnymede Trust’s definition of Islamophobia. An alternative definition of Islamophobia/Islamophilia is proposed in the process.

RUNNYMEDE TRUST'S DEFINITION OF ISLAMOPHOBIA

"Islamophobia" is a term that originated in the 1980s and gained wider use in response to the then contemporary events, such as the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, the advent of the Iran-Iraq war during the 1980-1988 period, the defeat of the Soviet aggression in Afghanistan by a fundamentalist religious movement aided by the U.S., the West, and their regional allies (such as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia), and, later, the fall of the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc nations and the subsequent posing of Islam in global imperial politics as an alternative nemesis to the West.

The term came to be formally coined and defined in a report titled *Islamophobia: A Challenge For Us All*,¹ published in the United Kingdom in 1997 by the Runnymede Trust, which was founded in 1968 "with the stated aim of challenging racial discrimination, influencing legislation and promoting multi-ethnicity in the UK."² The report was researched and written by the then newly established (in 1996) multi-ethnic and multi-religious Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia chaired by Professor Gordon Conway and composed of eighteen members.³ Since the events of September 11, 2001 and the significant rise in biased and discriminatory policies and behaviors toward Islam and Moslems, the term has achieved much wider circulation.

The Runnymede report defined Islamophobia and "closed views of Islam" as follows:

1. Islam [is] seen as a single monolithic bloc, static and unresponsive to new realities.
2. Islam [is] seen as separate and other—(a) not having any aims or values in common with other cultures (b) not affected by them (c) not influencing them.
3. Islam [is] seen as inferior to the West—barbaric, irrational, primitive, sexist.
4. Islam [is] seen as violent, aggressive, threatening, supportive of terrorism, engaged in 'a clash of civilisations'.
5. Islam [is] seen as a political ideology, used for political or military advantage.
6. Criticisms made by Islam of 'the West' [are] rejected out of hand.

¹"Islamophobia: A Challenge to Us All (Summary)." London, UK: Runnymede Trust, p. 2. 1997. The summary and full report may be obtained from The Runnymede Trust, Suite 106, London Fruit & Wool Exchange, Brush field St, London E1 6EP, United Kingdom. The summary can be downloaded from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Runnymede_Trust.

²http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Runnymede_Trust

³Mastoid Ahmed, Akbar Ahmed, Zaki Badawi, The Rt Revd Richard Chartres, Ian Hargreaves, Phillip Lewis, Zahida Manzoor, Rabbi Julia Neuberger, Trevor Phillips, Sebastian Poulter, Usha Prashar, Hamid Qureshi, Nasreen Rehman, Saba Risaluddin, Imam Abduljalil Sajid, Richard Stone, and The Revd John (see the Runnymede report summary, p. 3).

7. Hostility towards Islam [is] used to justify discriminatory practices towards Muslims and exclusion of Muslims from mainstream society.
8. Anti-Muslim hostility [is] accepted as natural and 'normal'.⁴

Non-Islamophobic and "open views of Islam," in contrast, are described by the report as follows:

1. Islam [is] seen as diverse and progressive, with internal differences, debates and development.
2. Islam [is] seen as interdependent with other faiths and cultures— (a) having certain shared values and aims (b) affected by them (c) enriching them.
3. Islam [is] seen as distinctively different, but not deficient, and as equally worthy of respect.
4. Islam [is] seen as an actual or potential partner in joint cooperative enterprises and in the solution of shared problems.
5. Islam [is] seen as a genuine religious faith, practised sincerely by its adherents.
6. Criticisms [by Islam] of 'the West' and other cultures are considered and debated.
7. Debates and disagreements with Islam do not diminish efforts to combat discrimination and exclusion.
8. Critical views of Islam are themselves subjected to critique, lest they be inaccurate and unfair.⁵

In an editorial note to the collection of conference papers guest co-edited by Grosfoguel and Mielants (2006), I noted that, while the definitional framework for Islamophobia as proposed by the Runnymede Trust does not imply its misuse as a vehicle for dismissing criticisms made of one or another Islamic belief or of Islam as a whole, opponents of the term have suggested that the term lends itself to silencing "legitimate" criticisms that one may raise against Islam or one or another of its varieties.⁶ As a result, I noted, some have responded by accusing those who have warned against Islamophobia for being themselves tinted by various degrees of Islamophilia,⁷ i.e., of lending uncritical support and wholesale admiration to

⁴Ibid. p. 2.

⁵Ibid.

⁶In a letter published in 2006 in the French weekly newspaper *Charlie Hebdo*, warning against Islamic "totalitarianism" and signed by Salman Rushdie and several others, for instance, Islamophobia has been referred to as a "wretched concept that confuses criticism of Islam as a religion and stigmatization of those who believe in it" (for a full text of the letter see <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4764730.stm>). Ironically, the letter was published following the widespread global protests in the Islamic world to the publication of mocking and derogatory cartoons of the founder of Islam in Western media, purportedly as a mechanism to "test" the openness of Islam to criticism.

⁷"Islamophilia is a controversial term (believed to have been first used by critic of Islam Daniel Pipes) employed by some journalists, media commentators and politicians to

Islam and blindly accepting its associated ideas and practices. I concluded then that such criticisms of the term Islamophobia and its use, however, often fail to make a distinction between the definitional coordinates of the term itself as coined in the Runnymede Trust report and the misuse that the term (like any other term) may suffer in ideological and political debates. Clearly, I argued, the definition provided by the Runnymede Trust for Islamophobia does not exempt Islam or any of its variants from being subjected to criticism nor does it limit the option, within a constructive dialogical framework, for those believing in and practicing Islam to present their responses to the criticisms launched against their views.

In light of the fact that the term “Islamophilia” has been used by those critical of the term “Islamophobia” in general and of the definitional framework offered by the Runnymede Report’s in particular to express their dissatisfaction with the term, for the purpose of further clarification and exploration, I will return at the end of this paper to the controversy over the definitions of the term(s). For this purpose, let me first review the conceptual framework advanced by Grosfoguel and Mielants before proceeding further in a critical reexamination of the latter followed by a critical reconsideration of the Runnymede definition.

ISLAMOPHOBIA AS WESTERN RELIGIOUS, CULTURAL, ORIENTALIST, AND EPISTEMIC RACISM

In their article titled “The Long-Durée Entanglement Between Islamophobia and Racism in the Modern/Colonial Capitalist/Patriarchal World-System”—an introduction to a collection of proceedings of an international conference on Islamophobia they co-organized in 2006 in Paris, France⁸—Ramón Grosfoguel and Eric Mielants proposed that Islamophobia is not a new, conjuncturally coincidental, or structurally epiphenomenal feature of the capitalist world-economy but one that has been a centrally constitutive element of the modern world for centuries, having taken a variety of forms entangled with religious, cultural, orientalist, and epistemic racism and modes of racial othering. They argued, in other words, that, while the term “Islamophobia” may be new in the recent historical context, its content and what it represents as racism and a practice of racial othering is not anything new when considered in the world-historical context of the emergence, development, and decline of the modern world-system. The novelty of the argument advanced was thereby

describe unwavering and uncritical admiration of Islam and used to counteract what many believe to be spurious accusations of Islamophobia. British journalist Julie Burchill also complained of a kind of “mindless Islamophilia” that was “considerably more dangerous” than Islamophobia owing to what she claimed was a white washing of Islamic History and its use as a way of stifling debate” ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamophilia_\(neologism\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamophilia_(neologism))).

⁸ See “Othering Islam: Proceedings of the International Conference on “The Post-September 11 New Ethnic/Racial Configurations in Europe and the United States: The Case of Islamophobia” (Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, Paris, France, June 2-3, 2006).” *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* V(1), 2006.

in regard to both the exposition of the *systemically constitutive* role of Islamophobia in the making of the modern world and to its *world-historically evolving forms*.

In order to better appreciate and further build upon the conceptual framework as advanced by Grosfoguel and Mielants, a more detailed consideration of their perspective is necessary here.

Grosfoguel and Mielants' view on Islamophobia in a world-history context is one that follows a broader conceptual framework as advanced in Grosfoguel's earlier writings (Grosfoguel and Cervantes-Rodriguez 2002, Grosfoguel 2006, 2007). Central to this framework is the recognition that the modern world-system is not a unillogical world reducible to a singular economic motive (Wallerstein 1979; Hopkins and Wallerstein 1982) but a complex system of multiple, crisscrossing and overlapping, economic, political, and cultural hierarchical structures in which the latter two are not simply additive but also constitutive of the economic and the overall social structure. Culture and politics, in other words, contrary to the classical Marxist perspective still informing the world-systems analysis, are not merely superstructural but also organically constitutive of the economic processes and vice versa, such that no a priori primacy of one factor over others could be established.⁹

Moreover and similarly, the authors also insist that imperialism and coloniality are not a past and transient, but a continuing and structurally necessary feature of the modern world, necessitating ever newer forms of what Hatem Bazian (2007) calls "organizing principles" of imperial rule, for which various modes of cultural, religious, gender, and racial subordination and stratification are continually reinvented and employed to maintain the systemic status quo.

"Post-"coloniality, amid such a world-system constituted of overlapping and interconstitutive hierarchical structures, is thereby an illusion, one that merely helps to ideologically hide its essentially continuing imperial/colonial nature. In this regard, the close affinity of the authors' views with and its indebtedness to what Anibal Quijano has called the "coloniality of power" is evident (cf. Quijano 2000). Colonialism is not a matter of the past; coloniality is a continuing, ever renewing process essential to the workings and survival of the modern world-system.

For the above reasons, from this perspective it is not fruitful to characterize the modern world as simply "capitalist" but, at the cost of sounding awkwardly long, as a "modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system." Racial, gender, religious, and imperial/colonial hierarchies, in other words, are not to be seen as merely additive but, instead, as structurally constitutive building blocks of the capitalist system, necessary

⁹ For a similar critique of Marxist perspective and world-systems analysis see Tamdgidi's *Advancing Utopistics: The Three Component Parts and Errors of Marxism* (Paradigm Publishers, 2007).

components that the system must continually produce and reproduce in order to maintain itself.

Using such a conceptual framework, it becomes possible for the authors to consider Islamophobia itself not simply as an epiphenomenal but as a constitutive element and “organizing principle” of the modern world, an element which has taken a variety of forms over the centuries and whose historical making can be traced to the origins of the world-system in the long sixteenth century, particularly marked historically by the events of the year 1492. In Mignolo’s words, as quoted by the authors:

In this year, the Christian Spanish monarchy re-conquered Islamic Spain expelling Jews and Arabs from the Spanish peninsula while simultaneously ‘discovering’ the Americas and colonizing indigenous peoples. These ‘internal’ and ‘external’ conquests of territories and people not only created an international division of labor of core and periphery, but also constituted the internal and external imagined boundaries of Europe related to the global racial/ethnic hierarchy of the world-system, privileging populations of European origin over the rest. Jews and Arabs became the subaltern internal ‘Others’ within Europe, while indigenous people became the external ‘Others’ of Europe (Mignolo 2000).” (cited in Grosfoguel and Mielants, 2006:2)

The authors then trace the “long-durée entanglement between Islamophobia and racism,” noting how an originally religious difference between Christianity, Islam, and New World Indian indigenous culture became rearticulated into a racial difference and hierarchy whereby Moslems as a “people with the wrong God” and “New World” Indians as a “people without a God” (Maldonado-Torres, 2006) were separated from the Christian Europeans as “others” and inferiorized into the strata of respectively lower or non-human beings (Dussel 1994). It is this racial othering of Islam in religious form that then metamorphoses into cultural (following the secularizations of Western culture) and more specifically orientalist forms across the following centuries, in terms of confronting a people without civilization, barbaric, exotic, sexist and irrational, merging in subtler and covert forms with new cultural practices of racism in contemporary times when the more overt biological rationalizations of racial stratification and domination could not hold legitimacy in the face of the onslaught of contemporary anti-colonial and civil rights movements. Islamophobia is simply a new word that expresses the latest “organizing

principle” of a longstanding religious, cultural, and orientalist racism toward Islam as an alternative civilizational project.¹⁰

If we regard capitalist patriarchal coloniality, religious and cultural racism, and orientalism, not as additive but as overlapping and progressively narrowing concentric circles, it becomes clear why the further identification of Islamophobia as epistemic racism takes such a central role in Grosfoguel and Mielants’ analysis of the significance of Islamophobia in maintaining the modern world. Islamophobia, in other words, is most fundamentally and generatively present in the foundations of Western epistemic architecture. A capitalist world-system without a drive to continually produce and reproduce Islamophobia in its epistemic foundations in one or another form would be inconceivable. The emphasis on epistemic racism in the authors’ non-reductive sociological analytical framework allows them to highlight how such underlying epistemic constituents help maintain and reproduce orientalist, cultural, religious, and social/institutional forms of racism:

Epistemic racism leads to the Orientalization of Islam. This is crucial because Islamophobia as a form of racism is not exclusively a social phenomenon but also an epistemic question. Epistemic racism allows the West to not have to listen to the critical thinking produced by Islamic thinkers on Western global/imperial designs. The thinking coming from non-Western locations is not considered worthy of attention except to represent it as “uncivilized,” “primitive,” “barbarian,” and “backward.” Epistemic racism allows the West to unilaterally decide what is best for Muslim people today and obstruct any possibility for a serious inter-cultural dialogue. Islamophobia as a form of racism against Muslim people is not only manifested in the labor market, education, public sphere, global war against terrorism, or the global economy, but also in the epistemological battleground about the definition of the priorities of the world today. (Grosfoguel and Mielants, 2006:9)

The significance of the above realization is best captured in the authors’ reference to what Enrique Dussel has characterized as the epistemic racism embedded in Descartes’ “I think, therefore I am.” In Dussel’s words, it is the “I conquer, therefore I am” that implicitly contextualizes the Western mode of knowing based on “objective” rationality whereby the correctness and truthfulness of the Western epistemology is merely presumed as a universal fact, unlocated in and floating above the particular imperial/colonial historicities of time and geographies of space:

¹⁰ For a similar view of the significance of orientalism, in particular in regard to Islam, in the rise and maintenance of the modern capitalist world-system see *Islam and the Orientalist World-System* (Samman and Al-Zo’by, 2008).

...[A]s Enrique Dussel (1994), Latin American philosopher of liberation, reminds us, Descartes' ego-cogito ("I think, therefore I am") was preceded by 150 years of the ego-conquiro ("I conquer, therefore I am"). The God-eye view defended by Descartes transferred the attributes of the Christian God to Western men (the gender here is not accidental). But this was only possible from an Imperial Being, that is, from the panoptic gaze of someone who is at the center of the world because he has conquered it....

What is the relevance of this epistemic discussion to Islamophobia? It is from Western hegemonic identity politics and epistemic privilege that the 'rest' of the epistemologies and cosmologies in the world are subalternized as myth, religion and folklore, and that the downgrading of any form of non-Western knowledge occurs. The former leads to epistemic racism, that is, the inferiorization and subalternization of non-Western knowledge, while the latter leads to Orientalism. It is also from this hegemonic epistemic location that Western thinkers produce Orientalism about Islam. The subalternization and inferiorization of Islam were not merely a downgrading of Islam as spirituality, but also as an epistemology. (Grosfoguel and Mielants, 2006:8)

The above theme was more or less further amplified in other contributions¹¹ in the volume for which the essay by Grosfoguel and Mielants served as an introduction. The latter closed their article by drawing attention to this important insight—as underlined by inspirations drawn from Tlostanova's contribution to the volume—that to counter Islamophobia it is not sufficient to oppose and expose it but to pose alternative, non-Islamophobic, and non-racist epistemic frameworks where alternative inclusive visions of a better world can be cross-culturally and cross-paradigmatically cultivated and practiced. They wrote:

... [I]n "Life in Samarkand" Madina Tlostanova provides us with insight into a potential way out of present dilemmas. Her

¹¹ "Islamophobia/Hispanophobia: The (Re)Configuration of the Racial Imperial/Colonial Matrix" (Mignolo 2006); "No Race to the Swift: Negotiating Racial Identity in Past and Present Eastern Europe" (Boatcă 2006); "How Washington's 'War on Terror' Became Everyone's: Islamophobia and the Impact of September 11 on the Political Terrain of South and Southeast Asia" (Noor 2006); "Militarization, Globalization, and Islamist Social Movements: How Today's Ideology of Islamophobia Fuels Militant Islam" (Reifer 2006); "Muslim Responses to Integration Demands in the Netherlands since 9/11" (Tayob); and "Life in Samarkand: Caucasus and Central Asia vis-à-vis Russia, the West, and Islam" (Tlostanova 2006).

study of cultural and ethnic hybrids in both Central Asia and the Caucasus, and the concurrent significance of Sufism in the region, in opposition to the binary logics imposed by both the Russian/Soviet Empire on the one hand and the capitalist world-system on the other hand, could very well be an alternative epistemology ignored for too long. (p. 11)

To sum up, in Grosfoguel and Mielant's view, Islamophobia as a fear of the Islamic other is not new but is a structurally necessary and historically evolving phenomenon in the modern world-system that has taken various forms in entanglement with religious, cultural, orientalist, and epistemic racism. Its function has been to enable imperial rule over the Islamic other by justifications involving purported confrontations with a "people with the wrong god" or "people without a civilization," barbaric, inferior, violent, exotic, sexist, and irrational, whose knowledge is not worthy of serious intellectual consideration.

ISLAMOPHOBIA AND ISLAMOPHILIA: THE JANUS FACES OF THE ORIENTALIST WORLD-SYSTEM

The conceptual framework as advanced by Grosfoguel and Mielants and briefly summarized above is fruitful in understanding the structural causes and evolving historical forms of Islamophobia in modern times. However, it is important to note three aspects of the perspective that need further reconsideration, clarification and development.

First, it is important to note that just because a civilizational project has subjected another to imperial/colonial subjugation and racial inferiorization does not mean that the subjugated civilizational project itself was devoid of similar tendencies in the first place. The authors themselves write, for instance, "The 'imperial difference' after 1492 is the result of imperial relations between European empires versus Non-European Empires and we will characterize it here as the result of the 'imperial relation'" (p. 3). Or, elsewhere they recognize that "the European Empires' relations with the Islamic Empires turned from an 'imperial relation' into a 'colonial relation' ..." (p. 3). In other words, it is always important not to forget that historical Islam itself was not exempt from having in it tendencies toward imperial and colonial conquest of others. And what do empires do?

Two, the authors themselves recognize historically regressive and oppressive tendencies that associate themselves with Islam. For instance, when considering the case of Tariq Ramadan as a European Muslim subjected to undue harassment and censorship by Western governments, the authors find it necessary to dissociate him as a "moderate reformist European Islamic thinker" who is "critical of Islamic fundamentalism, suicide bombers, lapidation against women, terrorism, etc." (p. 9). In other words, here we have a recognition, again, that, just because a civilizational project is subjected to imperial/colonial subjugation and oppression, this

does not mean that the subjugated civilizational project is uniformly moderate or reactionary but that it contains contradictory and conflicting interpretations and practices of its seemingly singular and unifying ideological identity, as Islam is often taken to be.

Third, and in light of the above two points, it may be fruitful to consider the inter-imperial and inter-civilizational relation not as a simplified and zero-sum master-slave binary in which one side simply rules and subjugates the other but in terms of how the imperial and oppressive tendencies (and, in the same token, subaltern and resistance movements) across the civilizational projects historically engage in complex modes not only of politico-military and economic but also of religious, cultural, aesthetic, and intellectual articulation over time in order to preserve (or promote or transform) their hierarchical class, status, and power positions not only across but also within their own respective civilizational projects. Once we adopt this more complicated lens in exploring the inter-civilizational relations, it becomes evident that the perpetuation of imperial and colonial rule and subjugation has often historically necessitated not a one-sided but a double-sided “stick and carrot” policy on the part of commonly interested dominant socio-political forces and tendencies across civilizational projects.

More specifically, a closer examination of historical record will clearly indicate that the metamorphosis, across the centuries, of an originally religious difference into successive forms of imperial/colonial, religious, cultural, orientalist, and epistemic racism, which has most recently been manifested in the terminological clothing of Islamophobia, in the Western eyes cannot be easily separated from a parallel and also centrally constitutive process that may best be called Islamophilia. Islamophobia and Islamophilia in many ways represent the stick and carrot aspects of a singular imperial/colonial policy in the Western attitude toward the historical Islam and its challenges to the West as both a complementary and alternative, though not necessarily antagonistic, civilizational project.

A. Broadening Our World-Historical Horizons

Before elaborating further on such a Janus-faced history of Western imperial attitudes toward Islam, it is important to step back and further expand the horizons of the world-historical framework used for understanding (and hopefully transcending) Islamophobia. For this purpose, I think it will help to draw upon a conceptual framework for understanding imperialism in a world-historical (and not just Western/modern) context that I recently advanced in *Review*, the journal of the Fernand Braudel Center (Tamdgidi 2006b).

Therein, I tried to tentatively illustrate, by way of advancing a nonreductive dialectical conception of the history of imperialism in contrast to materialist approaches, both the relative historical validity and the transitory (heuristic) nature of the primacy of economies and their analyses

in world-historical social science. The dialecticity of the conception as proposed allows for politics, culture, and economy to have similarly played primary parts in the rise of distinct forms of imperialism in world history corresponding to ancient, medieval, and modern historical eras across multiple, but increasingly synchronous and convergent, regional trajectories. The nonreductive dialectical mode of analysis reverses and relativizes the taken-for-granted universalistic modes of analysis of imperialism in terms of class, allowing for considerations of political domination, cultural conversion, and economic exploitation as historical forms of deepening imperial practice that violate self-determining modes of human organization and development. Power-, status-, and class-based relations and stratifications are thereby reinterpreted as distinct forms of imperial practice that now assumes a substantively generative position vis-à-vis those structural forms.

I argued that, given the non-synchronous tempo of emergence and development of various ancient civilizations, imperial expansions across civilizations also took place non-synchronously across the globe, adding significant complexity to the trajectory of development of each community in light of the more or less advanced states of development of populations in other regions with which they came in contact through imperial expansion. I further argued that three major forms of imperialism may be distinguished from one another during the long imperial era up to the present: political, cultural, and economic. To be sure, all empires and imperial expansions involve all these three dimensions. I have argued elsewhere for treatment of culture, polity, and economy in terms of part/whole dialectics (Tamdgidi 2007b). The political and the cultural processes must not be conceptualized as being “non-economic” but as integral to it. Indeed, it was the political and cultural preconditions set by precapitalist empires that made possible the modern predominantly economic form of imperialism. What distinguishes the three forms of imperialism from one another is the primary means by which the incorporation of new groups, communities, and regions into the empire is carried out and maintained. In political imperialism, the primary motives are militaristic invasion, control, and domination of other communities and civilizations. In cultural imperialism, the violence of ideological conversion of other communities to one’s own cultural and religious beliefs becomes the key motivating factor. In economic imperialism, the primary motive is the exploitative integration of the natural and human resources and wealth of other communities. The key processes distinguishing the three forms of imperialism are thereby political domination, cultural conversion, and economic exploitation.

We need not uniformly impose a materialist or idealistic logic across the three imperial periods to uncover a universalistic and trans-historical “economic basis” for political or cultural imperialism or a cultural basis for political and economic imperialism or a political basis for cultural and economic imperialism. These distinct forms could exist as developmental

phases of imperialism or even exist contemporaneously within or across clashing empires. The move from outright dominative political modes of imperialism to more subtle cultural and economic modes involves a deepening of the imperial relations of ruling. All aspects may be present, but, in each period, one or another mode of imperialism becomes a predominant mode, casting its hue on other motives. The relative lack of economic development under political and cultural imperialism itself can be explained by the extra-economic determinations of social development during these periods, not vice versa. In contrast, it is the establishment of economic foundations of cultural hegemony and political domination in the modern period that has made possible the deceptive, seemingly autonomous and “sovereign,” cultural and political forms of neocolonialism present in the contemporary period.

In broad world-historical outlines, although political imperialism may be considered to have originated back in 2300 B.C. with the rise of the Akkadian empire, it was in the aftermath of the Indo-Europeans invasions of the south and the rise of the Assyrian empire circa 800 B.C. that the classical period took shape, later reaching its height in the Persian, Hellenic, and Roman empires in west Asia and Europe, Maurya and Han empires in south and east Asia, and the old and new Maya empires in the pre-Columbian Americas—non-synchronously across space. Classical periods entered their structural crises during A.D. 300-500 and were gradually followed by cultural imperialisms of Zoroastrian (Sassanid), Christian (Byzantine), Islamic (Arabic), Hindu (Gupta), Buddhist (Tang and Sung), and pre-Columbian religious empires (Inca, Aztec, and Taltec), which presided over various increasingly synchronous “medieval” periods. The fall of Constantinople in A.D. 1450 ushered a rapid, globally synchronous phase of transition to the modern period characterized by the rise of economic empires originating in Western Europe. The older model of imperialism characterized by the monopolistic drive of a single power increasingly proving to be a failure, through the sheer violence of trial and error, the modern economic empires invented collective imperialism, which became finally and formally established in the mid-twentieth century, after two world wars, with the formal institutionalization of the “United Nations.” This innovation in imperialism, long in the making since the fifteenth century, in effect created the most successful and enduring world-empire in history characterized by a singular economy but of multiple cultures and polities organized in a system of hierarchical core, with peripheral and semi-peripheral “nation-states” (Wallerstein 1979, 1996). By mid-twentieth century, the whole face of the globe became finally integrated into the economic world-system of collective imperialism.

The relevance of the above framework for the subject under consideration is significant. Islam was not itself a homogeneous and monolithic civilizational reality confronting the rising Western civilizational project in the long sixteenth century but one that itself historically contained

contradictory and conflicting tendencies since its very beginnings, including imperial and subaltern tendencies as well as diverse class-, gender-, and ethno-cultural interpretations of the Koran and Prophet's sayings and traditions. Previously (2006), I have noted how it is important to make a distinction between the original religious doctrines and teachings on one hand and the imperial use to which they were put by the emerging empires of the medieval periods on the other. Religion in itself is not a culprit for imperialism, as much as philosophy and law were not so for political imperialism during the classical periods nor science for economic imperialism in the modern period. That these fragmented forms of human knowledge became increasingly split from one another and acquired an ideological character and were thereby substantively and organizationally manipulated and revised to become primary or secondary means of imperial expansion were altogether different processes. As such, they must be distinguished from the reasons for which these world-outlooks were originally invented in ancient civilizations as by-products of the essentially curious, creative, and artful human endeavor.

The point here is to emphasize that, in considering the process through which Islam in the eyes and policies of the West became entangled with colonial, religious, cultural, orientalist, and epistemic racisms in the long durée rise of the "modern/colonial patriarchal/capitalist world-system," we need not ignore the internal complexity, heterogeneity, and hierarchical cartography of Islam as not simply a civilizational but also an imperial project, albeit in its cultural (in contrast to Western economic) imperial form bent on forceful (though not necessarily always violent) cultural-religious conversion of others. And in doing so, we need not attribute all that was ushered by Islam since its inception with an imperial motive since the complexity of Islam, like any other civilizational project, can hardly be contained in a singular, all positive or all negative, logical model. The relevance of this more complex understanding of Islam becomes more significant if we alternatively ask the question what the contacts with the emerging and then rising Western imperial project and the latter's colonialist designs and expeditions did to the development or rather under- and/or over-development of one or another tendency in the complex cartography of the really existing historical Islam during the long durée of successive Western incorporative efforts and imperial/colonial aggressions.

B. Also Considering Islamophilia

Islamophobia and Islamophilia are two sides of the West's orientalist attitude toward Islam. Both signify and serve, based on false and manipulative (intentioned or not) premises, to erect misrepresentative views of the reality of Islam so as to legitimate its cooptation by coercion or consent. They are two Janus faced policies that serve to misrepresent and misshape the historical Islam in favor of the West's short-term or long-term economic, geo-political, cultural and even aesthetic interests.

What would have been the really existing Islam like if the West did not have, as recently as in the 20th century, a deepening strategic interest in the oil and energy resources of the region precipitating modes of economic, politico-military, and cultural policies that seek to secure a strategic and long-lasting base among an ultraconservative Saudi leadership in the geo-spiritual heart of Islam who wields the sword of an outdated and static view of Islam and of “Islamic” behavior in domestic and global affairs? Who would have financially and politically aided the Moslem “freedom fighters” in Afghanistan against the Soviet aggression—as did the Saudi government and the repressive Pakistani regime under Zia-ul-Haq (which presided over the “radical” Islamization of Pakistan)—and how would the spiritual heart of Islam been represented differently had it not been possible to strengthen, through long-term politico-military treaties, the ultra-orthodox face of Islam? What would the heart, and the face, of Islam be like, if the West had not conducted significant, covert and overt, direct or indirect, interference in the lives of Muslims in the Middle East and beyond? What would the heart and face of Islam be like if it did not have to cope and deal, amid unrelenting violence and multiple wars, with the occupation of Palestinian lands and subjugation of a whole people via the agency of the last remaining settler-colonial state that is Israel? What would have been the extent of economic prosperity, cultural vitality, formal education and political visions and sensibilities of Moslems as a whole (and not limited to a select few) if the Moslem population had not been subjected to decades, if not centuries, of direct or indirect colonial rule and imperial designs aided by local regimes perpetuating outdated monarchic (Jordan, Saudi Arabia) or de facto dictatorial (Egypt) administrative forms of government and political rule?

Islamophilia is the other side of the Western orientalist attitude toward Islam, seeking to one-sidedly amplify, strengthen, and reinforce those elements and agencies in Islam that best suit the economic interests, political security, and cultural, moral, philosophical, scientific, and aesthetic interests of the West and its orientalist looking glass self. Bush’s Islamophilia toward Saudi rulers who also pursue “Middle Age” policies domestically with respect to, for instance, women may appear to sharply contrast with his and his wife’s “dedication” to the liberation of women in Afghanistan. But the two policies are two sides of the same attitude on the part of the West that helps preserve, strengthen, and reinforce the same misguided and misrepresentative trends in, for instance, the realm of gender relations in Islam. With one hand, the West plants the seeds of cultural ultraconservatism that it claims to be seeking to eradicate and liberate with the other hand. This Janus faced carrot and stick policy that helps deform Islam underlies and, in fact, justifies in the imperial mind the continuation and perpetuation of the status quo in the West’s foreign policy toward Islam and helps fuel and engender both Islamophobic and Islamophilic attitudes in Western media and wider Western public opinion.

It is the lack of historical perspective and critical sociological imagination on the part of the lay Western population, fueled by short-term memory and amnesia perpetuated by the Western media, that mischaracterizes the problems of Islam as if they separately and independently evolved alongside a West that pretends it has had nothing to do with the rise of “backwardness” and “ignorance” among Moslems. At the very same time that Western media self-righteously boast at ridiculing Islamic religious beliefs for the higher cause and in the higher interest of defending freedoms of speech, they ignore the extent to which their governments for decades sought to install or desperately secure the lives and regimes of one or another regional ally (read dictatorship) in Shah’s Iran, Saddam’s Iraq, etc., regimes that did their utmost to violate human rights and freedoms of speech amid their Moslem subjects.

In the realm of art and literature, it is difficult to deny the extent to which the works of Islamic thinkers have been subjected, albeit with good intentions, to the mistranslation and misrepresentations at the hand of Western writers. A case in point may be that of how the quatrains of Omar Khayyam were received by the West. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in her famous article ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ (1988) noted how “writers like Edward FitzGerald, the ‘translator’ of the Rubayyat of Omar Khayyam ... helped to construct a certain picture of the Oriental woman through the supposed ‘objectivity’ of translation” (1994 [1988]: 102). The key point regarding the relevance of Khayyam to the argument advanced here is that it helps to illustrate well the juxtaposition of an oriental vs. an authentic representation of his thought. Just because a FitzGerald mistranslated Khayyam and helped to construct an orientalist view of his poetry, his philosophy, and in fact of his spirituality and of the “East,” does not mean that an authentic representation of Khayyam’s thought is not warranted or possible. The most telling, if not degrading by-product of the introduction of Omar Khayyam to the world through FitzGerald, has been the notion that Khayyam’s culture is incapable of representing itself through producing verse translations of its own to convey the beauty and subtlety of his quatrains, that his culture needs a FitzGerald to give the West a taste of Khayyam in English because his culture cannot, that his culture cannot represent itself, that it must be represented.¹²

A similar example most recently has been the way in which Rumi’s mystical poetry has been received and “translated” by Western authors. Coleman Barks does not even pretend to have known Persian when translating Rumi and has based much of his translations on secondary translations of yet other Westerners. And yet, he and the mass of the audience that has nevertheless found some glimmer of Rumi’s message amid Barks’s “abbreviated” translations takes his translations as the most genuine

¹² For an elaboration on this theme see my “Orientalist and Liberating Discourses of East-West Difference: Revisiting Edward Said and the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam” (2005).

representative of Rumi's thoughts and intentions. In his words, for instance, Rumi's love of God turns into:

Barks:

*"If you don't have a woman that lives with you,
why aren't you looking? If you have one, why aren't
you satisfied?"*

Arberry's original translation (which Barks used):

*"If you have no beloved,
why do you not seek one. And if you have attained the
Beloved, why do you not rejoice?"¹³*

The extent to which what the West hates and loves about Islam is a fabrication of its own imagination rather than based on a sound, direct, and in-depth understanding of Islamic culture and values cannot be so easily measured as in the translation rendered above. Even when the mistranslation and misrepresentation is acknowledged, even with all good intentions, by a FitzGerald himself and those who have studied and compared his translations with the quatrains in the original, the Islamophobia or Islamophilia internal to the subjectivities of Moslems themselves, especially those educated and socialized amid Western culture also shape the outcome of the ensued civilizational dialogue. The realities that generate Islamophobia and Islamophilia, while being strongly generated, shaped, or rather misshaped, by decades if not centuries of Western imperial policy and colonization, have also penetrated the really existing Islam and been reified to the extent that distortions that were originally strongly precipitated due to imperial Western imaginations and policies now appear as if they are essential attributes of Islam—hence generating Islamophobic and/or Islamophilic reactions in Western eyes. Said put this misfortune quite aptly in 1980:

For the first time in history (for the first time, that is, on such a scale) the Islamic world may be said to be learning about itself in part by means of images, histories and information manufactured in the West. If one adds to this the fact that students and scholars in the Islamic world are still dependent upon U.S. and European libraries and institutions of learning for what now passes as Middle Eastern studies (consider, for example, that there isn't a single first-rate, usable library of

¹³ Quoted from the message of "Ron" as found in <http://rumi.tribe.net/thread/320bcd73-b473-47cc-a45f-d14d9c285132>. Visit the site for a heated discussion of this subject among Rumi enthusiasts.

Arabic material in the entire Islamic world), plus the fact that English is a world language in a way that Arabic isn't, plus the fact that for its elite the Islamic world is now producing a managerial class of basically subordinate natives who are indebted for their economies, their defense establishments and for their political ideas to the worldwide consumer-market system controlled by the West—one gets an accurate, although extremely depressing, picture of what the media revolution (serving a small segment of the societies that produce it) has done to Islam. (p. 490)

C. Beyond Islamophobia and Islamophilia: Critical Self-Reflexivity as an Essential Insight from Sufism

The Prophet of Islam said, "Whosoever knows his self, knows his Lord"; That is, self-knowledge leads to knowledge of the Divine. Sufism takes this saying (hadith) very seriously and also puts it into practice. It provides, within the spiritual universe of the Islamic tradition, the light necessary to illuminate the dark corners of our soul and the keys to open the doors to the hidden recesses of our being so that we can journey within and know ourselves, this knowledge leading ultimately to the knowledge of God, who resides in our heart/center. (Nasr, 2007:5)

Perhaps one way to seek alternative epistemologies to global knowledge and transformation would be to scrutinize the modality of antisystemic behavior gripping many social movements in the modern historical period and seek innovative "othersystemic"¹⁴ and utopystic¹⁵ ways out of the global crisis that are more concerned with building the alternative worlds in the here and now than posing them as goals to be achieved in the future.

The world to be known and transformed is not just 'out there' but 'in here' as well, in the intricate modes of thinking, feeling, sensing, relating, processing, and acting to which all of us have been more or less habituated as a result of the blind workings of what Grosfoguel and Mielants aptly call the "modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system." The Anzaldúan proposal for the simultaneity of self and global transformation (Anzaldúa

¹⁴Cf. Mohammad H. Tamdgidi, "Open the *Antisystemic Movements: The Book, the Concept, and the Reality.*" *Review* (Journal of the Fernand Braudel Center), XXIV, 2, summer 2001, 299-336.

¹⁵Tamdgidi, Mohammad H. Forthcoming. "I Change Myself, I Change the World': Anzaldúa's Sociological Imagination in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza.*" *Humanity and Society*. See also my *Advancing Utopistics: The Three Component Parts and Errors of Marxism* (Paradigm Publishers, 2007).

1987; cf. Tamdgidi, forthcoming), her innovative alchemy of self and world transformation as a way out of the global crisis, has intimate affinities with the Sufi and esoteric spiritual ways of changing the world through radical self-knowledge and inner transformation. For sure, Sufi ways of change may also learn from our world social forums to not limit the scope of knowing and transformative behavior to the intrapersonal landscapes—expanding the realm of selfhood to that of the collective global community.

Beyond Islamophobia and Islamophilia, the sociology of self-knowledge as advanced in my work (Tamdgidi 2002, 2002-, 2007a) seeks to draw attention to the voices and traditions of esotericism and mysticism, including those in Islam, that have for millennia also agonized over the human condition and sought ways of bringing the alienated human “reeds” (as Rumi would have it) together as parts of a common humanity. Islamophobes cannot ignore the voices of Rumi, of Hafiz, of Jami, of Sa’di, and of Khayyam, among many others, arising from the landscapes of mystical Islam, voices that for millennia have attracted the love and admiration and inspiration of the world to the poignancy of their logic and epistemology and the poetic nature of their transformative praxes across generations. As Said observed,

To dispel the myths and stereotypes of Orientalism, the world as a whole has to be given an opportunity to see Moslems and Orientals producing a different form of history, a new kind of sociology, a new cultural awareness: in short, the relatively modest goal of writing a new form of history, investigating the Islamicate world and its many different societies with a genuine seriousness of purpose and a love of truth. (1980:491)

REVISITING THE RUNNYMEDE DEFINITION OF ISLAMOPHOBIA IN LIGHT OF ISLAMOPHILIA

In light of the above analysis and the fact that the term “Islamophilia” has been used by those critical of the term “Islamophobia” in general and especially of the definitional framework offered by the Runnymede Report’s to express their dissatisfaction with the term, I find it necessary to return to the controversy over the definitions of the term(s).

While I consider the first set of definitions labeled as “closed views of Islam” and specifically aimed at defining “Islamophobia” as warranted with perhaps a few adjustments, the second set of “open views of Islam” may be misunderstood and may leave the term “Islamophobia,” by association, open to criticism and accusations of “Islamophilia”—the latter term requiring its own clarification, of course.

Let me begin with certain adjustments to the list of “closed views of Islam” as advanced by the Runnymede Report. I propose making the following changes to the definitional framework, identified in bold:

1. Islam **as a whole** [is] seen as a single monolithic bloc, static and unresponsive to new realities.
2. Islam **as a whole** [is] seen as separate and other—(a) not having any aims or values in common with other cultures (b) not affected by them (c) not influencing them.
3. Islam **as a whole** [is] seen as inferior to the West—barbaric, irrational, primitive, sexist.
4. Islam **as a whole** [is] seen as violent, aggressive, threatening, supportive of terrorism, engaged in ‘a clash of civilisations’.
5. Islam **as a whole** [is] seen as a political ideology, used for political or military advantage.
6. Criticisms made by Islam of ‘the West’ [are] rejected out of hand.
7. Hostility towards Islam [is] used to justify discriminatory practices towards Muslims and exclusion of Muslims from mainstream society.
8. Anti-Muslim hostility [is] accepted as natural and ‘normal’.

The need for the above adjustment becomes clear when we move on to reconsider the alternative list of “open views of Islam” as offered in the Runnymede Report. To expedite the comparative considerations, I will provide adjustments and commentaries to the second list as follows (alternative formulations are offered in bold in brackets, while further explanations are provided in italics, when needed):

1. Islam [is] seen as diverse and progressive, with internal differences, debates and development. [**Islam is seen as containing diverse, contradictory interpretations and traditions that may offer a spectrum of progressive to conservative socio-political tendencies, some displaying dynamic, self-critical, and self-transformative attitudes while others remaining static, dogmatic, and unresponsive to new realities**]. *The problem with the existing definition is that it falls into the same trap the “closed views of Islam” list warns against; it portrays Islam as a whole as being progressive, as if all its diverse tendencies are equally open to debates and to inner dynamic development, to self-criticism and self-transformation; like any other weltanschauung, Islam contains contradictory tendencies and trends, and as such it is not to be singled out to be any different than others.*
2. Islam [is] seen as interdependent with other faiths and cultures—(a) having certain shared values and aims (b) affected by them (c) enriching them. [**Diverse interpretations, traditions, and sociopolitical tendencies in Islam may display different degrees of openness to interdependence and sharing of values and aims with other faiths and cultures, each trend’s responsiveness (ranging from accommodation to rejection) and strength varying**

depending on changing social-historical (economic, cultural, and political) conditions, interests, and forces both internal and external to the Islamic community].

3. Islam [is] seen as distinctively different, but not deficient, and as equally worthy of respect. [The extent to which Islam is regarded as distinctively different, promising or deficient, or worthy of respect depends on which interpretations, traditions, and sociopolitical tendencies in Islam are under consideration and which social agency outside the Islamic community is making such assessments and judgments; some may be highly civilized, rational, advanced, and egalitarian; others may be fundamentalist, barbaric, irrational, primitive, and sexist, keeping in mind that such a spectrum of tendencies may have been shaped and distorted by forces both internal and external to the Islamic community].
4. Islam [is] seen as an actual or potential partner in joint cooperative enterprises and in the solution of shared problems. [As in any other world cultures, the Islamic community may contain tendencies that are violent, aggressive, threatening, terrorist, and civilizationally clashing and tendencies that are constructively critical-minded, peaceful, confined, friendly, compassionate, and civilizationally contributive and dynamic, the range in the spectrum being itself subject to the extent to which non-Islamic communities display and reciprocate similar tendencies and attitudes].
5. Islam [is] seen as a genuine religious faith, practised sincerely by its adherents. [Islam is a genuine religious faith that, like in any other faiths, may be practiced more or less sincerely by its adherents; diverse tendencies in Islam may display differing degrees of actual or potential partnership on the one hand or politico-ideological or militaristic competitiveness on the other, partly in response to the adoption of similar differing attitudes toward them by non-Islamic trends and tendencies in other communities; some may actively seek or find it reluctantly necessary to seek politico-military solutions to the problems as a matter of self-defense and survival when similar approaches are adopted and imposed on the situation by non-Islamic social forces].
6. Criticisms [by Islam] of 'the West' and other cultures are considered and debated. [Islam's diverse tendencies may display differing degrees of criticism or accommodation of the West or other traditions or of self-criticism in intracommunal, regional, or global affairs, and open views of Islam would be those that are open to consideration and debate of such self/criticisms].

7. Debates and disagreements with Islam do not diminish efforts to combat discrimination and exclusion. **[Moslems may not only be subjected to discrimination and exclusion, which are unwarranted simply because of debates and disagreements with one or another trends in Islam, but some Moslems associated with particular trends in Islam may also practice discrimination and exclusion because of intracommunal debates and disagreements or as a result of debates initiated or disagreements expressed by those outside the Islamic community; at the same time, there may be other Islamic tendencies that self-critically eschew such discriminations and exclusions practiced by other Moslems and, thereby, condemn and seek to end them].**
8. Critical views of Islam are themselves subjected to critique, lest they be inaccurate and unfair. **[Both the critical views of Islam by others and Islamic views of others by Moslems are open to debate and reciprocal scrutiny, and the extent of inaccuracy and unfairness of such criticism are matters to be determined and revealed in the course of debate and mutually constructive dialogue].**

Short of the above clarifications, I think one may regard the Runnymede Report's existing definition of Islamophobia as an inadvertent definitional framework for Islamophilia instead, though in its more sophisticated expressions. Runnymede Trust's "open views of Islam" unfortunately falls in the trap of regarding Islam monolithically, in turn as being characterized by one or another trait, and does not adequately express the complex heterogeneity of a historical phenomenon whose contradictory interpretations, traditions, and sociopolitical trends have been shaped and has in turn been shaped, as in the case of any world tradition, by other world-historical forces. The irony here is that such an effort to remedy the harms caused by Islamophobia seems to have been made in order to avoid negative stereotyping of Islam while acknowledgment of the troubling interpretations, traditions, and sociopolitical trends in Islam, or at least their continued strength and survival, may have had as much to do with the continuation of a Janus-faced global imperial policy that finds it in its short-term, if not long-term, strategic interest to amplify and reinforce those very troubling agencies in Islam, agencies that in the ever-changing ebb and flow of geopolitics metamorphose back and forth between civilized friend and barbarian foe identities. Islamophilia and Islamophobia are strange bedfellows in the Western mind.

The purpose in the above, revised "open views of Islam" is to move away from a monolithic view of Islam that is rightly rejected as a cornerstone of Islamophobia as defined in Runnymede Report's own definition. Here, I have deconstructed "Islamophobia" and revealed a somewhat biased "Islamophilic" view of Islam contained in Runnymede

Report's second, "open views of Islam" list, an attitude that also oversimplifies and distorts the tradition of Islam away from its complex heterogeneity and in favor of a monolithic view that is simplistically portrayed as being all positive. Such simplifications do not serve well the cause of understanding and transcending Islamophobia and lend themselves to unwarranted criticism from conservative quarters and social forces that readily cite the troubling tendencies in Islam as proofs for the monolithic regard and dismissals of Islam as a whole. These conservative, and at times even liberal, critiques often ignore or hide the fact that many such troubling tendencies of Islam may not be due to intra-generated but to externally and imperially imposed conditions amid decades and centuries of Western imperial and colonial designs and policies toward Islam. Critiques of the Runnymede Report often dismiss the imperial world-historical context within which various tendencies in Islam have emerged and, by separating and othering Islam as a closed box, perpetuate the fallacy of attributing all its faults and wrongs to Islam alone, not to mention the fact that often the very racial bias displayed toward Islam often takes the standard procedure of simplistically attributing the troubling nature of one or another event or tendency in Islam to the "nature" of Islam as a whole in an essentialist and ahistorical manner. A terrorist act by or tendency in a self-proclaimed offshoot of Islam, itself perpetuated and strengthened by an imperial policy under earlier circumstances where support for it was geopolitically expedient, is suddenly elevated as a standard-bearer of what Islam as whole is and is about.

The most long-term damage done to Islam by Islamophobia and Islamophilia, however, may be what one may not readily expect and that is the extent to which the common threat faced by Moslems are translated into a lack of self-critical thinking and attitude among Moslems themselves. Here is a pertinent observation by a Moslem scholar, sympathetically quoting another observer:

The most subtle and, for Muslims, perilous consequence of Islamophobic actions," a Muslim scholar has observed, "is the silencing of self-criticism and the slide into defending the indefensible. Muslims decline to be openly critical of fellow Muslims, their ideas, activities and rhetoric in mixed company, lest this be seen as giving aid and comfort to the extensive forces of condemnation. Brotherhood, fellow feeling, sisterhood are genuine and authentic reflexes of Islam. But Islam is supremely a critical, reasoning and ethical framework... [It] or rather ought not to be manipulated into 'my fellow Muslims right or wrong'." The writer goes on to add that Islamophobia provides "the perfect rationale for modern Muslims to become reactive, addicted to a culture of complaint and blame that serves only to increase the powerlessness, impotence and frustration of being a Muslim.

(Imam Dr. Abduljalil Sajid, 2005:34-35, quoting from Davies, 2002)

CONCLUSION

One does not have to acknowledge the danger of Islamophobia for fear of being accused of Islamophilia. Nor should one abandon being critical of Islamophilia in fear of being accused of Islamophobia. Islamophobia and Islamophilia are woven of similar threads in the sense that they both seek to oversimplify and essentialize Islam as a civilizational project for being entirely bad or good. What is to be done away with is the binary logic feeding such argumentations. One can be critical of both Islamophobia and Islamophilia and be also critical of centuries of imperial policies that have helped distort the realities of historical Islam.

What is to be confronted and questioned head on is the common premises displayed in both tendencies that civilizational projects are monolithically good or bad, right or wrong. The West prides itself for being self-critical, and dynamic as a result, but it seeks to silence the views of those who regard other civilizational projects, Islam included, to be characterized by the same complexities and contradictory tendencies from which the West is itself not exempt. It is this presumption of presumed uniformity and monolithic heterogeneity that the West falsely attributes to its colonial others and then blames them for. Islamophobia and Islamophilia, thereby, are aspects of the West's epistemic racism and its own looking glass self projected upon colonized subjects as if it points to their essential attributes.

Recent examples of support for and then the overthrow of Saddam and the original support for and the current war against Afghani "freedom fighters" metamorphosed into Al-Qaeda suggest how the contemporary political realities of Islam that engender Islamophobic and Islamophilic reactions in Western eyes are far from independent processes and phenomena that the West merely reacts to. They are the very byproducts of its imperial policies, for empires and Bin-Ladins (and Saddams) are two faces of the same actual and latent imperial coin. The West regards itself as a beauty, desperately seeking to respectively adorn and cleanse the Janus-faced images of the beauty and the beast on the wall of Islam, not realizing that the wall is a mirror and both reflected images of the beauty and the beast on the wall ever cross-morphing by-products of its own orientalist imperial adventures across modern world-history.

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