Reaching Out to the Non-Muslims: The Challenges And the Prospects of Islamophilia

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Abstract

This paper attempts to enlighten the challenges and prospects in the outreach program (da’wah to the non-Muslims) through the use of Islamophilic programs, to combat the notions of Islamophobia. Post 9/11 incident signifies that a new thread should be taken to clothe the garb of Islamic da’wah. Interestingly, an Islamophilic outreach program is nothing new in the history of da’wah, but to make it today as a mainstream is vital to ensure a rise at the understanding level of Islam and possession of a correct comprehension of its teachings amidst the non-Muslims. The prospects are great but the promotions of it are very little and slow due to the perception to segregate between the Da’wah to the Muslims or also called Islah, from the da’wah to the non-Muslims in toto. Due to that, this paper tries to promote the prospects of outreach program in Islam through the three main mediums, which first is through the use Al-Hikmah, next is Al-Maw’izah Al-Hasanah from the outreach activities e.g.: Cordova Initiative, Kalimatin Sawá’ and many more. Thirdly is through the use of Al-Mujádalah Al-Hasanah, like the exemplary harmonious debates of the late Ahmed Hussein Deedat (1918-2005), Dr. Zakir Abdul Karim Naik (born 1965) and many Muslim reverts. Reaching out is one thing and reverting others to Islam is another different thing, because only Allah can revert one from a religion to Islam. The duty of mankind is just to convey the message.

Keywords: Islamophobia, Islamophilia, Islamic Outreach

Introduction

The words of Allah are not merely read and recited, but they are to be pondered (Al-Tadabbur) and contemplated (Al-Tafakkur), for they are
filled with deep and most insightful meanings. In the history of Adam ʿAlayh Al-Salām being the quasi persona non grata on this earth as in the verse 30, of the Al-Baqarah 2nd chapter, where He the Most Wise says:

وَأَذَّ قَالَ رَبِّ لِلدَّمَّارِيْنِ إِنَّا أَجَعَلْنَاهَا فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلْقًا قَالُوا أَتَحْمَلْ فِيهَا مِنْ يَقْسَمُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفَكُ الدَّمَّاءَ وَنَحْنُ نَسْبُحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنَقْدِسُ لِكَ الْقَالِ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vicegerent on earth." They said: "Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? Whilst we do celebrate Thy praise and glorify Thy holy (name)?" He said: “I know what ye know not.” (Al-Baqarah 2: 30)

Literally connotes ‘quasi personally unacceptable or unwelcome.’ Quasi is fixed here for the raison d’être is not to question God’s but to seek His wisdom. This incident is told in the Quran but not literally in other religious scriptures e.g. Torah, Bible and Avestas. This incident signifies the wisdom of Allah the Most Wise in the creation of Adam and the human beings, where it is inherent in human nature to do evil if it is not directed to the Godly or Holy path (Rabbānī). In a nutshell, human is inhuman without guidance from the creator of humanity. A very subtle discussion on this issue could be referred to a tract by Abd Al-Rahman Al-Maydani’s Lā Yāsiḥhu An Yuqāl Al-Insān Khalīfah ʿAn Allah Fi Arḍīhi Fa Hiya Maqūlah Bāṭilah. (1411H) and also Yasien Mohamed’s thesis Human Nature in Islam (1998) with other classical treatises by the past prominent Islamic scholars.

It is paramount to initiate our intellectual journey throughout this paper with the admonition provided by Allah the Most High, for in the beginning the angels of the earth (Malak Al-Ard) had already foreseen that the creation of human beings into this world is only a cause to corruption (Al-Fasād) and bloodbath (Safak Al-Dimā’) on this world. The angel in this verse refers to the angles which reside on earth after their war with the Jinn. This story has been elaborated by Al-Baghawī (d. 516H) Rahimahu Allahu ʿAlayh in his Maʿālim Al-Tanzīl in exegeting the same verse of the same chapter. In a commentary to this verse, Al-Imam Fakhr Al-Rāzī Raḥimahu Allahu ʿAlayh (544-606H) says:
ومنهم من قال إلهم قالوا: ذكرنا اليقين وهو مروي عن ابن مسعود وناس من الصحابة ثم ذكروا فيه وجوهًا: أحدهما: أنه تعالى لما قال للملاكاة:
{إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الأرض خُلِّيَةً} قالوا: ربي وما يكون ذلك الخِلِّيَة؟ قال: يكون له ذرية يفسدون في الأرض ويجمعرون ويقتل بعضهم بعضاً، فعند ذلك قالوا: ربي أجعل فيها من يفسد فيها ويسفك الدماء.

Some of the Muslim scholars said that the angels asked such question on a firm grounding, as narrated from Ibn Mas‘ud and the companions in many versions. One of these versions: “Allah the Most High said to the angels: I will create a vicegerent on earth. So the angels replied: What is this vicegerent? Allah answered: This vicegerent belongs to them progeny that they will cause corruption on earth, hatred and killing among each other. For this reason, the angels asked: Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? (Al-Razi, 2001: 392)

In brief, the question brought forward by the angels did not mean disloyalty and disbelief, but more towards stressing on the natural tendencies of the human being which has potential for wrong i.e. causing mischief and bloodshed. This has been agreed upon by the mu‘zam mufassirin or majority exegetes as told by Imam Fakhr Al-Rāzī Rahimahu Allahu ‘Alayh in commenting the present verse. In the words of Imam Ibn Kathīr Raḥimahu Allahu ‘Alayh:

وقول الملائكة هذا ليس على وجه الاعتسار على الله، ولا على وجه الحسد لديني أدم، كما قد يتورم به بعض المفسرين ... وإنما هو سؤال استعلام واستكشف عن الحكمة في ذلك، يقولون: يا ربي، ما الحكمة في خلق هؤلاء مع أن منهم من يفسد في الأرض ويسفك الدماء، فإن كان المراد عبادتك، فنحن نسحب محمدك وندعوك.

Means: The question posed by the angels here intends no disloyalty towards Allah nor envy upon the sons of Adam, like what thought by some exegete. In fact, the question was inquisitive in nature and in seeking of wisdom from Allah’s decision to create humankind. The angels asked: O Lord, what is the wisdom from the creation if humankind,
whereby some of them cause corruption on earth and shed blood. If it is to serve You, then we celebrate You by praises and we glorify You. (Ibn Kathir, 2002: 173)

Only from the understanding of the root of this issue; namely: human being either Muslims or non-Muslims are the antagonists, who created Islamophobia; then we can go to the following topic. In reality, it is not Islam that should be taken into focus in this issue, but the one who perceives Islam is supposed to be taken into our consideration. This delicate issue of a priori (deductive reasoning) or a posteriori (inductive reasoning); of the ‘observer’ (people) or the ‘observed’ (religion); should always be taken as a main concern in tackling the misinterpretation or misunderstanding of Islam. At some extent, the issue at hand is not really Islamophobia, whereby it could also be considered as ‘muslimophobia.’ However this is not to neglect the phenomenon in toto, as it was once told by Imam Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) : “Islam is veiled by the Muslims.”

**Islamophilia Vs. Islamophobia in a Bird’s Eyes View**

Religious extremism remains a threat today as in the past, but it is not restricted to or inherent in any one religion. The specter of attacks by terrorists motivated by ethnic, religious or ideological beliefs and grievances is real. The challenge today, as in the past, is to avoid the easy answers yielded by stereotyping or the projection of a monolithic threat, to distinguish between the beliefs and activities of the majority (whether they be Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs, Christians and Jews, Arabs and Israelis, Tamils and Buddhists) and a minority of extremists who justify their aggression and violence in the name of religion, ethnicity or political ideology. It is equally important to distinguish between the aspirations and demands of legitimate political oppositions groups and those of extremist groups. (Esposito, 1999: xvii.)

As a preamble, it is very important to have the correct profiling of Islamophobia and Islamophilia. Without a correct conceptualization of Islamophobia and Islamophilia in one’s thought it will only cause to a continuous misunderstanding of Islam. For instance, consider this
example:

The FBI agent investigating a Muslim charity does not consider herself an Islamophobe, just as a Hizbullah militant does not identify as a terrorist. Applying these labels is an exercise in negative characterization, a fact that makes the labels invaluable for political purposes, but potentially misleading for analytical and interpretive ones. (Shryock. 2010: 3)

Therefore, to arrive at the closest meaning of Islamophobia, one should break it up to the root words of its construction. Literally the term is a combination of two words, namely Islam and phobia. Firstly, Islam here refers to one of the major religions of the world. In Nasr’s (born 1933, Professor of Islamic Studies at George Washington University) succinct words:

Islam considers itself the last major world religion in the current history of humanity and believes that there will be no other plenary revelation after it until the end of human history and the coming of the eschatological events described so eloquently in the final chapters of the Quran, which is the verbatim Word of God in Islam. That is why the Prophet of Islam is called the “Seal of Prophets” (khātam al-anbiyāʾ). Islam sees itself as the final link in a long chain of prophecy that goes back to Adam, who was not only the father of humanity (abul-bashar), but also the first prophet. There is, in fact, but a single religion, that of Divine Unity (al-tawḥīd), which has constituted the heart of all messages from Heaven and which Islam has come to assert in its final form. (Nasr, 2003: 2-3.)

Secondly, the word phobia is etymologically of Greek origin Phobos which signifies fear, flight and to flee. Therefore, the combination of both words literally connotes the fear of Islam. According to Ellis Cashmore (born 1949, a Professor of Culture, Media and Sport at Staffordshire University’s School of Health), Islamophobia is defined as “an outlook or worldview involving an unfounded dread and dislike of Muslims, which results in practices of exclusion and discrimination.” (Cashmore, 2003: 215) With a slight difference from
the prior, in the mostly visited website on the issues of Islamophobia i.e. www.islamophobia.org, it defined as “an irrational fear and prejudice towards Islam and Muslims.” Actually there are many descriptions credited to this term in defining its characteristics and manifestations. For instance, in the summary of a report provided by The Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia in UK, there are 8 distinctions of this phenomenon:

<table>
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<th>Distinctions</th>
<th>Closed views of Islam</th>
<th>Open views of Islam</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Monolithic / diverse</td>
<td>Islam seen as a single monolithic bloc, static and unresponsive to new realities.</td>
<td>Islam seen as diverse and progressive, with internal differences, debates and development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Separate / interacting</td>
<td>Islam 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.</td>
<td>Islam seen as interdependent with other faiths and cultures – (a) having certain shared values and aims (b) affected by them (c) enriching them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Inferior / different</td>
<td>Islam seen as inferior to the West – barbaric, irrational, primitive, sexist.</td>
<td>Islam seen as distinctively different, but not deficient, and as equally worthy of respect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Enemy / partner</td>
<td>Islam seen as violent, aggressive, threatening, supportive of terrorism, engaged in ‘a clash of civilisations’.</td>
<td>Islam seen as an actual or potential partner in joint cooperative enterprises and in the solution of shared problems.</td>
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| Table 1: Closed and Open Views of Islam  
(The Runnymede Trust, 1996: 3) |

In 2006, a survey was conducted by the Council on American-Islam Relations (CAIR) to understand what Americans think about Muslims, to identify variables associated with anti-Muslim prejudice, and to identify conditions conducive to combating prejudice. Some of the illuminating findings of this survey are:

Approximately one-in-four Americans believes that Islam is a religion of hatred and violence.  
Almost 60 percent said they “are not very knowledgeable” or “not at all knowledgeable” about Islam. (Council on American-Islam Relations (CAIR) Research Center, 2006: 2-3)
Due to that, one of the most significant causes to Islamophobia is lack of knowledge about Islam. Without equipping oneself with the realities of Islam, one is forced to presume Islam and to portray it according to one’s wishful thought or fallacy. This non-pathological, quasi-psychological and epistemological epidemic in today’s world is growing larger by days and so need to be curbed with the use of proper intervention that will be provided in this present paper.

We noted here epistemological for it is caused by the problem of knowledge at the root of it, less psychological and non-pathological. Thus, Islamophobic is subservient to the prejudice and discrimination proposed towards Islam. The trend of tackling the issue on the misperceptions towards Islam from the point of view of a Muslim or non-Muslim alike through the use of epistemological discourses has been used for ages by Islamic jurists (usuliyên) and philosophers (mutakallimûn). A best reference could be made to the great work of the late Prof. Dr. Mustafâ Al-Sibâ’i i.e. Al-Sunnah Wa Makânatuha Fî Al-Tashrî’ (2001: 49-51) Even though majority of thinkers would subject this discussion as the topics of merely political nomenclatured or cultural or economical; but we will have it digested in our paper in a very general overview, which inclusive of the prior mentioned topics.

Furthermore, According to a booklet provided by U.S. National Institute of Mental Health, phobia is an intense, irrational fear to something that poses little or no threat. In the case of other phobias like arachnophobia (fear of spider), hydrophobia (fear of water), agoraphobia (fear of open and public spaces) etc, this definition would apply. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009: 11) Therefore in understanding phobia, one must understand these two pillars: first, the intense and irrational fear from the person and second, the threat from the feared object. But in the case of Islam, we conceive that Islam poses zero threat and the person who suffers from this irrational fear need to be reached. Next, this person needs to learn and relearn from his outreach. Furthermore, “the illiterate,” to quote from Alvin Toffler (born 1928, a futurist): “of the year 2000 will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.”

In sum, if we arrive to the conclusive points that Islamophobia means that Islam is feared, intolerable and regarded with aversion, therefore
it is nothing new. The same also goes that Islamophobia is understood as not merely geographically limited to the West, but also extended to the whole world like a global infestation. In reality, the problem of Islamophobia is not merely happening in the West, but it is also happening in the countries of Asia and Arab. For instance, the issue on clashes between the Muslims and the non-Muslims in Kashmir, India; Moro, Philippines; Southern Thailand and also Palestine. The Noble Prophet Salla Allahu ‘Alayh Wa Šālih Wa Sallam once told in an authentic hadith reported by Imam Muslim (201-261H) Raḥimahu Allahu ‘Alayh:

بِدَا الإِسْلاَمُ غَرِيبًا وَسَيِّئًا وَكَمَا بِدَا غَرِيبًا فَطَوَّبَ لِلْجَرْبَاءِ

Means: Islam began strange and it will return strange, so good news is for the strangers. (Al- Nawawī, 1424H, Hadith no. 370, Vol.1, p.354)

As narrated from Al-Qādī ‘Iyād (d. 544H) Raḥimahu Allahu ‘Alayh on the commentary of this hadith:

وَظَاهِرُ الْحَدِيثِ العَمُومُ وَأَنَّ الْإِسْلاَمَ بِدَا فِي أَحَدَ مِنَ النِّاسِ وَقَلِةً ثُمَّ انتِشَرَ وَظَهَرَ ثُمَّ سَيِّلَحَهُ النَّفْقُ وَالْأَخَلَالَ حَتَّى لَا يِقِي إِلَّا فِي أَحَدَ وَقَلَةً أَيْضًا كَمَا بِدَا.

It reads: the literal meaning for this hadith is very general, whereby it explains that Islam began strange as only within a few people and then the number of believers increased till Islam became a well-known religion. Later Islam will be imposed upon it shortcoming and errors that cause only a few people again to stay committed with this religion, just like in its beginning.

As such, Islamophobia depicts an old perspective towards Islam but newly branded and nomenclatured. This projected fear, hostility, prejudice and discrimination has no other cure, except that it could only be removed and healed by love.

The idea to have Islamophilic themes to combat Islamophobic symptoms in the current society is a wisdom taken from the
methodology devised by Imam al-Ghazzali Raḥimahu Allahu ʿAlayh (450 – 505H) in medicating and healing the spiritual problems of the heart. Islamophilic or Islamophilia is a term combined with two words of ‘Islam’ and ‘philia’ or ‘philo.’ The term ‘philo’ here is of Greek origin which connotes love or affection towards something. As a result, the use of Islamophilia here in this paper is to promote the love towards Islam either from the Muslims or the non-Muslims alike. He said in his magnum opus, in the book on kitab Riyāḍah Al-Nafs Wa Tahdhib Al-Akhlaq:

وكمَا أن العَلْة المَغِيبَة لا اعتِدَال الْبَدْن المُوجِبَة لِلْمَرْض لا تَعِالِج إِلا بِضَدِهَا فإن كانَت مِن حِرَاء فِي البِرودَة، وإن كانتَ مِن بَروَدَة فِي الحِرَاء، فَكَذَلْكَ الرِّذْبِيَّة الَّتِي هِي مِرْضُ القُلُوب وَعِلْمُهَا بِضَدِهَا. فَتَعِالِج مِرْضُ الْجِهْل بالتَّعْلُمُ، ومرْضُ الْبِخَل بِالبَتْسَح، ومرْضُ الْكُبْر بِالْبَوْلِ، ومرْضُ الْشِّرْأ بالكَف عن المَشْتَهِي تَكَلَّفُ:

Means: If there is change in the temperament of moderation, it must be understood that the body has got disease. Its medicine is to act to its opposite. For instance, heat can be removed by cold and cold by heat, and fire by water. If one catches cold it can be removed by using hot things. Illiteracy can be removed by learning, miserliness by charity, pride by humility and greed by patience. (Al-Ghazzali, 1982: Vol.3, p. 61)

The best explication for this concept of applying the opposition (المعاشة بالاضداد) could be referred to the work of Profesor Muhammad Abul Quasem, where he mentioned:

The principle of opposition, al-Ghazzali says, is put in its entirely in a single Quranic verse, “as for him who fears to stand in the presence of lord and keep the soul from passion, then surely paradise- that is abode.” ……the Shari’a also enjoined the removal of vices from the soul by good acts of the body. This constitutes the source of the specific form of opposition found in the ethics of al-Ghazzali, al-Makki and al-Muhasibi, i.e. the removal of a vice by removing its causes, and the removal of its causes by means of their opposites. (Muhammad Abul Quasem, 1978: 93)
Due to that, the understanding of Islam as a theology of hate, a jihadic ritual of abhorrence and a meditation of seeking religious segregation is to be overcome with the concept of love embedded in every dimension of Islamic teachings i.e. Aqīdah, Shari‘ah and Akhlāq. Below this paragraph, we provide the conceptual framework that we are using in describing the elements to be used in combating Islamophobia which flows from the concept of rahmah in Islam to the creation of Islamophilia and its linkage to the Muslims and the non-Muslims alike. Later, in our focus to the Islamophilic outreach program, every da‘wah activity will revolve as based upon the Surah Al-Nahl 16: verse 125, namely: the da‘wah bi Al-Ḥikmah, the da‘wah bi Al-Maw‘īzah Al-Ḥasanah and the da‘wah bi Al-Mujādalah Al-Ḥasanah.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of Islamophilia
Islamophilia is nothing new in the history of da’wah (Islamic mission) due to all previous propagators and conveyors of the Islamic messages were heirs of the prophets. As narrated by Imam Al-Tirmidhî (209-279H) Rahimahu Allahu ‘Alayh from the authority of Abû Dardâ’ (d. 32H) Rahimahu Allahu ‘Alayh, the Prophet Šalla Allahu ‘Alayh Wa Ālihi Wa Sallam said:

إنَّ الْعَلَّمَاءَ وَرَزْنَةُ الْاَئِبِياءَ إِنَّ الْاَئِبِياءَ لَمْ يَرْزُنُوا دِينَارًا وَلَا دُرُّها إِنَّمَا وَرَزُنُوا أَعْلَمَاءً فَمَنْ أَحَدُهُمْ يُحْظِي وَأَفْرُى

Means: The scholars (of my Ummah) are the inheritors of the prophets, the prophets did not bequeath dinars or dirhams, but they bequeathed knowledge, so he who takes it will take an abundant proportion. (Al-Tirmidhî, n.d., Hadith no. 2682. Vol. 1. p. 48)

Next, the prophet Muhammad Šalla Allahu ‘Alayh Wa Ālihi Wa Sallam in Islam was tasked to spread the blessings (rahmah) of Allah the Most Exalted to the whole universe as mentioned in the Al-Quran Al-Karim:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعُالَمِينَ

Which means: We sent thee not, but as a mercy for all creatures. (Al-Anbiya’ 21:107)

Here lies the concept of Islam as blessings and mercies of God to his whole creations. Shaykh Al-Mufassirîn, Imam Al-Ţabarî (224-310H) Rahimahu Allahu ‘Alayh in defining the implication of rahmah or mercy is applied both to the Muslims and the Non-Muslims. He said in the Jāmi’ Al-Bayân ‘An Ta’wil Āyi Al-Quran:

أُولِيّ القُوْلِينَ فِي ذلِكَ بِالضَّوَابِعِ السُّؤْلِ الذِّي رُوِى عَنِ ابْنِ عِبَاسِ، وَهُوَ آن اللَّهُ أَرْسَلَ نِيَبًا مُحْمَدًا صَلِّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ رَحْمَةً لِلْعَالَمِ، مَعْمُونِهِمْ وَكَافِرِهِمْ. فَأُمَّمُ مَوْقِعِيِّنَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهُ يَهْدِيهِمْ، وَأَدْخِلْهُم بِالإِيَمانِ يَدْعُونَهَا، وَبِالعَمَلِ يَجِهُونَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ، وَأَمَامَ كَافِرِيِّهِمْ إِنَّهُ دَفِعَهُم بِعَهِهُ عَالِمُ الْبَلَاءِ الّذِّي كَانَ يَتَزُّوِّلُ بَيْنِ الْأَهْمَمِ المِّكْرَٰبِ لَّهَا رِسْلَهَا مِنْ قِبْلَةٍ.

Means: The most accurate saying from the two previously
mentioned sayings (in the book) is the one which was narrated from Ibn ʿAbbas that Allah sent His messenger, Muhammad Ṣalla Allahu ʿAlayh Wa ʿAlihi Wa Sallam as a mercy to all creations, both the believers and the non-believers. For the believer, Allah guided him, granted him with entry into the heaven and taught him to serve Him as revealed, all due to the faith on Muhammad Ṣalla Allahu ʿAlayh Wa ʿAlihi Wa Sallam. On the other hand, for the non-believer, Allah avoided from them the instantaneous of punishment due to the glory of Muhammad Ṣalla Allahu ʿAlayh Wa ʿAlihi Wa Sallam, not like what befell to the previous nations that deny the messages of the past messengers. (Al-Ṭabarī, 2001: Vol. 16. p.441)

To the Muslims, the linkage of this very deep emotion, i.e. merciful and compassionate, with the daʿwah tasks is also one of the most powerful tools that strengthen the tasks of daʿwah. There is no escape among the propagators and conveyors of Islamic messages from being equipped with such feeling (Āli ʿImrān 3: 159, Al-Fatḥ 48:29; Al-Ḥujurāt 49:10). Its realization will assist in eradicating any diabolical means undertaken and performed in daʿwah. Furthermore, the most crucial understanding that a Dāʿī (the caller to Islam) should internalize in his 24-7 life is that daʿwah is done for the sake of God, the Most Eminent Guider, neither for the sake of oneself nor for the benefit of one group. This fundamental of daʿwah seems easy to be conceptualized but rather hard to be internalized. That is why to become a Dāʿī is to perform a sacred mission and profession in this world. (Fathī Yakan, 2001: 78-114; and Jād al-Ḥaq, 2005: 87-99) Whilst, to the non-Muslims, this Islamophilic expression connotes the meaning of voluntarily submission of Islam and not through the use of force or compulsion as misunderstood by many non-Muslims in the West and also in the East. (Al-Baqarah 2: 256; Yūnus 10: 99 and Al-Kāfirūn 109: 1-6). For Islam stresses on self-surrender towards Allah and His way. As such, neither this religion is named before the name of the messenger nor the place of its birth, etc. like many other religions, but it sublimes the concept of absolute servicehood (Al-ʿIbādah) and submission (Al-Taslīm). (Al-Attas, 1993: 51–95; and Nasr, 2002: 273-306)
The Challenges and Prospects of Islamophilic Outreach Programs

In this present topic, it is important to note that our discussion will revolve around the sources of challenges, which to be catered as the locus. We all believe that this impasse does not emerge from in vacuum. This intricate nature of the topic, where by addressing the sources of challenges to the Islamophilic outreach programs will then assist towards conceptualizing then, any possible shapes and forms of challenges that might appear. In addition, this is applied here in order to relate with our previous topic in the introduction.

Polarization is what Islamophobes desire, but cannot quite achieve. The Muslim presence in the West has been growing steadily for over a century, through immigration and conversion. Mosques can be found in every major city of Europe and North America, and the idea that Muslims can only be foreigners is now a position that must be vigorously argued, with obvious ideological bias. At the same time, however, the inclusion of Muslims in Western societies as citizens is a conflicted process, and it too requires immense ideological effort. To reverse our formulation, a generalized affection for Muslims is what Islamophiles desire, but cannot quite achieve, as evidence of Muslim difference persists and wars against Muslim-majority nation-states and Islamist militant groups reanimate a time-tested imagery of crusade and jihad. (Shryock, 2010: 18)

The issue at stake is then double-edged, where there is the need to work Islamophilia with the insiders and the outsiders simultaneously, in order to combat the notions of Islamophobia.

Evidently, we intentionally juxtapose the insiders (Muslims) and the outsiders (non-Muslims) in this topic to present a brief formula in confronting Islamophobia. The use of categorizing the insider’s and outsider’s view is to discern the main cause for the creation of Islamophobia. The formula that we told earlier is to be referred to the best book on understanding the Islamic Da‘wah, the Islamic Da‘wah 101 or its A-B-C by Shaykh Dr. Muḥammad Abū Al-Faṭḥ Al-Bayānūnī (b. 1940). According to him, in explicating the problems of dakwah,
it could be clarified in a more holistic way by looking through the classification into the insiders’ and outsiders’ (Al-Bayānūnī, 1995: 345-351). In our experience with this formula, the case of Islamophobia could also be situated within the same framework, where we could arrive to some plans to overcome this predicament.

In terms of the insiders, for they are already Muslims, they are to be reminded and ‘renewed’ from time to time with the Islamophilic elements through social activities, religious gatherings, learning classes and many more, for ignorance is always an enemy of this religion (Al-‘Asqalānī, 2000: Hadith no. 7307, Vol.13, 345). The process of renewal and reform in one’s worldview is very important to ensure that one is capable at grasping the solid understanding of Islam and to comprehend the situation of the current ummah. Even in a tradition narrated by Abu Hurayrah Rahimahulla ʿAlayh, the Prophet ʿAlayhissalam said:

جَدَّدو إِيْمَانَكُمْ قَالَ أَكْثَرُوا مِنْ قُوْلِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللّهُ


The renewal of faith in oneself in this hadith could be equated with the issue at hand, where to entrench and to have a staunch knowledge about Islam through learning and relearning.

Then, the insiders’ or the Muslims are also always can best be classified into three main groups, in making their perspectives, in confronting anything from the west, namely: the two extremes (of negligence and extravagance) and the middle-way. As what could be implemented from Aristotle’s popular maxim, he said “virtue is a mean between two vices.” (Aristotle, 1976: 108) In this significance, it is best to refer to the answer provided by Shakib Arsalan (1869-1946, an Algerian historian and journalist) when he was asked by an Indonesian Shaykh on the causes of the Muslim’s decline and it remedies, where he stated:

Another important cause of Muslim decline is the rigid, inflexible following of old hackneyed conventions. Although the ummah faces serious dangers from men who condemn
everything old as absurd and worthless, without giving thought to their intrinsic value, simply because they are ‘old’, no less serious are dangers that arise from the conservative which insists that no change can be permissible in anything. If anyone endeavours to introduce suitable reforms in the system of Islamic education, they would oppose it, saying that all these modern systems are the discoveries of the unbelievers and that emulation of unbelievers will amount to *kufr* (unbelief). Thus the sophisticated ‘ultra-moderns’ and the conservative conventionalists are ruining Islam between themselves. (Shakib Arsalan, 2004: 49-50)

The ultra-modern will distort Islam from within for the ‘wild’ accusation and refutation on the Islamic fundamental traditions and heritage. Whilst, the conservative will also deform Islam from within by not letting Islam to face the ‘others’ appropriately. In this case both perceptions are construed as the two faces of a same coin, where Islamophobia can be sparked from these perilous trends. In Islam, the relationship between the heritage and the new trend is discussed in depth under the title of *Sunnah* vis-a-vis *Bid’ah*. Nothing which in the modern trends are to be excluded and regarded as non-Islamic for as long it does not clash with the fundamental laws of Islam or *Uṣūl Al-Shara‘*. Allah reminds us:

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرَّ وَ الْبَحْرِ يَا كَسِبْتَ أَبْنَيِ الْنَّاسِ لِذَٰلِكَ نَسِئُ الْضَّلَالَّ وَ الْشَّيْئَ الْحَيَابِ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يُحْسَنُونَ

Which connotes: Mischief has appeared on land and sea because of (the meed) that the hands of men have earned. That (Allah) may give them a taste of some of their deeds: in order that they may turn back (from Evil). (Al-Rum 30: 41)

Nevertheless, in terms of the outsiders, the promotions of Islam are very little and slow due to the perception to segregate between the da‘wah to the Muslims or also called *Islāh*, from the da‘wah to the Non-Muslims *in toto*, whereas both da‘wah are supposed to be done and incumbent upon every Muslim for “no man is an island.” In this matter, we are not blaming the segregation for the purpose of
management and discernment, but segregation which resulted to the negligence and abandonment of the other.

As a result of that, we would like to stress over here the Islamophilic outreach programs for the non-Muslims as a means to eradicate the notions from the Islamophobes and at once eradicate the elements of Islamophobia amid them. Before any further elaborations are made, one should have a clear mind that the purpose of this paper is not to revert the non-Muslims, but this paper is purposely prepared to pave the way towards improving the Islamophilic outreach activities amidst the non-Muslims. Therefore, a distinction, limitation and scope of discussion should be made here or else will only create confusion rather than understanding, (Osman Abdullah & Abdul Salam Muhamad Shukri, 2008). This is evidently sought especially in this postmodern climate where the pluralistic society is becoming the major trends of most countries in this world. In the words of Sohirin Solihin:

In plural societies the purpose of da’wah is not necessarily geared toward the conversion. It is simply to demonstrate norms of social communication based on divine guidance and to wipe misconception about the divine message of Islam. Once they have full vision on Islam, they will appreciate the divine message showing respect and never disturb their identity. (Sohirin M. Solihin: 2008, 237)

Evidently, this has been the nature of da‘wah for ages, from the earliest prophet ʿAlayh Al-Salām to the Prophet Šalla Allahu ʿAlayh Wa ʿAlīhi Wa Sallam, the followers and all the Islamic callers till the end of time. Due to that, it is useful here to raise the issue of force conversion and looking at Islamization as a threat or intimidation. For a fundamentalist, Islam does not force other to be Islamized for it requires a free and unbound submission of oneself. But this might not be the same, in the point of view of the extremists or the negligent, as preceded in the previous paragraphs. Despite of the fact that the definition of fundamentalism is still debated and trapped in the web of meaning, as to use Max Weber’s (1864-1920) words in his theory of verstehen, this paper we would conceptualize it as a character of adherence to the holistic views of Islam and toleration towards its branches matters. This is relatively different to the popular understanding of Islamic fundamentalism as the extreme line of thought of Islam. (Sohail H.
Hashimi. 2004: 261-263) That is why in our da‘wah, we apply the faith and the practice of these verses:

"بِذَٰلِكَ إِنَّا أُمِّدْنَا مُذْكُورًا (٢١) لَنْسِ عِلْمَهُمْ بِمَسْتَطِيرٍ (٢٢) إِلَّا مَنْ تَوَلَّى١ وَكَفَرَ (٢٣) فَمَعْذُوبُهُمْ رَبُّ الْعَذَابِ الأَكْبَرِ (٢٤) إِنَّ إِلَيْهِ يَابُثُّهُمْ (٢٥) لَنْمَّا إِنْ عَلَينَا حُسْبَانُهُمْ (٢٦)" (Al-Ghāshiyah, 88: Verses 21-26)

Translation: Therefore do thou give admonition, for thou art one to admonish. (21) Thou art not one to manage (men's) affairs. (22) But if any turns away and rejects Allah. (23) Allah will punish him with a mighty Punishment. (24) For to Us will be their Return; (25) Then it will be for Us to call them to account. (26) (Al-Ghāshiyah, 88: Verses 21-26)

This issue, over and over again, has become the main discussion of many intelligentsias; from sociologists to psychologists, policy analysts to war think tanks, and the list goes on; and debated at many levels from the classrooms up to the international assemblies. To refresh a little, in 1993, Samuel P. Huntington’s (1927-2008, Professor of International and Area Studies at the Harvard University) thesis on the clash of civilizations has trembled the world with “an interpretation of the evolution of global politics after the Cold War.” In his point of view, he viewed:

The underlying problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power. The problem for Islam is not the CIA or the U.S. Department of Defense. It is the West, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the universality of their culture and believe that their superior, if declining, power imposes on them the obligation to extend that culture through out the world. These are the basic ingredients that fuel conflict between Islam and the West. (Huntington, 1996: 217-218)

Even though he never single out the word Islamophobia in his present work, but its characteristics are perceivable in his underlying messages on Islam. But it is quite shocking to note his conclusion
on the commonalities, where in some sort of ways projected his understanding of the real matters i.e. Islam (read: also other major religions) is not to be actually blamed. In the second last page of his *Clash of Civilizations*, he reported:

In addition, as many have pointed out, whatever the degree to which they divided humankind, the world’s major religions – Western Christianity, Orthodoxy, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism – also share key values in common. If humans are ever to develop a universal civilization, it will emerge gradually through the exploration and expansion of these commonalities. (Huntington, 1996: 320)

This demagogical trait of the Islamophobes is very obvious in many of their writings and coverage. The use of words and sources in wrongful ways is utilized to win the hearts of many. Despite Huntington, if we discern the works and ideas of Bernard Lewis (b. 1916, an Emeritus Professor of Near Eastern Studies at the Princeton University), Daniel Pipes (b. 1949, a blogger and founder-director of Middle-East Forum), Kenan Malik (b. 1960, an Indian-born British writer), Robert Spencer (b.1962, a webhost of www.jihadwatch.org), Geert Wilders (b. 1963, a Dutch politician and the producer of anti-Islam documentary ‘Fitna’), and many more, they also voiced out the same genre and with typical nature. Therefore, it is not shocking to see their perception of Islamophobia as actually a created Muslims myth to win the sympathy of many. In other words, Islamophobia is a reverse psychology used to turn the psyche of the public, who are ‘against Islam’ to ‘with Islam.’

In our point of view, it is the media coverage on Islam or Muslims, or any Islamic related issues that has become the catalysts for the Islamophobing tasks in the midst of the societies all over the world. Most Islamophobes endeavored on propagating their ideas through the use of media, be it printed or electronic, which mostly are through the alternative (rarely through the mainstream) media, e.g. magazines, websites, documentaries, articles and many more.

As such, the non-Muslims must also be informed and educated through the use of media. William Wagner (b. 1936, a professor of Christian missions to the Muslims) posited that there are two
strategies in Muslim media message, namely: first, dispelling negative views about Islam and second, projecting positive views of Muslims. (Wagner, 2004: 167) However exceptions are made here if there is no need to dispel any negativity, where this is according to the mode of knowledge about Islam of the non-Muslims.

It is a complicated task to reach out to a non-Muslim for there are many variables which should be entertained in ensuring that the right message has been delivered and not construed wrongly by the receiver. (Abdel Aziz Berghout, 2001: 274-278; and Ab. Aziz Mohd Zin, 2005: 86-125) For instance, a non-Muslim could have his or her prejudgment of Islam based on what he or she heard from the surroundings and through what he or she was taught by the sources of information. If the conception of Islam in one’s thought has already been tarnished, so the stake is higher and many efforts should be put forward to lower the risks. That is why in reaching out to the non-Muslims the first and foremost caution towards the client is to be very prudent with one’s words. In Al-Nadwi’s words:

والفعل بالنسبة إلى الرجل النزيف، فإذا وقع الشك في ظل هذه الكلمات أو أهدافها، أو صار التلاعب بما هيئها إضطراب دعائم الدين وتززه أركانها، وهذا يهم التاريخ والشعر والأدب، لذلك كانت الفوضى اللغوية

Political Anarchy. And the result is an image of the enemies and the enemies’ enemies of the man who has lost his chance and his chance. Anarchy

Means: (Using) words are one of the mediums to impart meanings and realities from one generation to the other, or from an era to the next. Whenever there is a doubt in the semantics of these words or its objectives, or it caused mockery to happen, the principles of religion are put into chaos and its pillars are shaken. The importance of
this matter has been stressed by the disciplines such as the history, poetry and the literature. In point of fact, the linguistic anarchy is much worse and more dangerous than the political anarchy. This is not a simple thing as thought by the majority. It affects in oneself in special way and imparts meanings and sentiments which are related with one’s past, with one’s faith and customs sometimes. As such, the Prophet Salla Allahu ‘Alayh Wa Alihi Wa Sallam prohibited from calling the al-’atmah (darkness) as the Isyak’ place, or the calling Arab Day instead of Al-Jum‘ah (Friday). He changed the term Yathrib into the City of the Prophet or Al-Madinah, and there are many other examples in the Islamic shar‘ah for this. (Al-Nadwi, 1405H: 406-407)

In this Islamophilic reaching out program, we list down here three main categories which could serve as the means of da‘wah (Asālīb al-Da‘wah) with their contemporary examples by following the wisdom in the Surah Al-Nahl 16: verse 125 where it reads:

اذَّنُ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلٌ ۚ رَبِّكَ بِالْحَكْمَةِ وَالْمُوْعَظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَاهِدُهُمْ بِالْيَتِيمِ الَّذِي هَيَّ

أَحْسَنَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلْ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالمُهَتَّدِينَ

Which means: Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance. (Al-Nahl 16: 125)

**The Use of Da‘wah Bi Al-Ḥikmah**

Some of the samples of da‘wah bi al-ḥikmah will be listed here so that it could be used to address wisely any issues of Islam with the purpose of islamophiling the clients. The word Al-Ḥikmah here is supposed to be understood in the correct manner, where it purports at giving the right information about Islam to the right people at the right time. Al-Imam Al-Alusi (d.1270H) said in this significance:

{بالحكمة} بالقالة المحكمة وهي الحجة القطعية المزيفة للشبه؛ وقريب

من هذا ما في «البحر» أفاد الكلام الصواب الواقع من النفس أجمع موقع
Means: With wisdom means through the use of justified arguments, namely from justification that eradicates any doubts. The closest meaning to this could be found in the Al-Bahr (tafsir book written by Abu Ḥayyan Al-Andalūsī, 654-745H) which the wisdom here means the rightful sayings that are very close to oneself. (Al-Alusi, n.d., Vol.14: 254)

Therefore, some of the strategies that could be used are through inviting the non-Muslims to also participate in every activity of Islamic congregations. For example in celebrating the feast of Ramadhan, where they will be enlightened to know that this duty of fast is a compulsory to every Muslim to teach and train self-control or the practice of abstinence. Or we can also invite the non-Muslims to participate in our sermons and classes of farḍu ‘āyn, so that they will know and aware of the faith and practices in Islam. With such understanding and information about Islam, will at least educate the non-Muslims the reasons for the uniqueness of Islamic religion in comparison to other religions. Through this ratiocination of the Islamic rituals it will eradicate the confusion about Islam and it will also bring closer the meaning of Islam as the Muslims’ way of life to the non-Muslims.

In addition to that, the effort of the Islamic groups in the United States to build Park51 in the middle of New York City should be applauded and given praises. This community center, which is at first to be introduced as the Cordoba House, will be equipped with Muslims prayer space, recreational and fitness facilities, a restaurant, a library and many more. What is important to note here is that this community center is built with the purpose to facilitate the interfaith relations, especially between the Muslims and the non-Muslims. Therefore there is a symbolic meaning of wisdom as provided in the aforementioned verse with the present efforts. Sometimes wisdom is not just to be uttered, but it could also be shown, hence it is told: لسان الححال أبلغ من لسان: enm alan that is action speaks louder than words.

**The Use of Da’wah Bi Al-Mawizah Al-Ḥasanah**

Imam Al-Alusi said, with regards to the invitation to the way of Allah with beautiful preaching and advising:
Means: Through beautiful counsel here means the beneficial preachings and lessons that obviously show to the people that you are advising them with it. (Al-Alusi: 254)

Even though it seems to appear like an intertwining of the previous means of da’wah, but we will try here to elaborate it in the other way around. According to Imam Al-Alusi, in the differences in the means of da’wah here in this verse bear also resemblances in some ways. But the magnificent construct in this verse is actually a sacred wisdom, where interpreted by him as:

Which understood as: In reality, the plurality of da’wah means by the Prophet سل الله عليه وسلم implies to the different levels of people. Among them are the khawwas (special) i.e. who own the enlightened souls, with strong preparation to achieve the understanding and with strong ability to comprehend the higher principles which can drive them towards the acquisition of conviction, despite its levels. This kind of people are invited to Islam through the use of wisdom as defined in the previous paragraphs (in the book). Among them too, are the awam (regular) who own the slightly tainted souls, with less
preparation, strongly bound to the senses and customs, weak with the use of rationales. However, they do not show any opposition and they are invited to Islam through the use of the beautiful counsel as it has been previously defined. Among them again, some people who oppose and debate wrongly to refute the truth. This is due to long attachment to their elders’ wrongdoings and the rooting of wrong beliefs in themselves. In this situation, no counsel or lesson will work, rather to provide the use of debate in the best way to soften the character and to get rid off the curb. This kind of people, Rasulullah Șalla Allahu ʿAlayh Wa ʿAlîhi Wa Sallam told us to be debated in the best manner.

Therefore, some of the strategies that could be used here are through invitation with goodly counsel and advices. For instances, the Cordoba Initiative is established in the United States as a way to promote understanding of Islam as the practice of the Muslims. For such reason it acts by advising policy makers on urgent Muslim-West issues and also providing experts in Islamic Law and other technical subjects for use in the public square. The same also goes to the efforts of the Royal Islamic Strategic Studies of Jordan in introducing the initiative called "A Common Word"; to closer the gaps between the Muslims and the People of the Book; and the interfaith tracking.

**The Use of Daʿwah Bi Al-Mujādalah Al-Ḥasanah**

As told by Imam Al-Alusi, as quoted above, the people who should be advanced through debate in our case are those who are also using debate to Islamophobing. It is important to note here that even though that the general meaning of *al-mujādalah* is closely akin to the word debate in English, but still the term dialogue could be used to represent it. In other words, dialogue is far more general than debate or debate is the sub of dialogue. As a result of that, an interfaith dialogue too can be added with the elements of debate when there is such need for it.

The usage of *al-mujādalah al-ḥasanah* i.e. argue with others in ways that are best and most gracious, is defined by Imam Al-Ṭabarî as follows:
Some of the exemplary debates and rhetorical approaches that could be imitated nowadays could be referred to the endeavors of the past Muslim philosophers or the Mutakallimūn.

In the present day, some names can be proposed here such as the late Shaykh Ahmed Hussein Deedat (1918-2005), Dr. Zakir Abdul Karim Naik (b.1965), Shaykh Hamza Yusuf (b.1960) and many other Muslim reverts. In short, debate is used at times by our Muslim debaters in order to rationalize the realities of Islam in the minds of those who are against it. A religious debate is never intended to downgrade or mock the personality, belief, practice etc. of the counterparts. In Islam, Allah the Most High already warned Muslims not to mock, disparage or downgrade the other religions or beliefs. He says:

وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا لِدَوَارَةَ الْخَيْرِ الْخَيْرَ الَّذِي نُجِبُهُ عِنْدَ عَزِيزٍ رَبِّي

Means: Revile not ye those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest they out of spite revile Allah in their ignorance. Thus have We made alluring to each people its own doings. In the end will they return to their Lord, and we shall then tell them the truth of all that they did. (Al-An‘ām 6: Verse 108)

An Islamophilic outreach debate therefore intends to put forward some conceivable arguments so that there will be no doubt and curiosity upon the message of Islam.
Conclusion

As a conclusion, we could say that an Islamophilic outreach program is nothing new in the history of da‘wah, but to make it today as a mainstream is vital to ensure a rise at the understanding level of Islam and possession of a correct comprehension of its teachings amidst the non-Muslims. Evidently, Islamophobia depicts an old perspective towards Islam but newly branded and nomenclatured. This projected fear, hostility, prejudice and discrimination has no other cure, except that it could only be removed and healed by love i.e. Islamophilia.

The prospects of Islamophilic da‘wah are great but the promotions of it are very little and slow due to the perception to segregate between the Da‘wah to the Muslims or also called Islah, from the Da‘wah to the Non-Muslims in toto. Due to that, three main mediums have been introduced earlier, altogether with some examples of current period. Lastly, what should also be reminded among the Islamophiles is that reaching out is one thing and reverting others to Islam is another different thing, because only Allah can revert one from a religion to Islam. The duty of mankind is just to convey the message and every Muslim is only compelled to bear what is just bearable upon their shoulders. Allah says:

لا يُكْلِفُ اللهُ نفْسًا إِلَّا وَمَعَهَا نَفْسًا مَا كُنتُتْ وَعَلِيَّها ما أَكْسَبْتُ وَرَبِّي لَا تَوَاصَلُوا إِنْ سَبِينَا أُوْحِيَتَا وَلَا تَحْمِيلُ عَلَيْنَا إِسْرًا كَمَا حَمِيلُهُ عَلَى الْذِّينَ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا وَاكْسِبْنَا مَا لَا طَأْقُهُ لَنَا بِهِ وَاخْفِفْ عَنَّا وَاخْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا أَنْتُ مُؤْلِنا فَاضْرُبْنَا عَلَى الْقُوَّمِ الْكَافِرِينَ

Which means: On no soul doth Allah place a burden greater than it can bear. It gets every good that it earns, and it suffers every ill that it earns. (Pray :) "Our Lord! Condemn us not if we forget or fall into error; our Lord! Lay not on us a burden like that which Thou didst lay on those before us; our Lord! Lay not on us a burden greater than we have strength to bear. Blot out our sins, and grant us forgiveness. Have mercy on us. Thou art our Protector; help us against those who stand against Faith." (Al-Baqarah 2: 286)
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