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The Andalusian Model
and Muslim–Christian
Dialogue Today

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This paper addresses the means to strengthen efforts of rapprochement between Islamic societies of the East and Christian societies of the West through the adoption of historical patterns of coexistence, interaction and cultural cross-fertilization, and thereby raise the hope of finding a possible model that will stimulate dialogue between the two civilizations. The best example of such patterns is the Andalusian Civilization that flourished on the territory of the Iberian Peninsula centuries ago, and we should take advantage of its most pertinent and accessible aspects. There is the belief that the Andalusian example can be employed in several ways, including formulating the theoretical and practical framework of fundamental principles, content and aims of such a dialogue. There is no doubt that the atmosphere of tolerance and peaceful coexistence that characterized the political experience and social development in Spain – during what was a relatively long period of time – sheds light on a civilized human behavior that has not lost its symbolism and energy as an incentive to recognize the importance of the lessons of the past in today's world.

Of course, the issue includes many dialectical elements since the "true image" of the "three civilizations" in Andalusia still raises various arguments and debates in Spain and Europe alike. Some groups skeptical about this civilized religious convergence push to deprive such an important era of its Eastern influence in order to create a European

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identity. Such groups still denounce the "Andalusian legend", which – in their view – is persistently fabricated for dubious purposes in order to justify a pointless cultural and religious dialogue. The opinion here – and putting aside those exaggerated positions that imply malicious intent – is that one can still hold to the solid belief that Andalusia's achievements in terms of relations between the various religious and ethnic groups should be valued and deserve appreciation. However, in fairness one should reject the excessive literature and discourse that seem concerned with embellishing the real image of Andalusia and censoring the negative aspects, rather than promoting a scientific project that over any other consideration seeks to add to the enrichment of Mankind.

Dialogue of Cultures and its Current Prospects

The process of dialogue between "Islam" and "West" started a long time ago, and here we mean the "official" process, which is now sponsored by governments, international and regional organizations and institutions representing large segments of society on both sides. Of course, the exchange of views between Islam and Christianity – and the search for understanding of each other's positions – represent a continuing phenomenon that has taken place for hundreds of years. This interaction finds itself renewed in the 20th century after several religious institutions in Muslim countries have responded to the calls for dialogue made by the Vatican Council II (1965–1966), and the subsequent visits and activities of Pope Paul VI in various Arab countries, notably Palestine.[1] Over time, the engagement of non-religious official bodies in this interaction has given the entire process a previously absent global focus, culminating with the United Nations (UN) – during its 59th General Assembly held in 2004 – announcing its support for the project of the "Alliance of Civilizations", thanks to efforts made by certain Western and Muslim leaders such as Spanish Prime Minister, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, and his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. In this context, the way has been paved for several global meetings and conferences – of which the Arab Gulf States have kindly hosted a number – which resulted

in the adoption of international efforts and confirmation of the participants' desire (particularly certain Arab and Islamic representatives) to bring those efforts to fruition.

The purpose here is not to consider the conditions necessary for the process of dialogue – or the Alliance of Civilizations – but rather to limit the task to providing an overview of the Andalusian experience and the continuity of its positive social, cultural and institutional aspects. However, it is worth mentioning that the difficulties and obstacles facing the path of this dialogue means that results are limited and do not match the efforts and endeavors made so far. Beyond the speeches, statements, media coverage, optimism and hopeful expectations expressed here and there, it seems that the project has not progressed beyond the set-up stage and verification of good faith. Coming up with tangible proposals to adopt specific standards within an explicit time frame will ensure the transition to a new decisive stage, where the opportunity will be wide open for the employment of prominent historical experiences such as the Andalusian one.

Before moving to the heart of this research, it is important to discuss three of the main implications of the dialogue process (and our personal approach to it), namely: the identification of the participating parties; the civilization–culture relationship and its implications for the dialogue; and the dialogue in reply to the "clash of civilizations".

The Naming and Identification of Participating Parties

This is an issue of paramount importance despite the fact that many have failed to see its intrinsic danger; traditional terms of reference indicate two main participants in the dialogue: one is "Islamic" and the other is "Western". At first glance it presupposes that there is a "secular" addressee having a non-religious base vis-à-vis another addressee who is distinctively "religious" or devout. Interestingly, the dialogue had basically started as a conversation between representatives of Christianity and Islam before (European-American) Christianity transformed into the "West". There are also various theoretical complications; the "West" is

primarily a geographical term whose natural limits and features are not well known. However, "Islam" is a very broad term that combines political, social, religious and other meanings. The most important thing is that depriving a party of the religious characteristic on the grounds that it is a secular party, while stressing the "religious" characteristic of the second party, predetermines the identity of the persons who are assigned to represent the views of their "civilization". In a few bilateral meetings we have seen representatives from both sides establishing their conversations on backgrounds that cannot be matched or balanced because the process was not preceded by a precise definition of what is "Western" and what is "Islamic". So, this failure or omission may explain why the majority of such meetings concluded with superficial recommendations. In addition, because of the absence of practical determinants of dialogue, the participants in such meetings in general tend to stress the religious or secular achievements of their civilizations, and to analyze the potential achievements of the other party from a purely "religious" or "secular" perspective.

Therefore, the impression received is some audiences do not care about any consensus on points of dialogue and similarity, but rather the uniqueness of their "civilization" and what distinguishes it from the other. Even if it is not said plainly, the listener feels sometimes that they want to prove the superiority of their culture through emphasizing what they deem as a deviation and deterioration of the other. In terms of Western discourse, the issue is further complicated by people stressing the "Christian element" of Western civilization, while others promote the "secular element" of the same civilization, noting that secularism fought and is still fighting with the Christian establishment, especially the Roman Catholic Church. As such, one should maintain the original binary (Christianity–Islam) or, at least one should have set up uniform standards for defining what is "Islam" and what is the "West".

The Civilization–Culture Binary and its Implications For Dialogue

From the above, a second problem is identified that also has terminological implications, specifically the concepts of "civilization" and "culture".

While the first has dominated contemporary discussion – we talk today about the "dialogue of civilizations", "meeting of civilizations" and "alliance of civilizations" – we did not bother, when it comes to the question of "Islam and West", to search for a consensus on the definition of "civilization". Given the varied physical, political and civil implications of the concept of "civilization", some have proposed the use of the term "culture", believing that the spiritual and rhetoric fundamentals of the latter is a more fertile ground to address two intellectual systems that are the most important and influential in the history of Mankind. The focus on the element of "civilization" will inevitably distance participants from entering into a productive intellectual debate and would instead end up focusing on positions and policies that do not necessarily represent the ideological background of the culture which produced a particular civilization. This argument is known to intellectuals famous for their contributions to the process of dialogue, such as the Bosnian Alija Ali Izetbegović in his book *Islam Between East and West*; and those who call for a dependence on "culture" in order to avoid many terminological implications.

Dialogue in Reply to the "Clash of Civilizations"

It is not a secret, especially after 9/11, that the encouragement of dialogue is strongly linked to the heat of the political, diplomatic and military conflict between certain Western countries – primarily the United States – and a number of Islamic organizations, especially in the Middle East. There is also a major and undeniable support for the saying "clash of civilizations" and the prevailing belief that there is a serious "problem" between Islam and West rooted in history and a need to be solved at the present time.

However, the irony is that these circumstantial problems arise from many clashes including the conflict between on the one hand the United States and the West, and Al-Qaeda and what is termed "international terrorism" on the other hand, in addition to the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, Iranian expansion, etc., all of which do not represent cultural or intellectual issues but are political clashes with tangible aims, whether

it is to dominate the Middle East; to control geo-social issues such as immigration; or bilateral economic relations. Thus, the approach to this conflict as a matter of cultural or civilizational debate is an approach that is destined to be ineffective because it is used as a means to avoid calling things with their appropriate names. This also explains the slowdown in the development of this process and a repeat of the relative stagnation felt in the leading international conferences held in the 1990s.[2] While there is pressure to increase such meetings and activities qualitatively and quantitatively whenever political and military crises arise, the use of dialogue as a sustainable and comprehensive cultural tool for mutual understanding then loses its original purpose—one which was never meant to be the sole means for the resolution of such conflicts, but rather as a path for rapprochement and understanding.

In addition, these premises often lead to strange suggestions such as those put forward by the Spanish former Foreign Minister, Miguel Ángel Moratinos, in the wake of the horrific terrorist attack carried out by a supporter of the extremist right-wing in Norway in July 2011. He called for strengthening the process (of the Alliance of Civilizations) to confront this attack, which was an assault on co-existence and tolerance among religions, noting that most of the victims were Norwegian (Christians), and the motive was primarily political and it appears that it was related to domestic issues within Norway.[3] Although the criminal targeted the Labor Party for its "lax" policy on immigration and the Islamic "invasion" of Europe, it is difficult to understand what is the benefit of involving the Islamic side in a dialogue limited to Christian–Christian extremism (and vice versa if the issue is related to Islamic–Islamic extremism) no matter how racist and hating the extremist right-wing ideas are towards other races, unless we want to take for granted that the exacerbated crisis of immigration and the spread of Muslim communities in a number of European countries is a part of (this) problem. However, this conclusion is a very serious and sides with the theories of the Nazi movements.

Andalusia and the
Atmosphere of Ideological Tolerance

The history of Andalusia extending from the 7th century to the 15th century AD is divided into five main stages: the rule of the Umayyads (the state, the emirate and the caliphate); disintegration of the Caliphate into small Islamic reigns (city states); the reign of the Almoravids; the reign of the Almohads; and the Nasrid Kingdom in Granada. Out of these phases the Umayyad era emerged as the most prosperous and flourished politically, socially and culturally; it is this stage which summarizes the glories of Andalusia. What attracts attention is that the Umayyad dynasty – its princes and caliphates – ruled most of the Iberian Peninsula for about 300 years—a very long period not surpassed by any other ruling family in the history of Spain.[4] However, other eras were not devoid of achievements that honor the history of Andalusia, even if they were struggling to survive after the balances of power turned against the Andalusian when the northern Christian kingdoms took the initiative. Despite their initial momentum, the campaigns by Almoravids and Almohads could not stop the armies of the Christian kingdoms, particularly the Castile and Aragon, except for only limited periods of time.

The history of Andalusia recorded examples indicating the ability of Muslim communities to display cultural and social generosity as is the case with the small Islamic reigns that were established following the collapse of the Umayyad Caliphate in Córdoba in the 12th century AD/ 6th century AH Andalusia fell under the rule of "26 dynasties, most notably the Abbad family in Seville, the Noon family in Toledo, Hood family in Zaragoza, the Aftas family in Badajoz, Hammudid family in Malaga, and Zirid family in Granada."[5] Despite their political weakness and preoccupation with fierce internal wars and the continuous Christian raids, those kingdoms flourished in arts, music and science.

Most Spanish and European historians agree that the Islamic state in the Iberian Peninsula dealt with the issue of religious and ethnic pluralism in a new and unprecedented way in the region following the spread of Christianity during the last phase of the Roman era. With the exception of

a small group that deliberately misuses history to justify its ideological heterodoxy and claims that Islamic rule suppressed other religions and tried to eradicate Christianity by killing its followers or, at best, subjecting them to a very hard discriminatory system akin to slavery, the vast majority recognizes that the Muslim rulers generally treated the Christians and Jews in a very acceptable manner. This new soft approach was firstly represented in the "easy" tax policy and freedom of worship, which provided opportunity to many *Dhimies* (protected non-Muslims) to stay in the Andalusian cities and countryside under the sovereignty of the Islamic State. The discrepancies between Andalusian and Goth governance are mostly reflected in terms of the experience of the Jews, who had been subject to persecution and exclusion in the Goth-ruled lands (Germanic people who swept into southern Europe after the collapse of the Roman Empire). The Jews dealt with non-hostile Muslim rulers who recognized the sect's right in managing their own affairs and practicing their religious rituals.[6] So, truth should be told that a large proportion of the Andalusia population remained true to their original faith for a long period of time; the same phenomenon that is familiar to us in the Orient and the Levant in general, especially during the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates.

In addition, there appeared during this period the "Mozarabs"— Christians who maintained their original religion in the heart of the Islamic emirate although they adopted Arabic civilization, culture and language. Those people preferred to live in a Muslim region and did not move to the northern area of the Christian kingdoms because "they remained free to practice their religious beliefs and rituals as their churches, monasteries, religious communities and clerical judiciary were left for them." Muslims requested the Arabists only to be loyal to the Andalusian State."[7] So, the Mozarabs took charge of senior positions in the administration and institutions, including the army, after they had assimilated socially and become fully Arabized. In spite of this, certain European historians are skeptical about the idealized position of Mozarabs and insist that they suffered poor living conditions under the "yoke" of Islamic rule. However, there is a balanced organic relationship between the generosity of the Islamic State and the flourishing of Christian affairs.

It is found that "the institutions of the Christian minority were stronger and firmer in the regions where the authority of the Umayyad Caliphate was stable and strong,"[8] unlike the conditions of the Mozarabs on the outskirts who were always exposed to rebellion and disobedience to the central government or vulnerable to raids from Christian armies. The phenomenon of the Andalusian Mozarabs indicates that the Umayyad state did not force the indigenous population to convert to Islam, but the radiating effect of Arab culture and Islamic religion is the reason that motivated great numbers of Spanish Christians and Jews to convert to Islam, but it was not coercion.

For the *Al-Muwal'ladeen* (Muslims of mixed ancestry), or those who converted to Islam, historical documents and evidence establish that these new Muslims were not forced to learn Arabic in order to join the Arab Islamic State, however, the majority of them clung to their romance languages derived from Latin.[9] It seems that families descended from ancient Arab roots used their romance languages beside Arabic during the days of the Umayyad Caliphate; this is what scholar Ibn Hazm implies in one of his novels.[10] When analyzing the Andalusian vision of the multi-religious society, one finds that the question of language is as important as religion because continuation of use by Spanish Muslims (*Al-Muwal'ladeen*) and Christians (Mozarabs) of their mother tongues gives us a very significant insight into the Andalusian leaders' mentality, and it invalidates some of the theories that the Arabs scorned romance languages and coerced their subjects in Spain to learn Arabic if they wanted to have any significant standing.[11]

It is also of interest to follow the conditions of religious groups, especially the Mozarabs, in order to consider the facts of this pluralistic mentality; the "Martyrdom movement" (or "the Mozarab revolution") itself indicates that the appeal of Islam to the Christians did not come from a programmed central policy, but rather resulted from normal conditions imposed by the flourishing of Arab culture. In the days of Caliph Abdul-Rahman Al-Awsat (8th century AD/3rd Century AH), the religious leadership of the Christian community was very dissatisfied with their children's deviation from Christianity, negligence in practicing their

rituals, and fascination with Arab-Muslim lifestyle. This forced monks Eulogio, Alvaro and others to appeal to their religious brethren to cling to their language, traditions and authentic norms. When these efforts failed, they launched a propaganda campaign against Islam to the extent of abusing the basic beliefs of Muslims and insulting their Messenger openly in public squares in order to seek martyrdom and thereby move the conscience of their sect.[12] Monk Alvaro summarized the motives of his displeasure and grief over the dissolution of the Mozarab community in a famous letter in which he blamed his brothers for neglecting the Latin language and adopting Arab culture.[13] While the Spanish nationalism school claimed that the execution of the Mozarab monks who assaulted their Islamic beliefs is strong evidence of the Muslim rulers' hatred of "Spanish identity", a careful follow-up of others' reactions reflects the keenness of Muslim rulers to negotiate with the rebels and not to be decisive except in case of paramount necessity, as happened when the insurgency and civil coup expanded and the Caliphate had to seek the mediation of the Catholic Church itself.[14]

Andalusian Approach to Religious and Ethnic Pluralism

In general, it can be said that Muslim rulers in Andalusia dealt with the issue of religious pluralism in a way that is more positive than what the Christian European kingdoms did in the north and south of the Continent. It is true that Andalusian history was full of infighting, dissension and tension, but the European regions suffered fierce and more dangerous and destructive sectarian disputes and regional clashes, as was the case with the religious wars that took place between the Catholic Church and heretical groups. Such wars resulted in innumerable medieval massacres that killed hundreds of thousands of people. There is a big difference between the treatment received by the Jewish community in Andalusia and the campaigns of "ethnic cleansing" and exile suffered by the same community in countries such as France and England, which expelled the Jews from their territories. These "cleansing" processes are deemed the

direct historical precedent of the decision taken by the Catholic King Fernando and Queen Isabel of Spain to displace the Jews of the Kingdom of Granada after it was conquered in 1492. This is the discriminatory measure which will be later complemented by Christianizing the rest of the Muslims (they were later called "Moors") before expelling them finally in the 17th century AD. It is no exaggeration to affirm that the religious openness that characterized some of the Christian kingdoms at the time of the Umayyad Caliphate, represented by unique models such as Toledo and its famous translation house, was the result of influence by the pluralistic Andalusian model.

However, this is not to say that the Andalusian experience was safe from ideological intolerance and radicalism, as in the states of the Almoravids and Almohads, although some contemporary studies of the alleged stubbornness of the Almoravids confirmed that they did not deviate radically from the classical pattern of Islam despite their bad reputation.[15] Whatever the case may be, the two states of Almoravids and Almohads constitute a departure from the rules of religious and social Andalusian tolerance—not only in dealing with religious minorities but also at the level of ties between Spanish Muslims and the new Moroccan rulers (especially Almohads) who were hostile to the "local" theological and philosophical creative schools and preservation of the "religious tolerance" of Andalusian people.

However, the new Orientalist school – to be discussed later – insists on reducing the religious history of Andalusia to the more violent and fighting scenes such as the martyrdom movement among Mozarabs; the severe restrictions on Christians and Jews during the days of the Almohads and their pursuit of skilled scholars such as Ibn Rushd and the Jewish Ibn Maimoon; and the burning of the books deemed heretical. The goal here is not to praise the glories of Andalusia and embellish its image as some sort of fascinating stage of history during which human beings reached unprecedented level of inter-religious coexistence and interaction. The Andalusian age is nothing more than the product of its time (the Middle Ages), where domination, tyranny and monopoly of power was the norm. However, in comparison with the conditions at that time, this

age represented a remarkable development and as repeated earlier, it has vital elements that can be applied today. These elements were a genuine desire to respect others and establish a diverse society even within a hierarchical order that discriminates between the followers of religions and sects according to their affiliations.

The history of Andalusia shows many facts including that of religious and sectarian difference, which were not the decisive element in the relationship between Christians and Muslims throughout the seven centuries. The decisive elements in fact were economic interests, political conditions and social developments. By relying on the fundamentals of religious faith only, we cannot interpret why the Islamic armies spread so easily throughout the Iberian Peninsula. However, the Islamic conquest was accomplished with the cooperation of a local faction defecting from the Germanic ruling family and people in many areas rushed to welcome the Islamic armies, expressing their hatred of the tight grip of control by the Goths. So, without adding these key factors to the equation it is impossible to understand the scope of the intervention by Muslim leaders in the affairs of the northern Christian lands, and cooperation among them through agreements and royal weddings between families on both sides.

The same situation was repeated in reverse during the time of the small Islamic reigns, which used to seek assistance from certain Christian kingdoms in order to counteract internal conspiracies or face external threats. Even the recovery or retrieval wars fought by the northern kingdoms with purely religious enthusiasm and zeal – as alleged by former historians – had no relation to the said historical epic as advocated by Spanish nationalists because, with a few exceptions, such wars were subject to "non-religious" alliances, agreements and understandings between Muslims and Christians against a Muslim party or a Christian group, or against both of them together.[16] What also terrified Almoravids and Almohads specifically, in addition to Islamic customs and beliefs, is the leniency of the Andalusians in their treaties with the Christians. Consider the Christian warrior, Rodrigo Ruiz de Vivar ("the Master"), the hero of Spanish nationalism and the symbol of the struggle against "Islamic occupation" according to the traditional nationalist story. He

employed his weapons and men to fight the prince of Christian Catalonia in order to defend Valencia.[17]

Furthermore, the collapse of Muslim rule in Spain was related to internal political and social reasons rather than the effects of the Crusades. Many historians revealed that the continuous differences between the Arab elites, and between the Berber soldiers and *Al-Muwal'ladeen* (Muslim Spanish people) – like the tribal tensions between the different parties that participated in conquering the Andalusian Peninsula – are the main factors which subjugated Umayyad rule. Thus, the most dangerous challenges that faced the Umayyad rulers were not the raids by the Christian kings but the rebellions and coups led by *Al-Muwal'ladeen* deserters, especially the insurgency led by Omar Bin Hafsoon.[18] Furthermore, the days of the last Umayyad Caliphate in Cordoba were evidence of the separation between the Berber military and the dignitaries of the City.[19]

Some attribute the disintegration of the Andalusian State to the weakness of its institutions and the lack of cohesion in a society subject to an authoritative political system that took into account the interests of a few oligarchs. According to this narrative, the ruling elite could reign in rebellious opposition with the assistance of its huge military and generous financial strength – both were the pillars of the Andalusian government – but not through sincere loyalty or national jealousy, a problem that was repeated with the Almoravids and Almohads.[20] Still, this narrative has a great deal of simplification and generalization as it limited the "Andalusian dilemma" to a bitter struggle between Arab elites, the popular *Al-Muwal'ladeen* and the Berbers, and it adopts a rule that is applicable also to the Christian autocratic elitist kingdoms. However, what is of concern here is to point out that the religious issue was not a problem in the intellectual Andalusian system, unlike the European view which in many cases deprived the followers of such religions and sects "with doubtful loyalty" of their rights as citizens. Unfortunately, we have many examples demonstrating the cruel treatment which the Europeans meted out to other people, starting with the Jews in the Middle Ages, to the campaigns of extermination and ethnic cleansing of native Indians at the

hands of the English, Spanish, Portuguese and the French, and later the American settlers in the North and South America, ending with slavery in Africa or the military campaigns in Asia.

The Debate on the Symbolic
Andalusian Civilization in European Culture

One can conclude from the aforementioned that Andalusia provided very valuable contributions to the field of cultural dialogue and religious understanding. However, several Western groups started to doubt the validity of this conclusion, especially since 9/11. There are countless examples showing the sensitivity of the new Orientalist school towards the "Andalusian positivity". Let us remember for example the "historic" speech delivered by the US President Barack Obama, addressing the Islamic World in June 2009, in which he praised Andalusia as a great or perhaps unique example of peaceful inter-religious coexistence, particularly that "Islam has a proud tradition of tolerance. We see it in the history of Andalusia and Cordoba during the Inquisition."[21] The case of Andalusia and Islamic view of religions and sects did not form a large part of his speech message in Cairo; however, the US President's momentary recall of the Andalusia times raised a tremendous amount of comments and positions. Still, his speech opened the door again to reviewing the implications of Islamic civilization in Andalusia, and the ways to estimate its contribution in the formation of modern European culture in general and Spanish culture in particular. An essential part of the debate is about the true meaning of such "Islamic religious tolerance" and its historical contemporary manifestations, and whether such tolerance to other religions as witnessed in Andalusia may be considered as a fine role model that should be emulated or just a typical unfounded argument?

After Obama's compliment on the religious peace during Arab rule in Andalusia, those who are anti- "the myth of Andalusia" and the "myth of Islamic tolerance" rose up and deemed such statements as new evidence that the "naïve ignorant Western society" has fallen in the trap of "pro-

Islam propaganda". Furthermore, they condemned the readiness showed by many Europeans to "swallow" this process of revisionism which aims to embellish an era of the Middle Ages (Andalusia) that was never characterized by grandeur and splendor as described by some.[22] Yet, others said that, "it is a bitter, tragic irony that the foundational myths of 'symbiotic' Andalusian ecumenism and Ottoman 'tolerance', which were central to the genesis of the Eurabian pathology currently on display in Europe, are now also being invoked as salvational fantasies in the wake of the French riots. Denying any Islamic etiology for the major problems confronting Europe, thus begets more Islam as the 'solution', and accelerates Europe's seemingly inevitable trajectory towards complete Islamization, with implementation of Shari'a."[23]

The phenomenon of rebellion against the "rosy image" of Andalusia, as drawn by intellectuals of the 19th century in Europe, thrived during the second half of the last century by a group of Orientalists and historians but it did not reach its peak until the aftermath of 9/11. Those censuring the "obsession of Andalusia" agree that the creators of the myth of Andalusia are the European secularists who hate the Christian religion and who intended through their creation of that myth to achieve two main objectives: accusing the Christian Church of religious rigidity and recognizing that the victory of secularism and abandonment of the church are the mainstays of contemporary European civilization. Actually, in terms of implications of this for Spain, the debate about the myth of religious co-existence during the days of Andalusia is within a broader subjective frame that also includes the role played by Andalusia in shaping modern Spanish and European identity. It is sufficient to refer back to the famous lectures of the historians Americo de Castro and Claudio Sánchez Albornoz in order to verify the significance of such a role.

The arena has not been empty of new debaters determined to revive such arguments and reconfirm that Andalusia is not one of the founding elements of Spanish identity. One of those debaters is the Orientalist Serafín Fanjul, the author of two books entirely devoted to denying any contribution by Arabs and Muslims to the establishment of current

Spanish civilization. Since then, various historians, journalists and politicians have followed his example trying to unveil the "true face" of Islam and alert their compatriots of its dangers. The said Spanish researcher has applied himself eagerly to put an end to what he called fallacies and propaganda traps regarding Andalusia and attacked specifically the argument of religious tolerance. Fanjul stresses that the Andalusian rulers' approach to religious diversity did not differ much from past practices in Christian communities at the time of the Islamic State in Spain. Fanjul views Andalusia as representing a foreign period of time forcibly injected in the historical path of Spain and Europe, noting that the State of Spain as we know today is the result of the recovery from war and the Spanish people's adherence to its Christian heritage and rejection of the Islamic influence. He concludes that the call for rehabilitation of such a "Andalusia fantasy" is essentially an attack on Spain and a blatant attempt to discredit its historical and social development. It is enough to consider the titles of both books in order to sense the quality of his conclusions (*Andalusia Versus Spain*, and *Illusion of Andalusia*).[24]

It goes without saying that these opinions reflect a problematic approach to the new history of Europe; it tends to consider other cultures as a cause of tension and a dilemma in itself instead of trying to contain and meld them into a diverse civilized crucible. Thus, Andalusia is separated from Spanish history and deprived of any characteristic as a foundation of Spanish identity. This is exactly what was persisted by what is known as the "Continuous Traditional School", which refuted the influence of the Andalusian era in forming Spanish identity, but rather it considered that Arabic Islamic institutions and culture did not leave any trace. In addition, Spanish societies succeeded in "Spanish-izing" the invaders and containing any possible effect of their Eastern civilization. The same applies to the Christian minorities under the Islamic State; the Mozarabs were "resistors" who never assimilated into the Islamic environment, but rather they are the human and civil foundation of the Spanish State which emerged in the south after the fall of Granada in 1492.[25]

Emergence of the "Myth" of
Inter-religious Co-existence In Andalusia

One characteristic of those who warn that Islam is harboring despicable plots and ploys against the West and its exceptional values of civilization, is that they go too far in re-attributing anything that we may consider as an accomplishment from Islamic culture to other civilizations that had preceded it such as the Greek, Persian, Indian, Roman and Chinese civilizations; i.e. Arabs assumed the mission of the carrier only. If we recognize originally that Islamic civilization, especially the Arabs, provided a valuable production, then there is always someone who will denunciate the matter out of hand.[26]

In a race to disguise any influence of the Arab presence, even through historical revisionism, there are some people seeking to rid the Arab historians of their leading role when it comes to the matter of "fabricating Andalusia untruths"; and they intended to attribute the matter to non-Islamic elements. The American Orientalist, Bernard Lewis, lays the responsibility of establishing the Andalusian "myth" on the Jewish community in Europe during the 19th century. According to him the Jewish community wanted to show up the Christian injustices against the Jews who were at that time subject to oppression and prosecution in several European countries. Those Jewish writers wanted to suggest the paradox that the Jewish living under the Andalusian government (also European) enjoyed a better social status.[27] Others state that the fabrication of Andalusian history was made during the same century, but by the hands of a movement that was keen to romanticize the medieval period in general, including the era of Arab-Islamic rule in Andalusia. However, such cosmetic attempts were not empty of political objectives, which were to save the face of the Ottoman Empire and find justification to maintain its unity.[28]

Aside from these explanations, there are other theories highlighting the contribution of Islamic Arab authors to the Andalusian uniqueness, for example the historian Abul Abbas Ahmad al-Muqri al-Talmasani (died in 1631 AD) who was of Andalusian-Moorish origin. He wrote the book

"Naṣhu'l Teeb Min Ghusni'l Andalus Erratieeb" (A Pleasant Scent From the Green Branch of Andalusia). Later, the 19th-century Orientalists adopted this work as a precious source when reviewing Islamic culture in Spain and integrating that period into the history of the country after purifying it of its negatives.[29]

Illusory Andalusia and the "Eurabia" Phenomenon

As such, it seems that the main objective of the New Orientalist School is to undermine the founding myths of the "good merciful Islam". Such a mission is transformed into a sort of scientific obligation for some people, including the said Professor Bernard Lewis who dedicated a great part of his research to "correcting the false image painted by makers of the myth" (what is meant here is the myth of Islamic tolerance to other religions).[30] For Lewis, the responsibility for the prevalence of this myth of Islamic open-mindedness toward monotheistic beliefs lies this time on the Christian missionaries in Africa.[31]

The supporters of the Western anti-Islam current took a great interest in the possibility that some people may restore the myth of Andalusia in order to justify what they called the project of turning the European continent into a "house of Islam" as a result of the growing radical Muslim communities living in Europe. Traditionally, the Islamic threat to the European continent was called "Eurabia"—a term usually attributed to the Egyptian researcher, Bat Ye'or, who became famous for her study of the (oppressed) Jews and Christians in Muslim countries. Ye'or and her team were concerned about the growing number of Muslim immigrants in Europe and the spread of religious influences, and that this reflects the "prophecy" of turning modern, developed and secular European society into a merely Islamic environment overshadowed by intellectual obstinacy and political closure. What is worse in their view is that the Europeans have not yet paid attention to the Islamic threat and they seem indifferent because of the influence of official governmental propaganda sympathetic to Islam.[32] What makes matters worse for the future of Western societies as a whole is that the United States itself seemed to have taken on the

European infection and is tainted by the same vice of apathy. American society is unable to fathom the threat of Islam and the Muslims' march toward using the broad freedom they have in order to blow up the state from within. That is, in synonymous words, the West is on the verge of suicide because it is going too far in making its own free environment available to a fifth column, i.e. to the Muslims who are innately anti-pluralism, anti-tolerance and anti-modernity.[33]

The term "Eurabia" – like "Islamofascist" – sums up the mouthpiece expression of those who hate Islam in the political and cultural circles in Europe and America. These people like to use a tragic tone when they talk about "a continent under siege" whose population faces "a youthful society to the south and east of the Mediterranean, which is quietly colonizing a senescent and secularized continent to the north and west of it. Today, at least 15 million Muslims have their home in the European Union, a number that seems certain to rise according to the historian Niall Ferguson,[34] who believes that Muslim immigrants clearly find it harder to integrate into European communities.[35]

In the same context, the theory of an Islamic conspiracy against Europe is used by one of those calling for confrontation with the Islamic threat; the American Orientalist Daniel Pipes, who is famous for his fiery writings against everything related to Islam, states that:

> Indigenous Muslims of northwestern Europe have in the past year deployed three distinct forms of jihad: the crude variety deployed in Britain, killing random passengers moving around London; the targeted variety in the Netherlands … and now the more diffuse violence in France … Which of these or other methods will prove most efficacious is yet unclear, but the British variant is clearly counterproductive, so the Dutch and French strategies probably will recur.[36]

In the opinion of Pipes and his companions, the nature of this aggressive jihad, common among the Muslims of our time, does not differ much from Arab campaigns against Europe from the 8th century AD, when the Arabs' tightening control of Spain led to "the occupation of the Mediterranean by hands of Arab Mujahideen, who converted to Islam in the 6th and 7th centuries".[37]

Suggestions to Restore Andalusia

There are various views among contemporary Arab intellectuals and thinkers on the symbolic nature of Andalusia; some of them prefer to focus on the cultural achievements while others hold to its strong political and organizational signs. On the other hand, some view it as one of the Arabs' lost glories or a lesson of history. Whatever the case, the talk of Andalusia in current Arabic literature usually focuses on its lost cultural connotations that should be restored. Thus, the call for restoration of Andalusia has a symbolic force intended for the return to the values, principles and behavior that made the Islamic civilization surpass other nations.

Therefore, it is strange to see the continual mobilization among the corps of politicians and specialists in "jihadist movements" who define Islam (politicized or non-politicized) as the number-one enemy for the West. Andalusia is of great interest to those people because, as they allege, it symbolizes such a lost paradise, which Islamic extremism attempts to restore through terrorism (or by organized immigration, if necessary). Based on this hypothesis, such extremist movements did not consider the project of restoring Andalusia as a cultural symbol, but as a clear political plan that aims to Islamize Andalusia (i.e. Spain), heart and mind.[38]

Destruction of the Andalusian Illusion to Serve Islamophobia

The essence of what is termed "Islamophobia" lies in the classic Orientalist argument that Islam is a frozen religion that does not change; or in other words, it is a belief system that rejects evolution and is not ready to cope with modern life and urban developments. It is a lowly theocratic system contrary to the West, tainted with violence and excessively patriarchal that despises the female gender.[39] Therefore, the collision between the West (with its modernity and rational balance) and Islam (which is backward and based on reverence for tradition) is inevitable. So, it is not surprising that such adherents rush to launch warnings about the fabricated maneuvers behind the mask of Islamic

"tolerance", such as the ominous dialogue of civilizations and the like. What inflamed the fire of their anger more so is that the US President himself joined this infamous bandwagon (i.e. the dialogue of civilizations).

After analyzing their interpretive approach to texts and references, which is noted for its crude and careless manner, it is easy to recognize the ideological factors indicating that politics is the main motive behind this Islamophobia. So, it is not unexpected to see adherents boasting that they are absolutely committed to the Zionist narrative and the neo-conservative school in the United States. Here, we refer to the Spanish philosopher, Rosa María Rodríguez Magda, in her book significantly titled *About the Andalusia which Never Existed: How Thinkers Created the Myth of Andalusia,* who confirms that Spanish Muslim society favored civilized openness, tolerance and adherence to democratic pluralistic values, but it "hates Israel and the United States, and accuses numbers of intellectuals of Islamophobia."[40] This statement offers the assumption that the reactionary (non-modernity) state of Muslims may be mitigated if they adopted a more positive position toward Zionism and American policy in the region.

Needless to say that in the context of current efforts for success of the dialogue of civilizations or cultures – or whatever we want to call – it is very dangerous if the symbols of Islamophobia have a wide influence on public opinion and political decision makers alike. In the United States, people such as Bernard Lewis, Daniel Pipes and Fouad Ajami – of Arab origin (he is famous for his studies criticizing Islam) – maintain a significant level of influence since they had actually participated in preparing the American campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq. The list goes on as well in France (after the United States and Britain, France is the impregnable stronghold of Islamophobia); however, their leading proponent is the philosopher Bernard Henri Levy, followed by authors Alan von Kalckreuth and Michelle Holibek. Henri Levy boasts of the relentless challenge of the authoritative movements developed in the 20th century from Nazism and Communism to "Islamism", while intensifying his activity in global campaigns aimed at any threat to the universal

Zionist project. Furthermore, Henry Levy co-signed a petition statement against "Islamism" with other Western and Muslim thinkers living in Europe and the United States such as Salman Rushdie and Taslima Nasreen. The statement called for confronting "cultural relativity" that legitimates the measure of "stripping the Muslim man and woman of their rights to equality, freedom and secular values in the name of respecting the privacies of other cultures."[41]

We have no choice but to wonder at this violent language toward Andalusia, which does not in any way deserve such an outburst that uses Islam and Muslims as a palatable prey for its sharp claws. What harm will befall them if we deal with Andalusia as a symbol of reconciliation and harmony between religions and sects? Do we falsify history and the naked facts if we said to the world: "Look, there is a civilized precedent that we can utilize?" Do they want us to take for granted an Andalusia which is the same for fanatic Muslims and that is still beating in the hearts of millions of Muslims aspiring for glory and self-dignity? What will hurt us, we the Europeans, if we pay attention to the days when Arabs were among us and take lessons from them in order to pave the way for a European multi-national and multi-faith community that combines values of social modernity and religious and ethnic tolerance?

Some Lessons from Andalusian History

What does the Andalusian civilization symbolize in the context of contemporary Western modernism? A question often facing European intellectuals concerned with so-called "convergence" of Western (Christian) civilization and Arab (Muslim) civilization, and understanding between religions, especially after the "dialogue of civilization" has become a global project. The issue – i.e. the meaning of the Andalusian civilization and its cultural implications – is not easy or subject to simple examinations, analyses and discussions. It recently faced a campaign of ideological mobilization that participated remarkably in stripping it of its substantive historical and intellectual elements to the extent that it merely became a subject for furious debate. We are used to approaching the issue

of Andalusia with politicized views and positions that have propaganda interests standing behind them. In order to break this vicious circle, we have to find a functional approach which allows for debate on the dialogue of civilizations or the prospects of bilateral relations between the West and Islamic world; the concept of modernity in its Islamic manifestations; in addition to the other flash points that feed the present problematic relationship between the Christian West and Muslim East.

Many years ago, Spain (the European country which is most affected by this subject) witnessed a renewed interest in the symbolism of Andalusia and the contribution of the Arab-Muslim influence in the formation of Spanish national identity and its palpable effects on Spanish society today. The presence of Andalusia increased as a cultural and institutional factor because of the efforts made by the government since the fall of the General Franco dictatorship in 1975, especially in the southern province of Andalusia and its capital Seville, in order to restore the significance of Andalusia and "modernize" it. Based on these efforts, institutes and governmental and civil bodies were established to promote the most positive aspects of that historical period, particularly the phenomenon of peaceful co-existence between different religions and sects (the three cultures: Islam, Christianity and Judaism), and the interaction between the Arab and Christian kingdoms in spite of many wars that broke out between them throughout the centuries. Furthermore, a group of researchers, intellectuals and writers worked hard to restore the positive image of that stage, considering it as one of the most generous periods in the history of Spain and an example of good-neighborliness and cohabitation between Muslims and Christians in Europe. It is interesting that these efforts have resulted at the end in a balanced portrayal of that period, especially if compared with the negative behavior adopted by the extremist Catholic regime of Franco for some 40 years. Today's portrayal has produced an incomplete vision of what Andalusia means to Spanish and European culture, and concentrates only on the moments of conflict between "Arabs" as dictatorial invaders, and the Spanish as an oppressed people fighting to restore a stolen Christian home.

This is how the narrative has moved from the Andalusian concept of civilization to its mere military significance, i.e. the collaboration of European societies in expulsion of strange Muslims and working after this religious confrontation on building a modern European culture (in other words, saying that Europe as a civilized project emerged after victory in the long-standing confrontation with Islam) as opposed to highlighting Andalusian exploits, peaceful co-existence and scientific, cultural and institutional development. Such a reading of the Andalusian record even went so far that some people concluded that the European continent in general, and Spain in particular, made a qualitative evolutionary leap thanks to the spread of Andalusian civilization; i.e. they reached a conclusion that is in total opposition to the first hypothesis: Europe did not arise as a civilization because it was against Andalusia, but because it was influenced by the Andalusian model to the maximum extent. Unfortunately, both hypotheses are based on fallacies and an incomplete reading of tangible historical facts. Confrontation and hatred were not the decisive factors in Islam–Christianity relations, as previously said, and the periods of constructive co-existence between the three cultures were not frequent or consistent over the centuries.

The attacks of 9/11 in the United States and the bombings in Madrid on March 11th, 2003 stimulated the debate on the significance of Andalusia as a record of the Muslim presence in the West. The literature that doubts the "civilization" of Muslims and their cultural achievements emanated from the Western right-wing camp. The main objective was to undermine what they called "the myth of Andalusia" and the "rosy Andalusian myths". It is intuitive to say that genuine dialogue between Eastern Islam and Western Christianity cannot be based on myth and legend, and it may not be based on exaggeration and denial. On these grounds, it is imperative to emphasize the true face of Andalusia and consider its many aspects of civilization that retain a great deal of modernity because they represent sustainable human values. Therefore, if we examined the Andalusian model, it will reveal the historical human history that is always controlled by the need for understanding and convergence.