Moving On:

Iberia's New Muslims



ISBON-Mamadu Indjai has given up on Europe and is heading home to the former Portuguese colony of Guinea-Bissau. The 55-year-old West African has spent the past 19 years in Portugal. Yet all he has to show for his labors are the house he was building for his family back in his ancestral village of Caio. "I haven't got the strength to struggle anymore," Indjai sighs.

Efforts to create a hospitable Iberian Model for immigrants, largely from former colonies of Spain and Portugal, have been undermined by economic catastrophe, which has drastically reduced or eliminated budgets for integration and social services and forced

MESQUITA CENTRAL DE LISBOA, LISBON MOSQUE

many immigrants to leave for their homelands or elsewhere. It's a dramatic reversal of an earlier and promising pattern. At the very moment other Europeans had all but closed their gates to what was seen as creeping Islamization, Muslim immigrants discovered the Iberian Dream. Barely a decade ago, Spain and its smaller neighbor, Portugal, laid out a welcome mat to immigrants.

THE ECONOMIC CRISIS— UNEMPLOYMENT AROUND 70 PERCENT IN SOME OF SPAIN'S MOROCCAN COMMUNITIES— IS DRIVING IMMIGRANTS AWAY. Over that period, Europe's two newest immigrant destinations developed a more humane means of dealing with an influx of Muslims. The number of Muslims in Spain was estimated at 1.3 million in 2010, with the largest community from Morocco quadrupling to 682,000 from barely 173,000 in 2000. In Portugal,

the Muslim community of some 30,000 ethnic Indians and Africans from former colonies was expanded to include several thousand Pakistanis, Indians, and North Africans. The Bangladeshis alone increased from 4,000 in 2006 to 10,000 in 2010.

Based on their own experiences as traditional emigrant nations, Spain and Portugal built an elaborate integration process based on the principle of interculturalism. This can be loosely defined as the interaction of different communities with a respect for cultural diversity, within the framework of national law—similar to the American system of hyphenated integration. On the Iberian Peninsula, however, the project became impaled on a grim series of economic and social realities and may become another victim of the global recession. Yet Iberia's new conservative leaders still pay lip service to the progressive immigration policies and look to their former colonies and the Islamic world for urgently needed investments and economic help that Europe has accorded only on the strictest conditions.

INQUISITION REDUX

Slight and wiry, dressed in jeans, a sport shirt, and a wool cap even on a sweltering day, Indjai tells his story in a café on Lisbon's historic Rossio Square, once site of the Inquisition and bullfights, now a favorite meeting place of African immigrants. In 1993, he flew to Italy from Guinea-Bissau to get medical care for his inflamed colon, to try to find a job, and to stay with his brother, who was working in a tile factory in Bergamo. Spotting his one-month tourist visa, Italian authorities ordered his repatriation, via Portugal. During a several day wait at the Lisbon airport for the flight to Guinea-Bissau, Indai suffered a severe attack of colitis and was sent to the hospital for treatment. Because of his health condition and Portuguese sympathy for citizens of its former colonies, Indjai obtained a string of short-term visas, until his status was regularized by a general amnesty in 1996. He continued to work for a variety of construction companies with temporary contracts, at the minimum wage of around €500 (\$660) a month. Sharing a flat with other immigrants from West Africa, with three or four people to a room, Indiai was able to send €100 to €150 a month to his family back home

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By late 2007, construction work was drying up in Portugal. Like other immigrants with only primary education, Indjai became a street hawker, peddling bracelets, necklaces, and other trinkets from café to café and at the flea market on weekends. He could no longer send transfers home, and last year, his wife divorced him, leaving their three children with his mother. In October 2011, Indjai was informed that he owed a total of €9,000 (\$11,870) in social security contributions. His only alternative was to enroll in the Assisted Program for Voluntary Return, which pays airfare home. Under this program, co-financed by the Portuguese government and the Geneva-based International Organization for Migrations, there were 2,114 requests for repatriation in 2011, of which 594 were accepted. Those figures were expected to have risen in 2012. His application approved, Indjai made plans to leave in October after his last medical appointment.

In Spain, Said Kirhlani, president of the Association of Moroccan University Students in Madrid, sums up the situation over coffee at a popular Puerto del Sol café: "Moroccans know through the media there are no jobs," he says, "and so they aren't coming anymore, while families here have begun to return." In his mid-30s, with a youthful, earnest manner, Kirhlani says Romanians have now replaced Moroccans as the largest foreign community in Spain. It is clear that the economic crisis—unemployment around 70 percent in some of Spain's Moroccan communities-is driving immigrants away. The Spanish Institute of Statistics reported in 2011 that for the first time in recent years, more people left the county than entered, and that trend increased in the first semester of 2012. Colectivo Ioé, a Spanish think tank that publishes studies on social issues, has been reporting a negative balance for Moroccans since 2010.

Immigration Portugal to never reached the heights of Spain, but there has been a similar decline in the foreign population over the last two years. The Portuguese press reported a 2 percent decrease in foreign residents for 2011. While there is no breakdown on the religion of the departing foreigners, a visit to Lisbon's Central Mosque shows the change. In the past, on Friday prayer days, the Rua da Mesquita looked like an Afro-Asian festival, crowded with women from Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Senegal, and India, dressed in traditional boubous and saris and men in white tunics or multi-colored African shirts. Now noticeably fewer faithful gather at the mosque, and the party atmosphere is gone. Sheikh David Munir, the popular imam of Lisbon's Central Mosque, who has made a point of reaching out to the broader Portuguese population, acknowledges sadly that Muslims from India, Pakistan, and Africa are leaving Portugal. He estimates attendance at Friday prayers, which averaged about 1,000 faithful a couple years ago, is down by 10 to 15 percent.

EUROPEAN IBERIA

There have been momentous changes in Spain and Portugal as the two ancient colonial powers turned from fascism to democracy, from among Europe's most isolated, underdeveloped nations into modern consumer societies. Historic rivals, the Iberian neighbors found common affinities as fledgling democracies in the mid-1970s. They joined the European Economic Community in 1986 and, for the most part, became fervent Europeanists. Yet they retained their world outlook, centuries in the making, reinforcing ties with their erstwhile colonies in Latin America and Africa, contributing decisively to their open approach to immigration. By the early 1990s, the two Iberian states seemed poised to recover their standing on the world scene. With an explosion of development—thanks in part to funds from the European Union—the peninsula became a magnet for immigrants and with the new open border regime across the continent, a gateway to the rest of Europe. While they were already talking of "fortress Europe" in the north, immigrants were welcomed to Iberia, with its aging populations, low birth rate, and urgent need for labor.

Many early immigrants were Muslims from Africa. Other European countries like France, the United Kingdom, and Ger-

BOAT PEOPLE HAVE NOT TRIED TO LAND ON PORTUGAL'S COAST BECAUSE THAT NATION'S MINIMUM WAGE IS KNOWN TO BE HALF OF SPAIN'S.

many, have older and larger Muslim communities. but the recent influx of Muslims in Roman Catholic Spain and Portugal carried special significance. Iberians and Muslims cannot forget their turbulent history. The Islamic occupation lasted from the 8th to

the 15th century in some regions and was followed by the Christian Reconquista, the Inquisition, and the mass expulsion of Jews and Muslims, largely extinguishing their presence for the next 500 years.

Portugal was first inundated by refugees, called *retornados*, after the independence of its African colonies in 1975. During decolonization, nearly a million people fled former Portuguese Africa—tens of thousands airlifted from Angola, Mozambique, and Portuguese Guinea. They sought refuge in a small nation of nine million inhabitants, which could not in good conscience turn them away. They were mostly Portuguese government cadres, business people, and professionals, including many ethnic Africans and Indians who had served in the colonial administration or fought in the colonial army. Among them were thousands of Muslims, who comprised modern Portugal's first Islamic communities and have been generally assimilated into business, banking, and other professions. The 1990 Schengen Treaty, which dropped all internal border controls between European countries while imposing visas for all North Africans and many other foreigners in most of Europe, sparked the explosion in illegal immigration to Spain, where the authorities were more tolerant of undocumented workers and there was still the possibility of mass legalizations.

SPAIN'S BOAT PEOPLE

In fact, most Spaniards only realized they had an immigration problem with the arrival of the *pateras*, ramshackle skiffs, bearing mostly Moroccans and Sub-Saharan Africans starting in 1990. Untold thousands perished in the Mediterranean, a treacherous eight-mile journey at the narrowest point near Gibraltar. Right-wing media portrayed the boat people as descendants of the *Moros*, who had invaded the peninsula 1,300 years ago, still an emotional issue for some elements of Spanish opinion.

Initially, most Spaniards were sympathetic to the undocumented migrants, or *sin papeles*, and their struggle to reach the Costa del Sol. There were numerous tales of individual heroes, like Father Isidoro Macias, who combed the beaches and woods every night to find boat people and give them shelter. At the office of the Franciscan order of the White Cross in the port of Algeciras, the 62-year-old Franciscan priest, known all over Africa as *Padre Pateras*, stocky with short grizzled hair, dark bushy brows, and a winning smile, explains that he helps Muslim migrants "because after all, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus were immigrants. Like the holy family, today's immigrants come because they're fleeing dictators and wars, because they are hungry and needy."

Caught off guard by the flood of migrants before the economic tide began to turn, Spanish authorities hastily assembled an infrastructure to meet the challenge. The government's lead agency for immigration policy was the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, which worked with other ministries and local authorities to provide immigrants with access to basic social services, education, and employment. The Spanish Red Cross assumed the main task of furnishing emergency relief to boat people. Encarna Marquez, who runs one aid group, Algeciras Acoge, attributes this earlier rush to "Africans [who] see television shows about Europe where everybody has automobiles, where dogs live more comfortably than most Africans, where people walk on money, and so they'll risk everything to get here." Marquez, a warm motherly figure who runs the Acoge office like her own extended family, says some boat people are still coming from sub-Saharan Africa, but not in such large numbers and now more women than men. She also speaks about the influx of pregnant women: "Many immigrants believe the myth that babies are the best passport to Spain." Under Spanish law, she explains, babies born in Spain are not automatically granted citizenship but must remain in the country for at least a year and have one parent with legal status.

PORTUGAL'S AGENCY

Remarkably, *pateras* have not targeted Portugal's southern coast, although it is next to Spain's Bay of Cadiz. Portuguese generally point to the dangers of their Atlantic shores, but North Africans say boat people have not tried to land on Portugal's coast because that nation's minimum wage is known to be half of Spain's. Still, Lisbon has had to cope with thousands of undocumented Brazilians, Eastern Europeans, and Asians, who arrive by plane, bus, or train with three-month tourist visas and disappear. They would simply melt into their local ethnic communities or more often, move on to Spain and other European countries with more and betterpaying job opportunities.

Portugal has opted for the humanist approach to immigration, according to the national immigration agency, the High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue. The hallmark of this policy is that all children of immigrants, regardless of the legal status of their parents, have the right to free health care and education. Under the new Nationality Law, foreigners can acquire Portuguese citizenship after six years of residency, compared to eight to ten years in Spain for everyone except Latin Americans, who need only two years residency.

Much of Lisbon's immigrant life is concentrated in Martim Moniz Plaza, at the foot of the Mouraria hillside, the medieval Moorish quarter. Its metamorphosis reflects the different migration patterns in contemporary Portugal. In the early 1970s, gypsies and Indians set up shop on the vast dusty square, turning it into a popular flea market. A decade later, city officials, imbued with ideas of gentrification, ousted the hawkers and built a large, characterless shopping center. Its 68 shops were immediately taken over by Indian shopkeepers from Mozambique dealing in household goods, soon followed by other Africans. In 1990, a second mall opened with 156 shops, all quickly occupied by

Africans, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Brazilians, and Chinese. Now Chinese immigrants dominate both centers.

When Taslim Rana arrived in Lisbon in 1990, there were only four other Bangladeshis in Portugal, three working in construction and one as a receptionist. Now, Rana owns three shops in Martim Moniz, featuring electronics, dry goods, and jewelry, and was leader of the Bangladeshi community of some 4,000 people. The short, trim, 44-year-old Muslim entrepre-

SPAIN AND PORTUGAL HAVE BEEN IN THE VANGUARD OF EUROPEAN ACTION TO PROMOTE POLITICAL DIALOGUE WITH THE ISLAMIC WORLD.

neur, with thinning hair, says he settled in Portugal because it is safe and friendly and a good place to raise his children. Still, he adds somewhat sadly, "nobody is coming, and more people are leaving-but not for Bangladesh." Rana admits that business is terrible at Martim Moniz. He plans to close all his shops and open an office

for translating and interpreting Bengali, Hindi, and Urdu. "But I'm Portuguese and staying here, where Muslims don't have any problems," he stresses. "I just hope we can escape the radicalization you see in England and other places."

DEALING WITH IRREGULARS

Confronted by a growing population of irregular foreigners, Madrid and Lisbon did what France and other European countries had done before them—carried out mass legalizations. The last mega-regularization took place in Spain in 2005, involving some 700,000 undocumented immigrants, said to be a European record. But broad amnesties were no longer politically correct in a European Union without borders. Wary Europeans charge that Iberians are soft on immigrants and press them to defend Europe's southern frontiers. Their main concern is that Iberia's legalized immigrants quickly head for other parts of Europe with more job opportunities and higher salaries. Madrid and Lisbon, acquiescing, stepped up their participation in the European Border Patrol FRONTEX, tightening their own controls and promising no more mass legalizations.

In Spain's Justice Ministry, Mercedes Rico, former director general of religious affairs, observes that Spain's 1992 accords with the main religious minorities, "marked closure to 500 years' expulsion of Muslims and Jews." The accords also provide a useful structure for a society with religious pluralism and a sizeable Muslim community, she says. "Specifically, we want to help Muslims retain their identity while achieving normal relations with the society around them ... that is real integration—not multiculturalism or ghettoization."

This outreach to the Muslim minority is only one chapter in the ongoing saga of the ambivalent attitudes of Iberians toward Islam and their own Islamic heritage. Since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, many Spaniards and even some Portuguese regard Muslims with distrust. Negative feelings were reinforced when investigations showed that Islamic radicals-mostly Moroccans-had attacked five commuter trains in Madrid on March 11, 2004, killing 191 passengers and wounding 2,000. Nevertheless the public reacted with remarkable restraint, distinguishing between a small group of fanatics and the majority of law-abiding Muslims. Still, the relentless waves of pateras had a strongly negative effect on Spanish public opinion. Polls showed that in 2006, the peak year for boat people, Islamophobia reached its highest level, with 60 percent of Spaniards holding a negative opinion of Muslims, up from 37 percent a year earlier.

Glossing over past conflicts with Muslims, Spain and Portugal have actively developed political, cultural, and commercial relations with the Islamic world to ease local as well as international tensions. More Iberian politicians and academics now cast a positive light on the Islamic occupation, which they contend has placed them in a unique position to understand and coexist with their Muslim neighbors. Spain and Portugal have been in the vanguard of European action to promote political dialogue with the Islamic world. Through the "Barcelona Process," Europe hoped to establish a framework for comprehensive relations with Muslims to the south and east. The Barcelona Process, however, was slow to produce meaningful change, obstructed primarily by worsening Arab-Israeli relations. In 2008, French President Nicolas Sarkozy took over the project, but it was again bogged down by Middle Eastern politics.

Meanwhile, Spain's Socialist Prime Minister, Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, launched his own project for an Alliance of Civilizations in his first address to the UN General Assembly in 2004. The real intent was to try to get the West and the Islamic world to start talking to each other under the same umbrella. Zapatero persuaded Turkey's Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan to co-sponsor the project, which was formally adopted by United Nations on July 14, 2005. The UN Secretary General named as High Representative to the Alliance Jorge Sampaio, former president of Portugal. At his Lisbon base, a lemon-colored 19th century palacete behind the Foreign Ministry,

Sampaio says the key objective of the Alliance is to support projects that promote understanding and reconciliation among cultures, in particular between Muslim and Western societies.

THE IBERIAN WINTER

Three major developments in 2011 altered the Iberian scene dramatically: the Arab Spring, national elections, and the world economic crisis. While the European Union initially watched in frozen awe as unarmed North African youths took to the streets to defy their autocratic rulers, Spain and Portugal were quick to champion the democratic movements. Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Zapatero rushed to Tunisia to offer the revolutionaries Europe's support. The Spanish Foreign Secretary was the first foreign dignitary to praise Morocco's king for his pledge to make "global constitutional reforms." The Iberians supported the French-led NATO effort in Libya but denounced French-Italian moves to reinstate internal European borders to bar thousands of Africans fleeing the fighting.

Iberian youths forcefully demonstrated their admiration for the North African revolutionary movement-by emulating it. In Portugal, a group of unemployed college graduates put half a million people into streets around the country-the biggest demonstration since Portugal's 1974 revolution. Calling for more and better democracy, organizers said they were inspired by the revolts in North Africa. A few weeks later, Spanish university students organized street protests in the name of "young people without a future." They held mass demonstrations in cities around Spain for "Real Democracy Now," declaring in their manifesto, "The Arab world shows us victory is possible."

domestic political But realities, spawned by the accelerating recession, soon took precedence. Spain's conservative People's Party, led by Mariano Rajoy, soundly defeated the Socialists in spring 2011 regional and municipal elections, then proceeded to chalk up an absolute majority in national elections in November. Likewise, in legislative elections that summer, Portugal's ruling Socialists were crushed by the conservative Social Democrats, who formed a coalition government with right-wing Christian Democrats. These new administrations have focused on ways to reduce their alarming deficits

"OUR BUDGET HAS BEEN CUT IN HALF, BUT WE SEE NO CHANGE IN POLICY." and bring under control the catastrophic jobs situation. But despite stringent austerity measures, Spanish unemployment topped 25 percent, with Portugal at 15 percent. Job-

lessness is twice as high for immigrants. As Iberians settle in for what looks like a prolonged state of economic emergency, it appears that many social and cultural programs may be in jeopardy. While it remains unclear whether the conservative leaders would preserve the progressive approach to immigration, they have aggressively pursued their outreach to the Arab World, seeking trade and investments.

In Lisbon, Prime Minister Pedro Passos Coelho's center-right coalition has retained the progressive national immigration agency and renewed the mandate of its director, Rosario Farmhouse. The secretary of state for immigration, Feliciano Barreiras Duarte, publicly praised the agency's efforts on integration and declared that Portugal would maintain its immigration policy, based on "responsible regulation and humanism." "There is a political consensus on migration policy in Portugal," asserts Roberto Carneiro, head of the Research Center on Peoples and Cultures at Lisbon's Catholic University, adding that the current government has not given top priority to immigration issues but is keen to maintain the same open policy and opposes restrictions advocated by other European countries. Portugal is again becoming a land of emigrants, as it was in the late 1980s. In recent months some 115,000 highly qualified Portuguese have left the country for Brazil, Angola, and England.

While the Iberian states agree on the principle of interculturalism, the economic crisis has accentuated differences in public attitudes. Spain's much larger Muslim population, composed mainly of North Africans, is seen by some as descendants of the ancient Islamic occupiers. There have been occasional Islamophobic incidents-protests against the spread of Islamic prayer halls or Muslim headscarves in public schools-but never approaching those in other European countries. The Portuguese, on the other hand, have proved generally welcoming to the smaller Muslim community, mostly hailing from the favored ethnic Indian minority in former Portuguese Africa.

Responding to rising anti-immigrant sentiment, Spain's conservative government has brought important changes to immigration and integration policies. Madrid issued a decree this year stipulating that from September 1, all undocumented immigrants would be barred from the national health service and their children denied free schooling. This attack on the two sacred cows of Spain's welfare state—free health care and education for all—was hotly contested by a broad spectrum of the country. Catalonia and its capital of Barcelona, the Basque country, and Andalucia have said

"no" to the law. The main labor federations denounced the ruling as a violation of human rights, and non-governmental agencies, like Caritas, have declared they will not implement the reform.

Rajoy's government, however, has renewed the mandate of the main institution charged with religious minority relations, the Foundation for Pluralism and Coexistence. "Our budget has been cut in half, but we see no change in policy or interruption in our programs," stresses Puerto Garcia Ortiz, the organization's technical director. The foundation publishes an introductory book on Islam in Spanish and one on the Arabic language (jointly with the Casa Arabe). Muslim religious leaders are taught Spanish, in cooperation with the Cervantes Institute. Children are taught Arabic and adults Spanish and Catalan, in cooperation with municipalities, but with the new austerity, some projects will have to be eliminated. Still, the conservative government has made a concerted effort to preserve Spain's preeminent role in European outreach to the Islamic world. Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Garcia-Margallo says Spain will remain in the Alliance of Civilizations, though there will be a reduction in contributions for budgetary reasons.

ISLAMIC OUTREACH

Both Iberian nations have long accorded high priority to relations with North Africa and the Middle East because of their dependence on imported energy resources and investments in the region. Spain's new prime minister made his first state visit to Morocco, praising the country's democratic reforms. At the same time, Spain's Ministers for Public Works and Foreign Affairs traveled to Saudi Arabia to sign contracts for the construction and operation of a high-speed railway between Mecca and Medina. The

\$9 billion project, won by a consortium of Spanish companies over the French, has become the centerpiece for future development planning. As usual with mega projects in the region, there were rampant allegations of corruption. In Madrid, however, the deal was seen as justification of Spain's Arab policy. While the Foreign Ministry announced sweeping cuts in foreign assistance, it emphasized that aid would be continued

to "Arab and African states going through a democratic transition." Also, the conservative government has adopted the Socialists' foreign policy instruments, like the Instituto Cervantes, the Casa Arabe, Casa Sefarad-Israel, Casa Africa, and Casa Mediterraneo-but has given them a more pragmatic approach. The casas are now expected to reduce expenditures and whenever possible find partners to share costs of programs.

"There's been a 180 degree shift," says Edu-

ardo Lopez Busquets, the new Director General of the Casa Arabe. "Before, the Casa Arabe was largely an academic institution, designed to show Spaniards the Arab World. Now we aim to show modern Spain to the Arab countries." Pointing out his budget is one-tenth that of his predecessor, Busquets adds, "because of the dire economic situation, we cannot afford to be an ivory tower." Indicative of the institute's new businesslike spirit is the current intensive Arabic course, attended by 400 Spaniards, mostly personnel connected to Spain's high speed railroad project in Saudi Arabia.

MADRID AND LISBON ARE TURNING WITH **INCREASED** INTENSITY TO ISLAMIC AND AFRICAN COUNTRIES AS A WAY OUT OF THE CURRENT **ECONOMIC** MORASS.

Jose Martin Valenzuela, director of the Instituto Cervantes in Lisbon, outlines the institute's extensive network, created in 1991 by the first Socialist government. There are today 77 Cervantes centers—many in the Middle East. Only Damascus has been closed because of the unrest. "The mission of the Instituto Cervantes is unchanged—to spread Spanish language and culture," says Valenzuela, emphasizing that all Spanish governments of the right and left have supported the non-political institute.

By mid-2012, immigration problems had virtually disappeared from Iberian headlines, monopolized by the disastrous economic situation. Then came a stark reminder that Iberia, like much of Europe, is faced with an underlying problem that will be present even after the economic crisis is resolved. Reports in both Spain and Portugal highlighted a continued decline in the birth rate to 1.3 children per woman-far below the two children needed for population replacement. It is clear that the countries will inevitably need to rely on immigrant labor whenever recovery might take hold. For this reason, immigration advocates are struggling to preserve their precarious edifice of intercultural integration-a vital infrastructure that would be difficult, and costly, to rebuild once dismantled.

Amid the gloomy news of foreigners and natives fleeing the troubled peninsula, a hopeful omen has appeared. The new European Immigrant Citizens Survey found that in 2011, migrants were generally more satisfied with their lives in Spain and Portugal than the average citizen and more than migrants in other European countries. It was a strong endorsement of the Iberian Model of integration and a sign that when the situation turns around, immigrants will either still be present or likely to return.

Seeking help beyond their natural partners in Europe and Latin America, Madrid and Lisbon are turning with increased intensity to Islamic and African countries as a way out of the current economic morass. More Portuguese technicians are heading to Algeria and Morocco with job contracts, while businesses and skilled workers flock to former colonies Mozambique and Angola. Spain is moving aggressively to increase bilateral trade and investments with Turkey, Morocco, and the United Arab Emirates. And high hopes have been raised by Saudi Arabia, which sent an important delegation to recruit Spanish companies to build the New Mecca, a metropolis in the desert 12 miles from the Holy City and served by the new high speed rail link. Sulaimin Al-Fahim, adviser to the Saudi Crown, presented the \in 34 (\$44.8) billion project at a forum in Seville, expressing his government's appreciation of Spanish professionals, technology and skills. Adding that his friends are also prepared to invest in Spain, the Saudi delegate emphasized that "the similarity of cultures makes it easier and more comfortable to do business with Spain."

The time has come, it seems, for Iberians to reap the interculturalism dividend. But of even greater importance is for such trends to continue—binding Muslims and Iberia even more tightly together so that when the turnaround comes, it will be both mutually profitable and comfortable. Such ties would inevitably clear the route to a return of those who have fled and retain those with the foresight to remain.