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The Role of Junta Islamica in the Rise of Moderate Muslims in Spain

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Abstract. This study examines the Junta Islamica's role in promoting moderate Islam in Spain amid scarce research on Islamic organizations' impact on da'wah and interfaith harmony in Al-Andalus. Founded in 1989, the organization uses education, halal certification, legal advocacy, interfaith dialogue, social integration, and media outreach to spread a message of moderation based on Qur'anic principles, defending Muslim civil rights, promoting gender equality, and rejecting extremism. It acts as a key civil society actor linking Muslims and the Spanish state, aided by constitutional freedoms and the legacy of *convivencia*, but faces challenges from Islamophobia, xenophobia, extremist violence, and far-right populism, notably from the Vox Party. The study presents the Junta Islamica as a model of peaceful, contextualized Islamic preaching that integrates faith, democracy, and human rights, advancing coexistence and civic inclusion in secular Spain.

Keywords. Moderate Islam; Islamic Da'wah; Minority Muslim; Interfaith Dialogue

A. Introduction

The expansion of Muslims into the Iberian Peninsula was significant, with Islamic rule lasting until the fall of Granada (Hitti & Thomas, 1938; Rofiq, 2019; Syalabi, 1984). During Islamic rule in Andalusia, Muslims built a great civilization that helped European civilization grow through ideas and remarkable architecture. They made significant advances in science, with experts in various fields. The support of leaders for education and tolerance was key to these achievements (Hitti & Thomas, 1938). Islam re-emerged in Spain after World War II, mainly due to Muslim immigrants from Morocco, Senegal, Pakistan, and Algeria. These immigrants helped spread Islamic teachings, leading to conversions among Spaniards. The Junta Islamica, founded by converts in Almodovar del Rio, has promoted Islam through various methods to encourage tolerance and Islamic moderation (Nasution, 2017). Founded in 1989, the Junta Islamica is known for contributing to the growth of Islam in modern Spain (*Junta Islamica*, n.d.).

Explanations in Islamic studies about Muslim communities in Spain often focus on historical aspects, such as the arrival of Muslims and the rise and fall of their political power.

Consequently, there is little information about modern Muslims in Andalusia. There is a lack of research on the Junta Islamica's role in promoting moderate Islam in Spain. This research aims to explain the Junta Islamica's strategy for fostering moderate Islam in Spain and to analyze the factors that affect their activities. The study will advance Islamic studies by exploring the history of moderate Islam, its proselytizing factors, and the challenges faced by Muslims in Spain.

The previous authors examined Muslim history in Spain. W. Montgomery Watt, in *A History of Islamic Spain*, emphasized that Islamic Spain should be viewed as part of the wider Islamic world. He explored how it adapted to the Iberian Peninsula's distinct context, how Muslims integrated socially, and how the region connected with the rest of Europe (Watt, 1965). Elena Arigita's *Representing Islam in Spain: Muslim Identities* examines how Muslim communities in Spain are actively reshaping their leadership and engaging with the government in response to the growing public visibility of Islam. This involves rethinking the institutional framework established in the early 1990s, driven by changes in immigrant integration and an increase in Muslim Arab migrants. The prominence of Islam in Spain's public debates increased notably after 9/11 and the Madrid terrorist attacks, deeply impacting discussions on Muslim leadership (Arigita, 2006).

Ana Ruiz's *Vibrant Andalusia: The Spice of Life in Southern Spain* examines the history and culture of Moorish Spain, the influence of the Gypsies, and the origins of Flamenco. The book emphasizes the enrichment of the Spanish language through many Arabisms. Ruiz encourages readers to explore al-Andalus and its Moorish heritage, complementing established scholarly research (Ruiz, 2007). Sarah Lynn Karp's *Historical Memory and Muslim Identity in Andalusia* examines the arrival of Muslim immigrants in Spain after Franco's era, during a period of socialism and secularism. These immigrants helped the economy by filling labor shortages in construction and agriculture and by providing jobs for unemployed North African migrants. Their presence contributed to economic growth and democratic progress, while also prompting questions about the formation of new Muslim identities in Spain (Karp, 2008).

The 2008 book *"In the Light of Medieval Spain: Islam, the West, and the Relevance of the Past"* highlights the widespread brutality and exile surrounding the fall of al-Andalus, culminating in 1492—a pivotal date in history. After 1492, many died or fled, while others stayed under Catholic rule, preserving their customs in secrecy amid challenging conditions. This hidden cultural survival shaped the lives of Judeo-conversos and Moriscos, marking centuries of covert existence. This quiet resistance, though unheroic, represents the transformation and loss of a vibrant cultural realm, affecting both those who remained in Spain and those who were exiled to North Africa and the Ottoman Empire (Doubleday, 2008).

Justin Stearns' *Representing and Remembering al-Andalus* examines how Muslim historians, up to the seventeenth century, depicted al-Andalus as a land of jihad, wonders, and one linked to apocalyptic themes. Historically, al-Andalus combined many ideas rather than serving a single historical purpose. In the nineteenth century, perspectives shifted as few Muslim visitors came to Spain after the expulsion of the Moriscos. Al-Andalus was no longer viewed primarily as a lost paradise to mourn but as a call for current political and social action. The era of nostalgic remembrance is coming to an end, but what will replace it remains uncertain (Stearns, 2010).

Fermín Sánchez Barea's *Education and Muslim Culture in Medieval Arab Madrid* examines diverse educational fields, including Quranic interpretation, law, linguistics, literature, medicine, philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, and music. It details medieval Arabic Madrid's teachers, students, classrooms, degrees, and notable figures. Education spread mainly

among elites due to limited student numbers. Initially free, teachers later received gifts as attendance grew. Wealthier families afforded private lessons, while Al-Hakim II established public schools for the children of the poor. Over time, education gradually became free and compulsory mainly for impoverished students, influenced by local customs and labor demands (Barea, 2011).

Mikaela Rogozen-Soltar's *Managing Muslim Visibility* examines how Moroccan immigrants, European converts, and other Muslims in southern Spain represent Islam. She explores their diverse representational strategies, internal debates, and conflicts between converts and immigrants regarding social inequality, authority, and religious authenticity. Differences in racialized views of Islam, unequal access to historical narratives, and distinct roles in Spain's political economy create an unequal form of multiculturalism. Andalusians' strong connection to their Muslim heritage and tensions between converts and immigrants, especially in Granada, reflect complex political identities and subjectivities (Rogozen-Soltar, 2012).

Imam Ghazali Said's *The Heritage of Al-Andalus and the Formation of Spanish History and Identity* highlights the significant role of al-Andalus' Islamic cultural legacy in shaping Spanish history and identity. He shows that al-Andalus was more than a region—it was a sophisticated center of literature, philosophy, and architecture. Despite academic debates, these legacies continue to be vital for understanding Spanish history and identity. Different interpretations of this heritage reflect people's views on politics and power, influencing how history is understood (Said, 2017). Giovanna Izquierdo Medina's *Muslim Women in Spain: Stereotypes and Prejudices and the Influence on Their Personal Well-Being* explores how Muslim women in Spain face adverse outcomes due to stereotypes and rejection rooted in ignorance. Her research shows that Spanish perceptions of Islam are often shaped by misinformation, leading to harmful prejudices against Muslim women. Media portrayals also reinforce these negative stereotypes, impacting the women's personal well-being (Medina, 2021).

Previous studies reveal a lack of in-depth research on the role of Islamic social organizations, like the Junta Islamica, in promoting moderate Islam in Spain. This research aims to fill that gap, making an academic contribution to understanding the relationship between Islamic organizations and Islamic da'wah in contemporary Spain.

B. Method

This qualitative research obtained data through documents relevant to the topic of discussion on the role of the Junta Islamica in forming a generation of moderate Muslims in Spain. This library research utilized important information published on the official website of the Junta Islamica or online media and references written by previous researchers to answer key questions. Data analysis is carried out by referring to relevant concepts and theories, such as Islamic da'wah, Muslim minorities, moderate Islam, and the role of social organization in the growth of Islamic population, especially in Spain.

Da'wah is a fundamental Islamic duty rooted in the Qur'an and Hadith, aiming to guide people toward Allah's teachings for happiness in this world and the hereafter. It is both an individual and communal obligation, depending on circumstances. Effective da'wah should be inclusive, gender-responsive, and socially sensitive, avoiding discrimination based on belief, ethnicity, race, or religion. Its success is measured by its ability to foster social change, welfare, moral improvement, equality, human rights, and democracy, ultimately leading people toward

spiritual and worldly well-being in line with Islamic values (Abdullah, 2015; Fahrurrozi et al., 2019).

A social group is formed by individuals who interact, share common traits, and feel a sense of unity, while the interaction of multiple groups creates social organization. A community's social organization embodies its shared values, customs, and behavioral patterns that guide interactions and help achieve collective goals. It relies on networks, mutual relationships, social support, and control mechanisms to maintain order and resilience, reflecting the community's capacity to govern itself based on common principles and values (Lim & Putnam, 2010; Mancini et al., 2005).

Organizational patterns include formal and informal structures. Formal organizations are intentionally created with apparent authority, responsibilities, and rules to achieve specific goals efficiently, while informal organizations emerge naturally from personal relationships within formal systems. From an Islamic perspective, effective organization requires discipline, cooperation, and purposeful action. Meanwhile, community organizations and NGOs play a vital role in democracy and civil society by advocating for individual rights and public interests without profit motives. Independent from government control, they foster social development, community empowerment, public representation, social cohesion, and institutional accountability (Herdiansah, 2016; Safri, 2017).

The term minority Muslim refers to Muslim communities living as minorities within countries or regions where the majority follow other religions or cultures. While Muslims constitute over a quarter of the world's population and are the majority in 44 nations, mainly in the Middle East and Asia, they are minorities elsewhere, often under non-Muslim governments. In such contexts, they may face challenges including social marginalization, limited access to education and healthcare, and restricted employment opportunities (Ansari, 2002; Warsah et al., 2019).

Moderation (*i'tidal* or *wasathiyyah*) in Islam signifies balance, justice, and avoidance of extremism, as taught in Qur'an Surah Al-Baqarah (2:143). It promotes a middle path (*tawassuth*) in theology and rationality in Islamic law by harmonizing its fixed and flexible principles. The renewed focus on moderation responds to rising extremism, with both Muslim-majority and minority nations endorsing it to promote tolerance and coexistence. *Wasathiyyah* means "to be in the middle," contrasting with *tatharruf* (extremism), which implies intolerance and rigidity. Signs of moderation include rejecting radicalism, respecting diversity, and fostering tolerance (Bakir & Othman, 2017; Islam & Khatun, 2015; Rofiq et al., 2019).

C. Result

1. History of Spanish Muslims 710 – 1614

The name "Andalusia" or "al-Andalus" originates from "Vandalisia," linked to the Vandal tribe that once inhabited the Iberian Peninsula, historically known as Hispania or Spain. Islamic rule on the peninsula unfolded through seven main periods: the First Umayyad Dynasty (711–750 AD) established control after the 711 conquest; the Transitional Period (750–756) saw brief rule by Yusuf al-Fihri before 'Abd al-Rahman al-Dakhil founded the Second Umayyad Dynasty (756–1031), a powerful independent caliphate. This was followed by the Taifas (1031–1090), weakening Muslim unity until the Almoravids (1090–1147) and then the Almohads (1147–1248) restored control. After the 1212 Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa, Christian forces gained ground, and the Nasrid Dynasty (1248–1492) maintained rule in Granada by paying tribute until the Christian Reconquista ended Muslim rule in 1492 under

Ferdinand II and Isabella I (Ash-Shallabi, 2007; Bosworth, 1996; Hitti, 2005; Levi-Provencal et al., 1986; Rofiq, 2019; Syalabi, 1984).

During Islamic rule in Andalusia, a remarkable civilization flourished, profoundly influencing European culture, especially in thought and architecture. The Maliki school shaped Islamic law through scholars like Ibn Hazm, while Sufi mysticism, led by Ibn 'Arabi, emphasized the unity of existence. Philosophers such as Ibn Rushd inspired Europe's intellectual revival, alongside the Jewish philosopher Maimonides, who made significant contributions to philosophy and medicine. Arabic became the literary language, enriched by poets like Ibn 'Abd Rabbih. Historians, geographers, and astronomers produced key works that influenced figures such as Copernicus, while scholars like Fibonacci introduced mathematical concepts to Europe. Advances in medicine and surgery originated from innovators like al-Zahrawi, while musical contributions by Ziryab significantly influenced Andalusian and European music. This civilization preserved and enhanced knowledge that fueled the European Renaissance (Hitti, 2005; Syalabi, 1984; Tautal, 1996).

The Islamic government in Andalusia achieved greatness through strong support for intellectual growth and religious tolerance, with Muslims living peacefully alongside Christians, including Mozarabs who adopted Arab customs. Educational institutions thrived in cities such as Córdoba, Seville, Málaga, and Granada, attracting students from around the world. Studies covered a range of disciplines, including religion, law, medicine, mathematics, chemistry, philosophy, and astronomy. Cordoba housed the most extensive library, developed by Muhammad I and expanded by 'Abd al-Rahman III and al-Hakam II, who invested heavily in its resources. Education was free, and teachers held positions of respect. Notably, the French priest Gerbert d'Aurillac, who later became Pope Sylvester II, studied in Andalusia. This intellectual environment helped spark the European Renaissance (Al-Qatari, 1985; Hitchcock, 2016; Hitti, 2005; Syalabi, 1984; Zapata-Barrero & ITTE, 2010).

King Ferdinand II and Queen Isabella I broke their promises of religious tolerance by enforcing conversions of Muslims under Cardinal Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros and burning Islamic texts in 1499. The Spanish Inquisition, established in 1480, persecuted Jews and Muslims suspected of secretly practicing their faith. Led by Tomas de Torquemada from 1483, it convicted over 100,000 people. In 1492, Jews were ordered to convert or leave Spain, leading to around 50,000 conversions and up to 200,000 exiles. Muslims faced similar treatment—those who converted were called Moriscos and distrusted, while others were expelled. Between 1502 and 1615, as many as 3 million Muslims left Spain, marking the end of Andalusia's long history of multicultural and religious coexistence (Jones & Acworth, 1998; Sabatini, 1913).

The First Alpujarras Rebellion (1499–1502) arose when Moriscos resisted forced conversions and cultural repression, but it was crushed by 1501, leaving them to choose between baptism and exile. Although many converted, they secretly practiced Islam, prompting harsher bans on Arabic language, dress, and customs. The Second Alpujarras Revolt (1568–1571), led by Hernando de Valor (Aben Humeya), erupted in response to King Felipe II's 1567 decree banning Arabic and Islamic traditions. Moriscos briefly controlled the Alpujarras region but were defeated by Don Juan of Austria's forces. The aftermath saw thousands killed, enslaved, or scattered, followed by the mass expulsion of Moriscos (1609–1614), effectively erasing Islamic identity from Spain through forced assimilation and Inquisition surveillance (en.wikipedia.org, n.d.-e; Himayah, 2003).

The Inquisition fostered an environment of fear and suspicion, urging people to report on others' supposed sins. Defendants were denied their fundamental rights, including access to legal counsel and knowledge of the specific charges against them. Torture was frequently used

to extract confessions. Sentencing occurred during public rituals called autos da fé; death sentences were sometimes announced just before execution. Those condemned were burned alive unless they repented, in which case they were strangled first. Victims were publicly executed by being tied to a stake and burned (Jones & Acworth, 1998; Kras, 2020; Lea, 2020; Nykanen, 2014; Van Limborch, 1731).

In 1609, King Philip III ordered the forced expulsion of the Moriscos, Muslims who had lived in Spain for over 800 years. Influenced by Juan de Ribera, the decision was driven more by financial motives than religious ones to confiscate Morisco wealth to benefit the royal treasury and the crown's associates. Over five years, about 300,000 Moriscos (around 5% of Spain's population) were expelled, marking the act of ethnic cleansing in European history by 1614 (Carr, 2017; en.wikipedia.org, n.d.-c; Syalabi, 1984).

In modern times, among the Andalusian people, some individuals studied the history of Andalusia and then received guidance, leading them to declare their conversion to Islam. For example, Mansour Abdussalam Escudero, who converted to Islam in 1979, was one of the most prominent Islamic figures in Spain (Islamicbridge.com, n.d.). Antonio Medine Miller, who chose Islam and later changed his name to 'Abd al-Rahman Madine in 1981 (Himayah, 2003). In addition to the Islam of the native Spanish population, there are also Muslims who immigrate to Spain from other countries, such as Morocco and Middle Eastern countries (Soage, 2018).

2. The Rise of Islam in Modern Spain

Spain's political history began with the Visigothic Kingdom (418–711), followed by Islamic Al-Andalus (711–1492), and then unification under Catholic Monarchs Ferdinand II and Isabella I (1474–1516). The Habsburgs ruled from 1516 to 1700, succeeded by the Bourbons until the 1868 revolution ended Isabella II's reign, leading to the brief First Republic (1873–1874). The Bourbons returned until 1931 before the Second Republic was overthrown in the Civil War (1936–1939) by General Francisco Franco, whose authoritarian regime (1939–1975) emphasized nationalism, Catholicism, and caused up to 350,000 deaths. After Franco's death, Spain transitioned peacefully into a democratic constitutional monarchy under King Juan Carlos I and later King Felipe VI, evolving into a modern parliamentary democracy, with historical ties between Franco's wartime alliance with Moroccan Muslims influencing later Spanish–Islamic relations (Barreira, 2018; Jensen, 2005).

Ceuta, strategically near the Strait of Gibraltar, has been under Spanish rule since the 17th century and became central to Spain's North African colonization under the 1912 protectorate. That year, Franco joined the Moroccan-based Regulars, Muslim soldiers led by Spanish officers. Spain's control faced fierce resistance from leaders like Muley Ahmed el Raisuni and Abd el-Krim, whose Rif tribes defeated Spain at the 1921 Battle of Annual but surrendered in 1926 to Spanish and French forces. These conflicts shaped Franco and raised the Regulars' prestige but caused military-government tensions that contributed to the Spanish Civil War. In 1936, Ceuta was Franco's launch point for his invasion, with 80,000 Regulars fighting in the war. Afterward, reliance on Muslim troops declined, though Franco maintained goodwill via pilgrimages and cultural outreach. After Morocco gained independence in 1956, Spain relinquished the protectorate but retained control over Ceuta, Melilla, and Western Sahara (De Madariaga, 1992; Graham, 2021).

Franco allied with Moroccan Muslims during and after the Spanish Civil War primarily for military advantage, recruiting thousands of experienced Moroccan soldiers from the Spanish Protectorate with incentives like pay and land. Their combat skills were key to his Nationalist victory, despite reports of civilian abuses. Although Franco used Islamic symbols to recruit, he

reinforced Spain's Catholic identity afterward and showed little support for Islam. Some Moroccan allies received honors, but most Muslim soldiers returned home or lived in Spain with limited rights. Under Franco's 40-year rule, Spain's Muslim population stayed small, marginalized, and excluded from his vision of Catholic national unity (Graham, 2021).

From the mid-20th century, many young men from Syria, Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, and Morocco came to Spain to study, drawn by lower costs and easier access. The Muslim Brotherhood organized these students into associations that deepened ties with Spain; many stayed, built careers, married Spaniards, and gained citizenship. Spain's 1967 Religious Freedom Act allowed Islamic associations in Ceuta, Melilla, and Madrid. Brotherhood leaders, such as Riay Tatory and Nizar Ahmad al-Sabbagh, promoted Islamic education and conversions, with al-Sabbagh founding the Islamic Centre in Granada and the Casa Islámica to expand the Brotherhood's peaceful influence. From the mid-1970s, Spanish converts inspired by Sufism, led by Ian Dallas, sought to revive Islamic-Andalusian heritage. Though small (5,000–50,000 members), this community remains a key part of Spain's modern Muslim identity (Galán, 2023, 2024).

Riay Tatory Bakry (1948–2020) was a Syrian-born religious leader who became a central figure in Spain's Muslim community. After settling in Spain in 1970 to study medicine at the University of Oviedo, he went on to serve as imam of the Madrid Central Mosque, chairman of the Union of Islamic Communities of Spain (UCIDE), and president of the Islamic Commission of Spain (CIE). Tatory represented Muslims in Spain through his role on the Ministry of Justice's advisory committee for Freedom of Religion and was awarded the Encomienda of the Order of Civil Merit in 1998. He died from COVID-19 in Madrid at age 72 and is remembered for his leadership in promoting the integration and representation of Muslims within Spanish society (Astor, 2014; Bornstein, 2018; Rodrigo, 2018).

Abdalqadir as-Sufi (born Ian Stewart Dallas, 1930) was a Scottish Muslim scholar and Sufi leader who converted to Islam in 1967 in Morocco. He studied under Shaykh Muhammad ibn al-Habib and founded the Murabitun World Movement, promoting Maliki law, classical Islamic governance, and criticizing modernism. Starting in the mid-1970s, he led efforts in Spain to revive Islam, converting Spaniards and establishing Muslim communities that moved from Córdoba to Seville and Granada. There, his followers built the first mosque since the Inquisition and held public Eid prayers, symbolizing Islam's revival in al-Andalus. Through the Murabitun, also known as the "Society for the Return of Islam in Spain," he advocated for creating spiritually grounded, self-sufficient Muslim communities modeled on the early Islamic era. Abdalqadir died in 2021, leaving a lasting impact on Sufi thought and Islamic identity in Spain (mezquitadegrana.com, n.d.; Pingree, 2007; Sanchez, 2002).

Mansur Abdussalam Escudero (1947–2010) was a Spanish psychiatrist, reformist thinker, and influential Islamic leader who shaped modern Islam in Spain. After specializing in neuro-psychiatry and pioneering Gestalt and integrative medicine, he converted to Islam in 1979 and founded Spain's first Islamic Community. He served as president of the Junta Islámica, co-founded key Islamic institutions, and led the Spanish Federation of Islamic Religious Organizations (FEERI; Federación Española de Entidades Religiosas Islámicas) from 1990 to 2003, as well as Secretary General of Islamic Commission of Spain (CIE; Comisión Islámica de España) from 1991 to 2006. Escudero established the landmark of the 1992 cooperation agreement between the Spanish State and the Islamic Commission, advocating democracy, interfaith dialogue, and gender equality. Recognized internationally for promoting peace and combating extremism, he earned honors like "Universal Ambassador of the Millennium for Peace" and was listed among "The 500 Most Influential Muslims in the

World.” He authored over sixty works, championed coexistence, and passed away in 2010 at his home in Almodóvar del Río (es.wikipedia.org, n.d.-b; Islamicbridge.com, n.d.; Pingree, 2007).

The contemporary revival of Islam in Spain has been driven by immigration from Muslim countries since the 1960s, leading to the creation of mosques, schools, and Islamic organizations, alongside growing Spanish converts inspired by spirituality and Andalusian heritage. Government support, especially the 1992 Cooperation Agreement, officially recognized Islam and allowed mosque construction and Islamic education. The historical legacy of Al-Andalus, symbolized by sites like the Córdoba Mosque and the Alhambra, continues to inspire this renewed identity. Unlike the past scholarly prominence of figures like Ibn Rushd, modern Islam in Spain has grown through community efforts focused on integration, education, and coexistence, framed by the 1978 Constitution’s religious freedom and Spain’s secular state after Franco’s death and the democratic transition (Law, 1978).

The 1980 Religious Freedom Act in Spain introduced the concept of “notorio arraigo” to formally recognize religious communities with significant societal presence, allowing them to make agreements with the State and gain fiscal benefits. By the mid-1980s, as Spain sought to present itself as a modern pluralistic democracy during the 1992 Barcelona Olympics and Seville Expo, the government aimed to address past injustices toward Muslims and Jews. However, progress with Muslims was delayed due to fragmented leadership until the Association of Muslims in Spain (AME; Asociación de Musulmanes de España) petitioned in 1989 for notorio arraigo status, which was granted that July, enabling state agreements on the condition Muslims appointed a single official representative body (Law, 1980; Soage, 2018).

The revival of Islam in modern Spain has been driven by immigration, conversion, and community renewal rather than a single leader or movement. Over the past three decades, the Muslim population has surged from about 240,000 to an estimated 2.5 to 3 million as of 2025, with Moroccan-origin Muslims forming the majority. Catalonia hosts the largest Muslim community, exceeding 660,000, and approximately one million Muslims are Spanish citizens by birth or naturalization. Conversions to Islam continue steadily, exemplified by regular ceremonies at Granada’s Great Mosque, which is home to around 3,000 Spanish Muslims. This growth reflects a collective development focused on integration, education, and coexistence within Spain’s pluralistic society (aa.com.tr, 2021; alestiklal.net, 2025; statista.com, 2025).

3. The Junta Islamica and the Spread of Moderate Islam in Spain

The Junta Islamica, established in 1989, is a national, non-profit organization promoting a universal Islam that blends spiritual values with modernity, humanism, and democracy. Key in the 1992 Cooperation Agreements with the Spanish State, it advances human rights, gender equality, freedom of expression, interfaith dialogue, and peaceful coexistence through education and mediation. Under Mansur Escudero, it launched verislam.com, a major Spanish Islamic news portal, and the Halal Institute for halal certification. Headquartered in Córdoba, it has been led by Maryam Isabel Romero since 2013, who continues to foster civil society engagement, democratic coexistence, and diversity, making the Junta a leading force for inclusive citizenship in Spain (es.wikipedia.org, n.d.-a; *Junta Islamica*, n.d.; *Verislam.Com*, n.d.; Pingree, 2007).

Mansur Abdussalam Escudero and Maryam Isabel Romero are the influential leaders of Junta Islamica. Today under Romero’s leadership, the Halal Institute has become a globally recognized certification body, helping over 500 companies export halal products to 140 countries, while promoting Islamic values, democracy, and human rights. Romero also founded

the Citizen Platform against Islamophobia and the Las Fuentes Foundation, and actively participates in networks supporting women's and youth entrepreneurship, working to strengthen intercultural understanding and normalize Muslim life in Spain (asocialoe.com, 2018; Diariocordoba.com, 2009; Elfarodeceuta.es, 2019; institutohalal.com, 2020; Islamicbridge.com, n.d.; mundoislam.com, 2021).

The Junta Islamica is an organization representing Muslims in Spain, advocating for their religious, social, and cultural rights. It was instrumental in Islam's 1992 official recognition in Spain and the Cooperation Agreement granting Muslims key rights in worship, education, cemeteries, and religious freedom. The organization promotes Muslim interests, interreligious dialogue, and preserves Islamic heritage post-al-Andalus. Its structure includes governing and specialized departments coordinating Muslim integration within Spain's democratic, multicultural society. The Junta maintains strong ties with the Spanish Government and Comisión Islámica de España, acting as a bridge on religious education, mosque management, and legal matters. It plays a strategic role in shaping policies and implementing state agreements, fostering coexistence and harmony in Spanish society (Carbajosa, 2015; *Junta Islamica*, n.d.).

Strategy of Junta Islamica Spreading Moderate Islam in Spain

The Junta Islamica plays a crucial role in strengthening Muslim identity and rights in Spain through Islamic education and its globally recognized halal certification system. Promoting a universal, humanistic, and modern understanding of Islam, it organizes educational and intercultural programs to encourage coexistence and democracy. Following the 1992 Cooperation Agreements, it founded the Halal Institute in 1998 to protect Muslim rights and ensure access to halal products. The Institute certifies goods and services in Spain, Mexico, and Portugal, exporting to over 100 countries under transparent, Sharia-compliant standards recognized by international bodies such as JAKIM, BPJPH, SFDA, and EIAC. Beyond certification, it embodies ethical consumption and civil rights advocacy by merging Islamic values with professionalism, innovation, and inclusivity. Under Maryam Isabel Romero's leadership since 2013, the Junta Islamica and its Halal Institute have gained international prestige for promoting responsible trade, religious freedom, interfaith dialogue, and the preservation of Andalusian Islamic heritage (Institutohalal.com, n.d.).

The Junta Islamica leads cultural and educational initiatives promoting understanding, diversity, and dialogue in Spain. Its Fundación Las Fuentes encourages appreciation of universal spiritual traditions and peaceful coexistence. It manages VerIslam.com, a major Spanish-language Islamic platform originating from the pioneering WebIslam.com. Through the Center for Islamic Documentation and Publications, it has published over 25 books and the Verde Islam magazine, while offering Islamic cultural consultancy. The Junta organizes congresses and seminars on interfaith dialogue, Islamic feminism, and citizenship to support intellectual and social growth among Spanish-speaking Muslims. The Federation of Islamic Communities Ibn Masarra (FECIM) supports these aims by promoting social inclusion and positive views of Muslim diversity in Spain (Badran, 2010; fundacionlasfuentes.org, n.d.; *Junta Islamica*, n.d.).

The 2025 report "Informe sobre la Intolerancia y la Discriminación hacia los Musulmanes en España," co-funded by the EU and Spain's Ministry of Inclusion, highlights rising Islamophobia in Spain. Muslims, about 4% of the population mainly Spanish and Moroccan, face discrimination in housing, jobs, and services, with veiled Muslim women most impacted. The report links prejudice to far-right groups, media, political rhetoric, and online

hate, plus institutional hurdles like mosque licensing and limited religious education. Over 80% of Muslims surveyed see Islamophobia growing, similar to discrimination against the Roma. Despite this, increased public awareness and government-community efforts through education, laws, and social programs are promoting inclusion, while media and politics heavily influence societal views of Muslims in Spain (verislam.com, 2025).

The Junta Islamica in Spain actively promotes a moderate Islam aimed at peaceful coexistence. It fosters Constructive Interfaith Dialogue through intercultural communication, emphasizing respect and harmony. The organization defends Muslim civil rights under Spanish law, condemns extremism and terrorism, and encourages integration while respecting cultural diversity. It promotes democracy, equality, and peaceful coexistence through mediation and educational programs about Islamic values and rights for all. Inclusive education integrates Islamic teaching within the Spanish school system. Junta Islamica also advances intercultural humanism, blending spirituality with modernity, human rights, gender equality, freedom of expression, and democracy to support a universal Islam in pluralistic societies (es.wikipedia.org, n.d.-a; Junta Islamica, n.d.).

Mansur Escudero defined “moderate” Islam in Spain as rooted in peaceful coexistence, democracy, and rejection of extremism. He emphasized harmony with Spain’s constitutional values like freedom, equality, and human rights, encouraging Muslims to be responsible, engaged citizens. Inspired by the Quranic ideal of a balanced community, Escudero promoted rational, nonviolent practice and interfaith dialogue. Leading the Junta Islámica, he advanced integration, education, and Muslim-Spanish cooperation. His 2005 public fatwa condemned terrorism by Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda as un-Islamic, underscoring his commitment to moderation and constructive Muslim-Christian relations in Spain (cbc.ca, 2005; csmonitor.com, 2005; Karagiannis, 2011).

Escudero’s vision of moderate Islam deeply influenced Spanish Islamic organizations by promoting peaceful coexistence, civic responsibility, and interfaith dialogue within Spain’s democracy. Leading the Junta Islamica, he modeled moderation rejecting extremism and emphasizing integration, inspiring other Muslim groups to align with constitutional values. His public denunciation of terrorism and support for Muslim-society cooperation fostered unity and constructive engagement. Escudero’s legacy shaped a cohesive Muslim identity based on dialogue, democratic participation, and inclusion, affirming Muslims as key members of Spain’s multicultural society (Goodenough, 2011; Islamicbridge.com, n.d.; *Junta Islamica*, n.d.; Wilkinson, 2007).

Maryam Isabel Romero has advanced Escudero’s legacy by promoting moderate Islam based on democratic coexistence, cultural inclusion, and civic engagement in Spain. As Junta Islamica’s president, she emphasizes Muslim integration through interfaith dialogue, women’s visibility, and recognition of Spain’s multicultural Islamic heritage. Her initiatives support social normalization, economic inclusion via the halal industry, and multi-confessional spaces to encourage respect. Romero’s leadership has boosted Muslim civic participation, expanded halal’s mainstream role, and fostered public acknowledgment of Spain’s Muslim history and presence, strengthening rights recognition, reducing marginalization, and enhancing social cohesion (*Junta Islamica*, n.d.; Politzer, 2015; visitalandalus.org, 2025).

Escudero defined moderate Islam in Spain as a peaceful, rational faith grounded in democracy, human rights, and coexistence, rejecting terrorism and promoting civic engagement and interfaith dialogue. His leadership inspired Spanish Islamic organizations to integrate and reject extremism. Maryam Isabel Romero continued this vision by advancing Muslim social normalization, cultural inclusion, halal industry growth, and recognition of Muslim heritage

within Spain's identity. Her leadership has boosted Muslim civic participation, economic inclusion, and institutional recognition, fostering social cohesion. Under Romero, the Junta Islamica promotes interfaith dialogue through Ramadan Iftar events and collaborations, emphasizing democratic values, gender equality, and mutual respect. Together, their work has established the Junta Islamica as a leading force for peaceful coexistence, civil rights, and interreligious understanding in Spain (kaiciid.org, 2023; mezquitadesevilla.com, 2022).

Spain's response to the moderate Islam promoted by groups like the Junta Islámica centers on peaceful coexistence, tolerance, and legal recognition, though challenges persist. Most Spanish Muslims identify as moderate, prioritizing integration, equality, and peaceful religious practice within Spain's democratic, secular framework. They have freedom of worship and mosque establishment but continue negotiating broader rights through state dialogue. Isolated Islamophobic incidents by far-right groups occur but are widely condemned and don't reflect the overall climate. Generally, Spanish society is open to Muslims seeking mutual respect and coexistence, with moderate Islam emphasizing harmony and adaptation without sacrificing religious identity (Noya, 2007).

Based on the extensive description above, the following table summarizes the Junta Islamica's strategy to spread moderate Islam in Spain.

Strategy of Junta Islamica to Spread Moderate Islam	
Islamic Education	Promotes Islamic education in schools by training imams who blend spiritual values with modernity and democracy, offering lessons that emphasize a rational, peaceful interpretation of Islam
Halal Certification	Operates the Halal Institute to certify halal products and services, ensuring compliance with Islamic law and international standards, supporting Muslim economic participation and access to halal markets both locally and globally
Legal Advocacy	Safeguards Muslim rights in Spain by working through the Cooperation Agreements with the State to ensure religious rights like worship, marriage, education, and access to halal food. Provides legal counseling and advocates for Muslim rights under Spanish law.
Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue	Facilitates intercultural encounters and interfaith dialogue, promoting mutual respect and peaceful coexistence. Organizes events like institutional Iftars and cooperates with religious and civic groups.
Social and Cultural Integration	Works to integrate Muslims into Spanish society, respecting cultural diversity, promoting gender equality, human rights, freedom of expression, and democratic values, aiming for peaceful coexistence.
Community Empowerment	Develops programs fostering youth and women's entrepreneurship, supports civic participation, manages mosques, and encourages active engagement in democratic processes.
Media and Information	Runs an influential Islamic news portal (<i>VerIslam.com</i>) and publishes educational materials to counter stereotypes, promote moderate Islam, and provide accurate information about Islam in Spain.
Rejection of Extremism	Publicly condemns terrorism and extremism, exemplified by fatwas against extremist violence. Emphasizes lawful and peaceful practices aligned with democratic values.

Strategy of Junta Islamica to Spread Moderate Islam	
Leadership and Representation	Provides structured governance through departments covering religion, law, social affairs, and international relations, representing Muslims before the government and international Islamic bodies.
Promotion of Muslim Heritage	Advocates recognition of Spain's Islamic heritage to foster identity normalization and reduce social exclusion of Muslims in Spain.

The table reflects how Junta Islamica coordinates education, legal rights, cultural inclusion, halal certification, interfaith dialogue, and community empowerment to foster a moderate, democratic, and peaceful Islam in Spain, aligning Islamic practice with Spanish societal values and legal frameworks. It demonstrates a comprehensive and multifaceted approach to promoting moderate Islam through inclusive policies and programs with measurable social impact.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Propagating Moderate Islam

The spread of Islam in Spain is supported by factors such as the government's religious freedom policy, regional autonomy, the spirit of Islamic da'wah, and the historical experience of convivencia. However, it faces challenges from Islamophobia, xenophobia, extremist Muslim terrorism, and the influence of the Vox Party.

Supporting factors

a. The Spanish Government's religious freedom policy

Spain's religious freedom policy, based on the Constitution and Organic Act 7/1980, guarantees individuals the right to freely practice, change, or abstain from religion without discrimination. The State has no official religion and cooperates with all faiths while respecting pluralism. The law protects participation in religious activities, education, and the right to refuse to participate in religious practices, ensuring that beliefs cannot justify inequality. Although some local authorities have attempted to restrict Muslim gatherings, courts have upheld constitutional protections. Spain is also moving to repeal blasphemy laws, reinforcing its commitment to religious freedom and equality (acninternational.org, 2023; Law, 1978, 1980, 1992; state.gov, 2023).

b. Regional autonomy in Spain

Regional autonomy in Spain, established by the 1978 Constitution, grants 17 autonomous communities and two autonomous cities self-government within a unified state. Each region has legislative and executive powers defined by its Statute of Autonomy, though judicial authority remains national. This asymmetrical system balances national unity with regional diversity, allowing some regions greater powers based on local identity. While regions can influence religious education and local governance, religious freedom is constitutionally guaranteed nationwide, ensuring equal treatment of all faiths. Despite local challenges, such as zoning issues affecting minority religions, Spain's framework maintains state neutrality while promoting cooperation and protecting religious diversity across its autonomous communities.(en.wikipedia.org, n.d.-a; Hughes, 2016)

Spain's autonomous communities influence Islamic preaching and movements through their control over local governance, education, and cooperation with religious groups. While the Islamic Commission of Spain (CIE) oversees national matters, such as certifying religious leaders, regions can form their own agreements with Islamic communities. For example,

Catalonia and Andalusia have introduced Islamic education in public schools, and courts have mandated that regional governments ensure equal access to such education. However, challenges like local opposition and difficulties in obtaining mosque permits persist. Regional autonomy enables localized support for Islamic activities and education, balancing national religious freedom with local administrative and social conditions.(en.wikipedia.org, n.d.-d; Muñoz et al., 2009)

c. The spirit of Islamic da'wah

Modern Spanish Muslims emphasize peaceful coexistence, cultural sophistication, and democratic values rooted in Islamic tradition. The Junta Islámica, founded in 1989, is a leading organization promoting Islamic da'wah by defending Muslim civil rights, fostering interfaith understanding, and encouraging democracy and human rights. It played a key role in the 1992 Cooperation Agreement that formally recognized Muslim rights in Spain. Through education, cultural dialogue, social programs, media outreach, and halal certification services, Junta Islámica advances Islamic teachings while promoting integration and mutual respect. It also collaborates internationally to combat Islamophobia and strengthen Muslim civil society. Spanish Muslims embody a spirit of harmony, civic engagement, and cultural and religious balance (es.wikipedia.org, n.d.-a; *Junta Islamica*, n.d.).

d. The experience of convivencia

Convivencia (meaning: living together) refers to the medieval period in Spain (8th–15th centuries) when Muslims, Christians, and Jews coexisted and exchanged culture, especially in cities like Córdoba, Toledo, and Granada. Though some view it as an idealized concept, it symbolizes a time of relative tolerance, intellectual collaboration, and interfaith harmony under Muslim rule in al-Andalus. In modern Spain, the Junta Islámica continues this legacy by promoting moderate Islam, interreligious dialogue, and peaceful coexistence. Founded in 1989, it advocates Muslim civil rights, gender equality, and democratic values while condemning extremism—reviving the spirit of convivencia as a model for harmony and mutual respect in contemporary Spanish society (en.wikipedia.org, n.d.-b; *Junta Islamica*, n.d.; Thomas, 1922; Wolf, 2009).

Inhibiting factors

1. Islamophobia

Islamophobia in Spain hinders Muslim social integration and religious expression, creating a hostile environment that restricts the public practice and spread of Islam. Rooted partly in Spain's historical legacy of al-Andalus and the Reconquista, modern Islamophobia is fueled by far-right rhetoric and nationalist politics that marginalize Muslims and limit their visibility. It manifests through institutional discrimination, social exclusion, and gender-based prejudice—mainly affecting Muslim women. Restrictions on public religious events and negative political discourse weaken interfaith coexistence and Muslim participation in society. Although Spain acknowledges its Islamic heritage, contemporary Islamophobia continues to obstruct Islam's growth and acceptance in the country (Farkhani et al., 2021; Olmos-Alcaraz, 2023; verislam.com, 2025; Zapata-Barrero & Diez-Nicolas, 2013).

2. Xenophobia

Xenophobia in Spain—marked by fear and hostility toward foreigners—negatively impacts Muslims by fueling discrimination, social exclusion, and hate crimes, especially against immigrants from North Africa. Closely tied to nationalism and ethnic tensions, xenophobia is reinforced by far-right rhetoric and online hate speech, portraying Muslims as outsiders or security threats. This hostility restricts Muslims' social participation, visibility, and ability to

practice and promote Islam. Intertwined with Islamophobia, xenophobia undermines peaceful coexistence, weakens social cohesion, and hinders the integration and growth of Islam within Spanish society (Ali, 2020; infomigrants.net, 2019).

3. Extreme Muslim acts of terrorism

Terrorist acts by extremists claiming to represent Islam have significantly damaged the perception and spread of Islam in Spain, fueling Islamophobia and hindering Muslim integration. Incidents like the 2004 Madrid bombings increased public suspicion and led to discrimination, vandalism against mosques, and social exclusion. Although Muslims make up around 4% of Spain’s population, mostly from Morocco, Algeria, and Pakistan, such attacks have made it harder for them to practice their faith openly, especially in areas with little Muslim presence. Despite widespread condemnation of terrorism by Spanish Muslim communities and their efforts to promote education, dialogue, and anti-radicalization initiatives, negative stereotypes linking Islam with extremism persist. Nevertheless, government and civil society actions continue to promote counter-terrorism, anti-discrimination, and interfaith understanding to reduce tension (Bourekba, 2021; Navarro-Granados et al., 2020; Noya, 2007).

4. Vox Party

The Vox Party is a Spanish national conservative and far-right political party founded in 2013 by former members of the People’s Party, led by Santiago Abascal. It entered parliament in 2019, becoming Spain’s third-largest party, though it lost seats in the 2023 election. Vox’s ideology centers on Spanish nationalism, anti-immigration policies, law-and-order advocacy, and the defense of Catholic and traditional values. While it claims to oppose only Islamic fundamentalism, its rhetoric and policies have been widely criticized as Islamophobic. The party has proposed deportations of Muslim immigrants, closure of mosques, bans on Islamic celebrations, and restrictions on nationality for people from Muslim countries. Vox’s actions and discourse—invoking terms like a modern “Reconquista”—have been condemned by the Spanish government and other parties for violating constitutional religious freedom and promoting discrimination against Muslims (aljazeera.com, 2025; euronews.com, 2023; Olmos-Alcaraz, 2023; Somoano & Gracia, 2024).

The Junta Islámica has firmly opposed Vox Party’s anti-Muslim measures, denouncing them as institutionalized Islamophobia that violate the constitutional right to religious freedom. The organization defends Spanish Muslims as equal citizens entitled to practice their faith without discrimination. Although some far-right groups have mischaracterized it as “radical,” Junta Islámica consistently condemns terrorism and actively combats Islamophobia, promoting an accurate understanding of Islam and advocating for justice, tolerance, and equal rights for Muslims in Spain (alestiklal.net, 2024; dw.com, 2025; sendika.org, n.d.).

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors		
Factors Category	Factors	Explanation
Supporting Factors	Spanish Government's religious freedom policy	The constitution guarantees freedom of religion, non-discrimination, state neutrality, and legal cooperation with religions.
	Regional autonomy	Autonomous communities have powers affecting religious practice, education, and local cooperation with Islamic groups, enabling localized support and integration.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors		
Factors Category	Factors	Explanation
	Spirit of Islamic da'wah	Organizations like Junta Islamica promote peaceful, democratic Islamic preaching, civil rights, cultural dialogue, and social programs.
	Experience of convivencia	Historical precedent of interfaith coexistence in medieval Spain fosters a cultural narrative of tolerance, peaceful coexistence, and respect.
Inhibiting Factors	Islamophobia	Social and institutional discrimination, hostile political rhetoric, restrictions on Muslim practices, and gender-based Islamophobia limit Islam's spread.
	Xenophobia	Fear and hatred towards foreigners and migrants, leading to social exclusion and discrimination against Muslims.
	Extreme Muslim acts of terrorism	Terrorist attacks cause increased suspicion, Islamophobia, and harmful stereotypes, hindering social integration and the peaceful propagation of Islam.
	Vox Party	Far-right political party advocating anti-Muslim policies, suspending Muslim religious freedoms, promoting deportation, and fostering Islamophobic discourse.

D. Discussion

Based on the perspective of Islamic da'wah, the Junta Islamica exemplifies Islamic da'wah. Islamic da'wah is inseparable from Islam, defined as an effort to invite and influence people to follow Allah's teachings for worldly and hereafter happiness. It involves guiding individuals from a state distant from divine instructions to one aligned with them. Every Muslim is obligated to perform da'wah for the benefit of all humankind, with its legal basis rooted in the Qur'an. Da'wah is *fardlu 'ain* (individual obligation) if no one else preaches, and *fardlu kifayah* (collective obligation) if capable individuals already exist (Abdullah, 2015; Aziz, 2004; Fahrurrozi et al., 2019).

The Junta Islamica promotes a universal Islam that integrates spiritual values with democracy, human rights, gender equality, and peaceful coexistence. This approach reflects the Islamic duty to invite others with wisdom and good counsel, emphasizing education, intercultural dialogue, and advocacy to counter Islamophobia and build mutual respect. By fostering a moderate understanding of Islam rooted in rational and democratic principles, the organization communicates a clear, peaceful message accessible within Spain's pluralistic society.

Structurally, the Junta Islamica's organized framework—with departments dedicated to religious affairs, legal advocacy, social and cultural activities, and foreign relations—enables effective da'wah through coordinated outreach and community empowerment. It also strengthens Muslim identity by expanding halal certification, supporting women's and youth entrepreneurship, and encouraging civic participation. This holistic engagement reflects the

da'wah aim of manifesting Islam's values in everyday life, promoting social integration and positive contributions to wider society while preserving Islamic principles.

Despite challenges like Islamophobia, extremist backlash, and political opposition, the Junta Islamica prioritizes peaceful coexistence and contextualized Islamic education. By collaborating closely with the Spanish Government and training Spanish-speaking imams, it maintains a balanced leadership that navigates societal tensions with patience and wisdom. This resilience and adaptability demonstrate how da'wah can thrive in a secular and multicultural environment, fostering harmony and understanding between Muslims and the broader community.

Besides, the Junta Islamica plays a vital role for Spain's Muslim minority. The term "minority Muslim" describes Muslim populations living as a minority within a specific nation or region, where they share the same faith, culture, and often ethnicity but are outnumbered by a majority of a different race, culture, or religion. Muslim minority communities frequently encounter systemic challenges. These include social marginalization, restricted access to quality education and healthcare, and limited employment opportunities. Such difficulties underscore the broader challenges faced by religious and cultural minorities in achieving inclusion and equity within diverse national contexts (Ansari, 2002).

The Junta Islamica advocates for the Muslim minority for their religious rights and social integration in a predominantly non-Muslim environment. It officially recognized Islam as Spain's second-largest religion, helping the Muslim community gain visibility and legal protection. This recognition strengthens Muslims' sense of belonging amid challenges like Islamophobia, political hostility, and social exclusion, allowing them to maintain their identity while engaging with broader society.

As a social organization, the Junta Islamica coordinates multiple functions. Social organization reflects a community's values, norms, practices, and behaviors, guiding interactions, fostering resilience, and enabling the achievement of collective goals. It includes networks of relationships, reciprocity, social support, accepted norms, and controls that regulate behavior. The concept is tied to a community's capacity for self-governance and adherence to shared principles (Lim & Putnam, 2010; Mancini et al., 2005). An organization is structured as either formal (deliberately designed with clear goals, authority, responsibility, and accountability) or informal (spontaneously arising from interpersonal ties within formal settings). From an Islamic perspective, effective organization requires cooperation, discipline, and purpose, much like a well-structured foundation (Safri, 2017).

Community organizations and NGOs play a vital role in democracy and civil society. They empower communities, channel aspirations, uphold social norms, and enhance accountability, serving as key partners in social development. (Herdiansah, 2016) The Junta Islamica supports the Muslim community, including mosque management, Islamic education, legal advocacy, and cultural activities. It promotes intercultural dialogue through foundations and media platforms, while its Halal Institute ensures trustworthy halal certification that extends beyond Spain. The organization promotes youth and women's entrepreneurship and maintains close ties with the Spanish Government to influence policy. These efforts provide structure, resources, and representation that empower Muslims to participate actively and positively in Spanish society.

In the moderation of Islam, the Junta Islamica proves that Islam is a religion of harmony. Moderation, or *I'tidal*, in Islam refers to avoiding extremism and radicalism and is closely linked to *wasathiyyah*, which means balanced and just behavior. The Qur'an describes Muslims as a moderate community. This concept promotes a harmonious approach to faith and life,

encouraging rationality within Islamic law by balancing fixed principles with flexibility in response to modern challenges. *Wasathiyyah* has gained importance globally, emphasizing pluralism, tolerance, and the rejection of intolerance and exaggeration (*tatharruf*), providing a framework for understanding moderate Islam (Bakir & Othman, 2017; Islam & Khatun, 2015; Rofiq et al., 2019).

The Junta Islamica emphasizes a moderate and inclusive interpretation of Islam that aligns with democracy, human rights, gender equality, and peaceful coexistence. This approach, championed by its late leader Mansur Abdussalam Escudero and continued under Maryam Isabel Romero, rejects extremism, promotes contextualized teachings, and encourages civic engagement. The organization counters negative stereotypes and integrates Islam within Spain's secular framework by training Spanish imams and fostering interfaith cooperation. This moderation helps the Muslim minority gain societal acceptance while preserving their faith in a contemporary and constructive manner.

Moderate Muslims in Spain practice a balanced, inclusive faith that focuses on peaceful coexistence, mutual respect, and harmony with diverse communities. They reject extremism, terrorism, and radicalism, fully embracing Spanish laws, democracy, and civic duties while advocating equal rights and social participation. Through interfaith dialogue and interpretations of Islam that align with human rights, freedom of expression, gender equality, and the Qur'anic ideal of *wasathiyyah*, they promote integration without compromising religious identity. They support cultural normalization by reclaiming Muslim heritage as part of Spain's multicultural fabric, boosting halal industries, inclusive education, and economic participation. Organized institutions coordinate religious, legal, and social efforts, engage democratically, and counter Islamophobia with resilience and a universalist vision that blends Islamic spirituality with modern pluralistic democracy.

E. Conclusion

The Junta Islamica, founded in 1989 by Dr. Mansur Abdussalam Escudero in Spain, promotes moderate Islam through education, interfaith dialogue, legal advocacy, and community empowerment. Its initiatives include training imams with democratic values, managing the Halal Institute, defending Muslim rights under Spanish law, encouraging social integration, gender equality, and human rights, as well as countering extremism and stereotypes through media and publications. By recognizing Spain's Islamic heritage and fostering cooperation with the State, the organization aims to harmonize Islamic tradition with democracy, coexistence, and inclusivity in Spanish society.

The spread of moderate Islam in Spain is supported by factors such as the government's religious freedom policy, regional autonomy that enables cooperation with Islamic groups, the peaceful *da'wah* efforts of organizations like the Junta Islamica, and the historical legacy of *convivencia*, which fosters interfaith tolerance. However, it faces obstacles including Islamophobia, xenophobia, terrorist acts that fuel negative stereotypes, and the far-right Vox Party's anti-Muslim policies, all of which restrict religious freedom and hinder peaceful Islamic propagation.

This study has a limitation in the form of the lack of in-depth interviews with key sources, which restricts a more comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences and internal dynamics of Muslim organizations and communities in Spain. Future research should incorporate direct interviews and field observations to gain deeper insights into the practical impact of Junta Islamica's initiatives and the broader social response to moderate Islam in Spain.

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