apparatus of government was extended under his son ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II (822-52). His accession itself is an indication of the enhanced status of the amirate seeing as during his father’s last illness, leading members of the court swore the oath of allegiance to him. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II recruited a new military, more reliant upon eastern models; he exchanged Christian guards with Berber ones and employed eunuchs; both of which had the advantage of being without local contacts and therefore completely reliant on the ruler. With these new military and fiscal resources, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II made a determined effort to assert Umayyad rule over the whole of Muslim Spain; a sign of course that his power base was strengthening; he made a concerted effort to assert his power beyond the walls of Córdoba into the Lower March, in the west based on Mērida and the Middle March based on Toledo. Both were lands dominated by the Berbers or the muwallads and were virtually impossible to control from Córdoba. Indeed it was not until the 830s that real control was established; both Mērida and Toledo were occupied by Umayyad troops and a governor was installed under the instructions of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān. The Upper Marches were largely controlled by powerful muwallad families but by 844, the city of Zaragoza was conquered by the amir and entrusted to his son Mūhammad. Thus, by the end of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s reign, Murcia, Zaragoza, Toledo, and Mērida all had Umayyad governors. Here, it seems that the power base of the Umayyad dynasty in Spain was relatively secure. They had governors under Umayyad control across the peninsula, a clear sense of legitimacy and a powerful military and fiscal system to support them. Yet, the events after ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s death in 852 were to show how precarious this assertion of central control was.

It was under the rule of Mūhammad, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s son, that the faults in the Umayyad power base become clear. The major underlying problem came, ironically from the success of Islam, which was noted above as being an important legitimizing factor in the assertion of Umayyad dominance. The evidence suggests that the second half of the ninth century was a period of rapid conversion to Islam with large numbers, rather than a few elite individuals converting; the new converts sought participation in the political life of the Muslim community and supported leaders such as Ibn Ḥafsūn who attempted to secure places in the military elite for themselves and their followers, creating tension with the older established military elements, the ṣūrūt, Arabs and Berbers. This ‘conversion’ also undermined the fiscal basis of government. The poll-tax was an important source of revenue and clearly the more people who converted to Islam and were consequently exempt from the poll-tax, the less money was collected. Thus, in consequence, the Umayyad government became increasingly weak and impoverished and it was not long before the separatist tendencies, superficially restrained in the final years of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s reign materialised once again. The lower, middle and upper marches gradually regained political autonomy yet these did not challenge Umayyad power in the southern heartlands. The rebellion of Ibn Ḥafsūn was much more dangerous in his respect; the rebellion created a domino effect whereby many Arab notables in the south asserted their political autonomy by building defensive castles and raising their own war-bands. Thus, by Muhammad’s death in 886, the disintegration of the amirate was far advanced; it was only in the

17 ibid, p. 265
18 R. Collins, ‘Spain’, p. 289
19 K. Wolf, Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain (Cambridge, 1988), p. 96
21 T. Glick, Islamic and Christian Spain, p. 45
22 H. Kennedy, ‘The Muslims in Europe’, p. 269
23 ibid, p. 270