

## The Imamate of the Lesser Between Islamic Theological Heritage and Western Literature

Dr. Nora Radjati<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Emir Abdelkader Constantine (Algeria).

The E-mail Author: [benchanora@gmail.com](mailto:benchanora@gmail.com)

Received: 10/08/2024

Published: 08/04/2025

---

### Abstract:

In this article, we discuss the development of the concept of the Imamate of the Lesser (Mafdool), which shifted from a specific meaning related to leadership in prayer to a broader political interpretation. This concept evolved through thinkers such as Al-Baqillani, Al-Mawardi, and Ibn Hazm, who integrated it into Islamic theological thought. The objective conditions for accepting the Imamate of the Lesser in the presence of the Superior (Fadool) were established, taking into account the realities that necessitate choosing a ruler based on the suitability of their qualifications. If the need is scientific, the ruler is chosen for their knowledge; if it is security-related, they are selected for their competence, bravery, and strength. Here, the legitimacy of the ruler hinges on achieving public interest and ensuring social, economic, and political security for the people.

We also examined the mechanism that parallels the Imamate of the Lesser in contemporary political thought and systems, which is the election process underlying today's democratic systems. We highlighted the intellectual genius of theological scholars in establishing the conditions and practical regulations necessary to realize the purpose of accepting the Imamate of the Lesser—something that has not been effectively utilized in addressing the challenges of governance today. This aspect is notably lacking in contemporary democratic political systems, particularly in their Arab versions, which focus more on the formal aspects of choosing a ruler.

**Keywords:** Imamate, Imamate of the Lesser, Theological Heritage, System of Governance, Western Literature.

---

### Introduction:

The term “Imamate of the Lesser” (Imamat al-Mafdool) is prominently featured in Islamic theological heritage, evolving from a specific legal concept related to leading people in prayer to a broader theological term that touches on doctrinal aspects, albeit

with political implications. It encapsulates general leadership and the issue of the legitimacy of the rule of the lesser in the presence of the superior.

Like many concepts, it has experienced intellectual debates over the years, but its modern application has been limited, even though its form and meaning resonate in what is termed the governance of elites and intellectuals in technocratic systems, contrasting with the rule of the superior. In democratic systems, leadership is often granted to those with majority support, regardless of competency, which corresponds to the rule of the lesser. However, the term “Imamate of the Lesser” and other similar Islamic theological terminologies have been largely overlooked in favor of democratic governance in both Western political culture and contemporary Islamic theological thought.

This raises a significant research question: What is the meaning of the Imamate of the Lesser in our Islamic intellectual heritage in general, and in our theological heritage in particular? How can it be applied to address the challenges of leadership and political governance in Islamic society, independent of the proposed Western literature?

To answer this question, we have structured our discussion into three main sections:

1. The conceptual framework of the terms of Imamate in general and Imamate of the Lesser in particular.
2. The views of theological scholars on the Imamate of the Lesser.
3. The Imamate of the Lesser and its parallels in Western literature.

### **Objective of the Study:**

- To define the term “Imamate of the Lesser” within Islamic intellectual heritage.
- To explore the implications of this term in our contemporary context as an alternative to the solutions proposed by Western literature for our various cultural and ideological issues.

## **Section One: Conceptual Framework of the Terms of Imamate in General and Imamate of the Lesser in Particular**

### **1. Concept of Imamate:**

In linguistic dictionaries, Imamate is defined as leadership or precedence. To lead the people in prayer is to be their Imam, akin to saying “the Imam of Muslims.” The term can also refer to a book, as indicated in the Quran: “The Day We will call forth every people with their Imam” (Al-Isra 71). An Imam can be someone whom people follow,

whether they are on the straight path or misguided. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the Imam of his nation, and all should follow his Sunnah<sup>1</sup>.

Arabic dictionaries typically do not stray from these meanings, except for the addition by the author of the “Al-Ma’jam Al-Wasiti,” which includes the connotation of the thread used in construction<sup>2</sup>.

This linguistic meaning has evolved into a commonly accepted legal term within the context of public policy, appearing earlier in legal and theological writings. It revolves around general leadership in both religious and worldly matters in what is termed the “greater Imamate.” According to theologians, the caliph is the successor of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in establishing religion and safeguarding the Islamic realm, necessitating his obedience by the entire community. The “lesser Imamate” pertains to the connection of the follower’s prayer to that of the Imam. The term “Imamate” in many of these texts is often linked to the Imamate of the Lesser.

## 2. Concept of the Imamate of the Lesser

The term “Lesser” refers to someone who is lesser in virtue compared to another, and it can also denote the defeated<sup>3</sup>. It embodies goodness and is the opposite of deficiency. However, this composite definition does not appear in a specific formulation in linguistic dictionaries, making it difficult to find a dedicated definition for the term “Mafdool” alone, unlike the term “Imamate,” which is extensively defined.

Regarding the Imamate of the Lesser, there is no precise definition; rather, it is understood through its repeated usage, indicating that it refers to someone who meets fewer criteria for the Imamate than the superior individual. The term “virtue” refers to

---

<sup>1</sup>- Tahdhib al-Lugha by Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Azhari al-Herawi, Abu Mansur (died: 370 AH), edited by Muhammad Awad Mur'ab, Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-Arabi – Beirut, first edition, 2001 (15/458). Al-Mu'jam al-Furuq al-Lughawiya, by Abu Hilal al-Hasan ibn Abdullah al-Sahl al-Saidi al-Yahyai al-'Askari (died: around 395 AH), edited by Sheikh Bayt Allah Bayat, Islamic Publishing Foundation, first edition, 1412 AH (p. 222). Al-Muhkam wa al-Muhit al-A'zam, by Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Ismail ibn Sida al-Mursi (died: 458 AH), edited by Abdul Hamid Hindawi, Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya – Beirut, first edition, 1421 AH - 2000 AD, vol. 10, p. 57. Taj al-'Arus min Jawahir al-Qamus, by Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Abdul Razzaq al-Husayni, Abu al-Faidh, nicknamed Murtada al-Zabidi (died: 1205 AH), edited by a group of scholars, Dar al-Hidaya (31/243).

<sup>2</sup>- See: Academy of the Arabic Language in Cairo - (Ibrahim Mustafa / Ahmad al-Zayat / Hamid Abdul Qadir / Muhammad al-Najjar) - Al-Mu'jam al-Wasat, entry: Hamzah/28.

<sup>3</sup>- Muhammad Umaym al-Ihsan al-Majdidi al-Barkati - Al-Ta'arifat al-Fiqhiyya: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya (reprint of the old edition in Pakistan 1407 AH - 1986 AD), first edition, 1424 AH - 2003 AD, entry: Imam/34. Also see: Abu al-Qasim Mahmoud ibn Amr ibn Ahmad al-Zamakhshari al-Jar Allah (died: 538 AH) - Asas al-Balagha- edited by Muhammad Basel Ayyoun al-Sud, Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, Beirut - Lebanon, first edition, 1419 AH - 1998 AD, entry: Fadl 2/25.

the gathering of qualities required for one to assume the Imamate<sup>1</sup>. Most discussions surrounding this term focus on the conditions and legitimacy of assuming the Imamate of the Lesser in the context of the greater Imamate (leadership of the state), particularly in the presence of a superior individual. This is significant because the Imamate is fundamentally “established as a succession to prophecy in safeguarding religion and governing worldly affairs,<sup>2</sup>” which lends it great importance among theologians. It is linked to the principle of human succession and the stewardship of the earth.

Other terms that serve as substitutes for the term Imamate include “Caliphate,” meaning the leadership that guides the community according to religious law for their worldly and spiritual interests, and “Emirate,” which refers to the position of an emir or general leadership<sup>3</sup>.

### **Section Two: Imamate of the Lesser in Theological Heritage**

Jurists have employed the term “Imamate of the Lesser” in their works, particularly concerning its application in prayer in the presence of a superior. However, theological writings have examined the issue of the greater Imamate (general leadership) once within the principles of belief, as seen in Shiite texts, and also within other theological discussions among different groups. Some attribute the development of the Imamate issue, including the Imamate of the Lesser, to Al-Mawardi, who made it an independent topic separate from both doctrine and jurisprudence. This is clearly illustrated in his book “Al-Ahkam Al-Sultaniyya wa Al-Wilayat Al-Diniyya,<sup>4</sup>” where the term “Mafdool” is consistently used to discuss the conditions for deserving the Imamate.

The concept of the Imamate of the Lesser includes several conditions, such as:

- The necessity of consensus when selecting a leader based on the needs of the time.

---

<sup>1</sup>- Abdul Malik ibn Abdullah ibn Yusuf ibn Muhammad al-Juwaini, Abu al-Ma'ali, Rukn al-Din, known as Imam al-Haramayn (died: 478 AH) - Al-Ghayathi Ghayath al-Ummam fi al-Tahdhi al-Zulm – edited by Abdul Azim al-Dib, Imam al-Haramayn Library, second edition, 1401 AH, chapter: Imamate of the Lesser/165.

<sup>2</sup>- Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Habib al-Basri al-Baghdadi, known as al-Mawardi (died: 450 AH) - Al-Ahkam al-Sultāniyya: do 26, Dar al-Hadith - Cairo, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup>- Diwan al-Mubtada' wa al-Khabar fi Tarikh al-Arab wa al-Barbar wa Man 'Asarahum min Dhawi al-Shan al-Akbar - previous source 239. Al-Mu'jam Lughat al-Fuqaha, Muhammad Ruwas Qalayji - Hamid Sadiq Qunibi, Dar al-Nafae for Printing, Publishing, and Distribution, second edition, 1408 AH - 1988 AD /88. Also see: Al-Ta'arifat al-Fiqhiyya - previous source/89. And see: Muhammad Ruwas Qalayji - Hamid Sadiq Qunibi - Al-Mu'jam Lughat al-Fuqaha - entry: Hamzah/88.

<sup>4</sup>- Omar Rabhi - Conditions for Selecting Rulers and Mechanisms for Transferring Power between Islamic Political Jurisprudence and Contemporary Constitutional Systems (Arab Republics with Republican Systems as a Model) Journal of Studies and Research: Volume 11, Number 2, June 2019, p. 148.

- The contributions the lesser may provide in terms of security, stability, and consensus<sup>1</sup>.
- It is only discussed within the context of the greater Imamate, including the conditions necessary and the overarching goals that must be achieved.

Thus, it can be applied today to align with political systems that choose leaders based on majority support, even if they do not meet the criterion of superiority.

In Islamic theological jurisprudence, the Imamate of the Lesser falls under the conditions that must be met for a leader to assume the position of Imamate legitimately. This encompasses the ability to fulfill responsibilities and maintain continuity in achieving the public good. The legitimacy of the ruler is established through their control over governance and the people's allegiance to them, which solidifies their authority and obligates obedience to them<sup>2</sup>.

The scholars who have raised and grounded this condition are predominantly from the Sunni tradition, as well as the Sulaymaniyyah Zaydi Shiites, who believe that the Imamate can be established by the agreement of two of the best Muslims and that it is valid for the lesser. A faction of the Khawarij, some Mu'tazilites, and all Zaydi Shiites, along with the entirety of Sunni scholars, agree that the Imamate is permissible for someone who is lesser than a superior. Conversely, the Khawarij and certain Mu'tazilites, led by Ibrahim ibn Sayyar al-Nazzam, argue that "the Imamate should belong to the most honorable and virtuous creation before God," citing the verse: "O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you<sup>3</sup>" (Al-Hujurat: 13). Thus, those who are the most pious and knowledgeable should be foremost in leadership, regardless of their ethnicity. Similarly, various factions of the Murji'ah and all the Shiite Rafdah assert that it is impermissible for someone to lead if there is someone better among the people<sup>4</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup>- Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyya: previous source/26.

<sup>2</sup>- Abu Zakariya Muhyi al-Din Yahya ibn Sharaf al-Nawawi (died: 676 AH), Tahrir Alfaz al-Tanbih: 328 (edited by Abdul Ghani al-Daqq, Dar al-Qalam, Damascus, 1st edition, 1408 AH).

<sup>3</sup>- Nashwan ibn Said al-Hamiri al-Yemeni (died: 573 AH), Shams al-Ulum wa Dawat Kalam al-Arab min al-Kulum: introduction/12 (edited by Hussein ibn Abdullah al-'Amri - Muthar ibn Ali al-Iryani - Yusuf Muhammad Abdullah, published by Dar al-Fikr al-Mu'asir (Beirut - Lebanon), first edition, 1420 AH - 1999 AD).

<sup>4</sup>- Abu al-Fath Muhammad ibn Abdul Karim ibn Abu Bakr Ahmad al-Shahrastani (died: 548 AH), Al-Milal wa al-Nihal: 1/159 and 4/126 (Halabi Foundation).

It is evident that Sunni scholars have extensively established the legitimacy of the Imamate of the Lesser in the presence of the Superior. However, Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari diverged from this view<sup>1</sup>, as noted in his work “Al-Farq Bayna al-Firaq,” relying on the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This is exemplified by the account of the Prophet approving the Imamate of Abdur Rahman ibn Awf, narrated by Al-Mughira ibn Shu'ba:

“The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) was with me during the Battle of Tabuk before dawn. I walked with him until he reached the Muslims in prayer, where Abdu Rahman ibn Awf was leading them. The Prophet (peace be upon him) joined them for the second rak'ah after Abdur Rahman had already prayed one rak'ah. After Abdur Rahman finished, the Prophet stood up to continue his prayer, and the Muslims were startled, thinking they had preceded the Prophet in prayer. When the Prophet completed his prayer, he told them: ‘You have done well’ or ‘You have succeeded.’<sup>2</sup>”

Additionally, there is a narration from Abu Huraira where the Prophet (peace be upon him) expressed his intention to appoint someone to lead the prayer, indicating the permissibility of leadership by someone lesser in virtue when necessary<sup>3</sup>.

The consensus among Sunni scholars regarding the permissibility of the Imamate of the Lesser is further evidenced by the Prophet's own actions<sup>4</sup>, such as his leading behind Abu Bakr. In “Al-Fath al-Rabbani,” it is noted that the Prophet's appointment of Abu Bakr as an Imam demonstrates that a lesser can lead in the presence of a superior. Imam Al-Shafi'i also supported this view in his Musnad regarding the Imamate of the Lesser.

Furthermore, Ibn Battal's commentary on Sahih Bukhari supports the idea of the Imamate of the Lesser in the presence of the Superior, citing the Prophet's practical

---

<sup>1</sup>- Al-Farq bayna al-Firaq by al-Baghdadi, Abdul Qahir ibn Tahir ibn Muhammad ibn Abdullah al-Baghdadi al-Tamimi al-Afara'ini, Abu Mansur (died: 429 AH), Dar al-Afaq al-Jadida – Beirut, second edition, 1977, p. 344.

<sup>2</sup>- Sunan Abu Dawood, Abu Dawood Sulayman ibn Ash'ath ibn Ishaq ibn Bashir ibn Shaddad ibn Amr al-Azdī al-Sijistani (died: 275 AH), edited by Shu'ayb al-Arnawut - Muhammad Kamil Qurra Bili, Dar al-Risala al-'Alamiya, first edition, 1430 AH - 2009 AD, Book of Purification, Chapter on Wiping over Khuffs, vol. 1, p. 105.

<sup>3</sup>- Al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Quran, Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Abi Bakr ibn Farah al-Ansari al-Khazraji Shams al-Din al-Qurtubi (died: 671 AH), edited by Ahmad al-Bardouni and Ibrahim Atufish, Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyya – Cairo, second edition, 1384 AH - 1964 AD, cited by al-Qurtubi, Chapter: Thaa, vol. 5, p. 276.

<sup>4</sup>- Ahmad ibn Abdul Rahman ibn Muhammad al-Banna al-Sa'ati (died: 1378 AH), Al-Fath al-Rabbani li Tartib Musnad al-Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal al-Shaybani and Bulugh al-Amani min Asrar al-Fath al-Rabbani: 5/261 (published by Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-Arabi, 2nd edition). Also see: al-Shafi'i Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Idris ibn al-Abbas ibn Othman ibn Shafi' ibn Abdul Muttalib ibn Abdul Manaf al-Mutalibi al-Qurashi al-Makki (died: 204 AH), Musnad al-Imam al-Shafi'i (arranged by Sinjar), 1/304, (edited by Maher Yasin Fahl, published by Grass Publishing and Distribution, Kuwait, 1st edition, 1425 AH - 2004 AD).

example when he appointed Usama to lead a military campaign that included Abu Bakr and Umar<sup>1</sup>. This practical precedent among the companions and their successors serves as evidence for the acceptance of the Imamate of the Lesser<sup>2</sup>.

The rationale behind the Sunni acceptance of the Imamate of the Lesser may often relate to purely political and security considerations, as seen in the repeated phrase “the permissibility of the Imamate of the Lesser in the presence of the Superior when it serves a public interest” found throughout the writings that endorse this view.

The discourse surrounding the Imamate of the Lesser reflects a profound understanding within Islamic theological jurisprudence that predates its time. This is particularly evident in the discussions by scholars of the fourth century AH regarding the issue of allegiance (election) and whether it constitutes a contract for authority or merely a declaration of it. Given the challenges in establishing the latter, debates arose around the former.

Al-Mawardi played a crucial role in formalizing the conditions for those responsible for appointing an Imam, emphasizing the need for justice, knowledge, and wisdom to ensure the selection of the best candidate. The criteria for a caliph (Imam or president) include justice, sufficient knowledge for deducing rulings, soundness of senses and limbs, and the ability to govern the people’s interests, along with courage in defending the state and protecting it, as well as a lineage from the Quraysh due to the textual evidence regarding it.

The measure for selecting an Imam is based on what is required by the circumstances, which grants legitimacy to the lesser, as they may be more agreeable to the people and closer to their hearts. The emphasis on the greater virtue is an exaggeration in selection and is not considered a requirement for eligibility<sup>3</sup>.

Abu Bakr al-Baqillani established the Imamate of the Lesser, considering the purpose of such an Imamate to achieve security and public interest. He stated, “What indicates the permissibility of appointing the lesser and leaving the superior due to fear of chaos and conflict is that the Imam is appointed to fend off the enemy, protect the community, and uphold justice. If appointing the best leads to chaos and disobedience,

---

<sup>1</sup>- Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari by Ibn Batal, Ibn Batal Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Khalaf ibn Abdul Malik (died: 449 AH), edited by Abu Tamim Yaser ibn Ibrahim, Al-Rushd Library - Saudi Arabia, Riyadh, second edition, 1423 AH - 2003 AD, Book of Stoning, Chapter on Stoning a Pregnant Woman for Adultery, vol. 8, p. 464.

<sup>2</sup>- Yahya ibn (Hubayra ibn) Muhammad ibn Hubayra al-Duhali al-Shaybani, Abu al-Muthaffar, ‘Awn al-Din (died: 560 AH), Al-Ifsha’ ‘an al-Ma’ani al-Sahih: 4/240 (edited by Fuad Abdul Moneim Ahmad, published by Dar al-Watan, published in 1417 AH).

<sup>3</sup>- Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyya: previous source 27.

this is a clear justification for choosing the lesser.” He cited Umar ibn al-Khattab’s nomination of six candidates for the caliphate, despite the presence of both superior and lesser individuals among them<sup>1</sup>.

Ibn Hazm also supported the Imamate of the Lesser, arguing against the claims that the Imamate is only permissible for the superior. He contended that there is no evidence from the Quran, Sunnah, consensus, or sound reasoning to support this view. The conditions set for a superior Imam, particularly the Quraysh lineage, became increasingly difficult to validate over time. Additionally, the judgment of superiority after the companions is often based on speculation, which is not valid legally or rationally, as people differ in virtues<sup>2</sup>.

The transition from a caliphate system based on election to hereditary succession led to significant conflicts over ascendance to power, which greatly influenced the foundation of the Imamate of the Lesser. This was done to preserve the unity of the community and to confront external threats to its security.

From this, we can note two observations regarding the Sunni acceptance of the Imamate of the Lesser:

1. The issue of the Imamate of the Lesser was not debated during the period of the rightly guided caliphs due to the equality among the virtuous.
2. The reality of the community, which witnessed a transition from one system of governance to another, along with the resulting discord and threats to the state and society, led to the unanimous acceptance among Sunnis of the Imamate of the Lesser.

Therefore, the significance of the topic of governance in Islam, particularly the methods of selecting a ruler, is deeply connected to the doctrine, as the ruler in Islam has a fundamental role in establishing the Sharia, which encompasses beliefs, ethics, and both ritual and practical laws. This can be summarized in the mission of stewardship entrusted to him, alongside the task of calling to God and cultivating the earth.

This presents a real challenge for discussing this subject among Muslims today, especially in light of Western propositions that theorize governance systems and

---

<sup>1</sup>- Muhammad ibn al-Tayyib ibn Muhammad ibn Ja'far ibn al-Qasim, Judge Abu Bakr al-Baqillani al-Maliki (died: 403 AH): 175, *Tamheed al-Awail fi Talkhis al-Dalail* (edited by Imad al-Din Ahmad Haidar, published by the Cultural Books Foundation – Lebanon, 1st edition, 1407 AH - 1987 AD).

<sup>2</sup>- Abu Muhammad Ali ibn Ahmad ibn Said ibn Hazm al-Andalusi al-Qurtubi al-Dhahiri (died: 456 AH), *Al-Fasl fi al-Milal wa al-Ahway wa al-Nihal*: 4/127-128 (published by the Khanji Library, Cairo).

promote them among peoples worldwide, including Muslim communities. Hence, it is essential to explore this issue based on the insights of our early scholars, guided by the Quranic text and the Sunnah, interpreting them wisely to address Western challenges.

### **Section Three: The Imamate of the Lesser in Western Literature**

Western literature does not address the concept of the Imamate of the Lesser directly, but it indirectly touches upon the fundamental meanings associated with it, particularly in the context of elections within what is termed a democratic system. Democracy is defined as a peaceful process of power transition among individuals and groups, aimed at resolving conflicts and enhancing unity within society<sup>1</sup>. Muslims hold two perspectives on this: one sees it as “a mechanism created by human thought to gauge and institutionalize popular will,<sup>2</sup>” while the other views it with skepticism due to its association with secular philosophy.

One of the shortcomings of modern democratic systems is the open criteria for candidacy, allowing even the least qualified individuals to attain power, often backed by effective media and substantial funds<sup>3</sup>. From this angle, we can compare the term “Imamate of the Lesser” with the less competent, as both lack the conditions of superiority. However, the reality necessitates their acceptance based on majority support and consensus.

In contrast, the rule of the superior can be compared to technocratic systems, which prioritize intellectual elites over political considerations<sup>4</sup>. Technocracy is defined as a governmental system that relies on scientific knowledge and technical expertise for political and administrative decision-making, applying the principle of “letting the baker have his dough,<sup>5</sup>” where the government is appointed based on academic skills.

Notably, while the technocratic system emphasizes competency in governance, the democratic system focuses on election processes that consider multiple conditions, such as age, gender, social and economic status, and cognitive abilities, while neglecting ethical aspects. In contrast, the conditions set by scholars for the superior

---

<sup>1</sup>- Ahmad Jiriba, *The Democratic Theory: Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs* (funded by the European Union), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>- Ahmad Bouachrine al-Ansari, *The Concept of Civil State in Western and Islamic Thought: A Comparative Study of Some Foundational Texts*, Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>- *Conditions for Selecting Rulers and Mechanisms for Transferring Power*: 146 (previous reference).

<sup>4</sup>- Ruthanne Kurth-Schai, *The Light in the Distance: Global Democracy and Humanity's Hope for the Future*, (Fourth edition) Elsevier, p. 79-93, ISBN: 9780128186299.

<sup>5</sup>- Technocracy - Government of Experts or Control of the Elderly / [www.aljazeera.net/blogs/2024/10/24](http://www.aljazeera.net/blogs/2024/10/24).

include not only intellectual and physical competence but also piety and moral integrity<sup>1</sup>.

The distinction between the leadership of the lesser and others lies in the conditions established by theologians regarding those who choose the lesser and the lesser themselves. They did not just consider the qualifications necessary for the lesser Imam, but also set conditions for those who impose these qualifications, primarily justice, knowledge, and competence—criteria that positively influence political action. This contrasts with the formal conditions imposed by democratic systems, such as age, nationality, and term limits, which can constrain the ruler's ability to perform their duties<sup>2</sup>.

Thus, the discussion of the Imamate of the Lesser by our scholars, particularly theologians, represents a significant advance in theorizing and establishing frameworks for a sound governance system. This system should consider the ruler's role in implementing God's law, serving the public interest, and establishing justice in the land, especially when a superior cannot achieve consensus and poses threats to communal security.

Moreover, we observe a lack of similar theorizing and structuring among contemporary scholars, leaving a void that Western political literature has filled with its culturally and ideologically specific propositions. This necessitates a re-examination of our Islamic intellectual heritage, particularly the theological legacy, as theologians have made significant contributions across various scientific fields, including theology, exegesis, hadith, linguistics, and legal theory.

## **Conclusion**

From the above, it is clear that the meaning of the Imamate of the Lesser remains tied to the fulfillment of the conditions required for assuming governance. The topic of the Imamate of the Lesser emerged only after the transition from the rightly guided caliphate to hereditary rule, in response to the turbulent reality experienced by the community. Thus, the focus shifted to public interest, where those who achieve consensus and acceptance among the majority become the most deserving of leadership. This resembles modern governance systems that grant legitimacy to the elected candidate with the most votes, even if there are more qualified individuals.

---

<sup>1</sup>- Patrizia Catellani, *Encyclopedia of Applied Psychology*, Elsevier 2004, p. 51-65.

<sup>2</sup>- Papiya Sengupta, *How Effective is Inclusive Innovation without Participation*, Geoforum, 2016.

We can affirm that Islamic theological heritage still holds effective solutions if researchers direct their efforts toward thoughtful exploration. This heritage is grounded in texts with sacred credibility, interpreted by minds equipped with the necessary tools for deep and conscious reading—something we unfortunately lack today.

Given the developments characterizing modern governance systems, it is essential today to:

1. Re-read what Islamic theological thought has produced regarding leadership, considering the conditions set for candidates, and applying sound jurisprudence to current realities.
2. Utilize the Imamate of the Lesser today to address many internal and external security crises, moving beyond endorsement based on seniority or party affiliation.
3. Embrace mechanisms for peaceful power transfer in Western political systems through elections while preserving cultural specificities.

### References:

1. Refinement of Language
2. Linguistic Differences Dictionary
3. The Definitive and Comprehensive
4. Crown of the Bride
5. Arabic Language Academy in Cairo) - (Ibrahim Mustafa, Ahmad al-Zayat, Hamid Abd al-Qadir, Muhammad al-Najjar)
6. Intermediate Dictionary
7. Muhammad Ameen al-Ihsan al-Majdidi al-Barkati
8. Legal Definitions): Abu al-Qasim Mahmoud ibn Amr ibn Ahmad al-Zamakhshari (d. 538 AH) (Foundation of Eloquence.
9. Abdul Malik ibn Abd Allah ibn Yusuf ibn Muhammad al-Juwayni, Abu al-Maali, Rukn al-Din, known as Imam al-Haramayn(d. 478 AH) - (The Support).
10. Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Mawardi (d. 450 AH) - (The Laws of Governance): p. 26, Dar al-Hadith, Cairo.
- 11.(History of Ibn Khaldun)
- 12.(Dictionary of the Language of Jurists)
- 13.Muhammad Ruwas Qallaji, Hamid Sadq Qunaybi

14. Omar Rabhi- "Conditions for Choosing Rulers and Mechanisms for Power Transfer between Islamic Political Jurisprudence and Contemporary Constitutional Systems," *Journal of Studies and Research*\*\* : Vol. 11, No. 2, June 2019.
15. (The Laws of Governance)
16. Abu Zakariya Muhyi al-Din Yahya ibn Sharaf al-Nawawi\*\* (d. 676 AH), *Clarification of Terms*: p. 328 (edited by Abdul Ghani al-Daqaq, Dar al-Qalam, Damascus, 1st ed., 1408 AH).
17. Nashwan ibn Said al-Hamiri (d. 573 AH), *(The Sun of Sciences and the Remedy for the Words of the Arabs)*: Introduction, p. 12 (edited by Hussein ibn Abdullah al-Amri, Mutahar ibn Ali al-Iryani, Youssef Muhammad Abdullah, 1st ed., 1420 AH - 1999 CE).
18. Abu al-Fath Muhammad ibn Abdul Karim ibn Abi Bakr Ahmad al-Shahrastani (d. 548 AH), *(The Sects and the Creeds)*: Vol. 1, p. 159 and Vol. 4, p. 126 (Dar al-Halabi).
19. (The Differences Between the Sects) by al-Baghdadi.
20. Sunan Abi Dawood (Sunan of Abu Dawood).
21. Al-Qurtubi, on the chapter of the letter "Thaa," narrated by Abu Huraira.
22. Ahmad ibn Abdul Rahman ibn Muhammad al-Banna al-Sa'ati (d. 1378 AH), \*\*Al-Fath al-Rabbani (The Divine Victory) for organizing the Musnad of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal: p. 261 (Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi, 2nd ed.).
23. Al-Shafi'i, Abu Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Idris (d. 204 AH), *(The Musnad of Imam al-Shafi'i)* (arranged by Sanjar), Vol. 1, p. 304 (edited by Maher Yasin Fahl, Grass Publishing, 1st ed., 1425 AH - 2004 CE).
24. Narrated by al-Bukhari, *Book of Stoning*, on the stoning of the pregnant woman due to adultery, narrated by Anas.
25. Yahya ibn al-Hubayra ibn Muhammad al-Dahli al-Shaybani, Abu al-Mudhafar, Awn al-Din (d. 560 AH), *Clarification of Correct Meanings*: Vol. 4, p. 240 (edited by Fuad Abdul Moneim Ahmed, Dar al-Watan, 1417 AH).
26. Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Mawardi (d. 450 AH), *Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyya (The Laws of Governance)*: p. 27 (Dar al-Hadith - Cairo).
27. -Muhammad ibn al-Tayyib ibn Muhammad ibn Ja'far ibn al-Qasim, Qadi Abu Bakr al-Baqillani al-Maliki (d. 403 AH): p. 175, *(Introduction to the Essentials in Summarizing the Proofs)* (edited by Imad al-Din Ahmad Haidar, Cultural Books Foundation - Lebanon, 1st ed., 1407 AH - 1987 CE).
28. Abu Muhammad Ali ibn Ahmad ibn Said ibn Hazm al-Andalusi al-Qurtubi al-Dhahiri (d. 456 AH), *(The Distinction in Sects and Opinions)* (Maktabat al-Khanji, Cairo).

29. Ahmad Jaybah .The Democratic Theory: (Funded by the European Union).
30. Conditions for Choosing Rulers and Mechanisms for Power Transfer
31. Ahmed Boucharin al-Ansari, The Concept of the Civil State in Western and Islamic Thought: A Comparative Study of Some Foundational Texts. Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies.
32. Ruthanne Kurth-Schai. The Light in the Distance: Global democracy and humanity's hope for the future, (Fourth edition) Elsevier, pp. 79-93, ISBN: 9780128186299.
33. Technocracy - Government of Experts or Control of the Elders-  
[www.aljazeera.net/blogs/2024/10/24](http://www.aljazeera.net/blogs/2024/10/24).
34. Patrizia Catellani, Encyclopedia of Applied Psychology, Elsevier, 2004.
35. Papia Sengupta, "How Effective is Inclusive Innovation Without Participation," Geoforum. 2016.