THE CONCEPT OF RULERSHIP ACCORDING TO
AL-GHAZALI IN *NAṢĪḤAT AL-MULŪK* AND
MACHIAVELLI IN *THE PRINCE*: A COMPARATIVE
ANALYSIS

BY

NUR ADILLAH BINTI OMAR

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International Islamic University Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to analyse the concept of rulership according to the perspectives of two scholars from the area of political philosophy, namely al-Ghazali and Machiavelli. It is important to fully understand the concept of rulership according to these two scholars as presented in their books *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* and *The Prince* in order to know the basis of political systems advocated by al-Ghazali and Machiavelli in relation to the advice they gave to their respective rulers in governing the states during their time. It is necessary to research on this since their respective views on rulership are not only for the people who lived in the past, but also for the present and future generations. Of course, both scholars have contradictory views. Al-Ghazali upholds religion as the foundation of his political approach, whereas Machiavelli is a secular thinker, who detaches religion and morality for the foundation of his political approach. However, both scholars use the same framework of political system, which is the authoritarian political system framework, in giving advice to the rulers in governing their states. Thus, this dissertation analyses the concept of rulership in order to justify the authoritarian style of political system that has been theorised by both al-Ghazali and Machiavelli, based on *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* and *The Prince* respectively using Juan Linz's framework of authoritarian political system which are limited pluralism, mentally, mobilization and leadership.

خلاصة البحث

الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو تحليل مفهوم الإمامة وفقًا لمنظور عالمين من تخصص الفلسفة السياسية، وهما الغزالي، ومكيافيلي. إنه من المهم أنْ نفهم تمامًا مفهوم الإمامة وفقًا لهذين العالمين كما وَرَدَ في كتابي "نصيحة الملوك للغزالي، والأمير لمكيافيلي" من أجل معرفة أساس الأنظمة السياسية التي دعا إليها الغزالي، ومكيافيلي فيما يتعلق بالنصيحة التي قدّماها للحكام خلال مدة حكمهم لدولهم. إنه من الضروري البحث في هذا الأمر مادامت وجهات نظرهم عن الإمامة ليست فقط للذين عاشوا في الماضي، ولكن أيضًا بالنسبة للأجيال الحاليّة والمستقبليّة. وبطبيعة الحال، فإنَّ كلا العالمين لديهما وجهات نظر متناقضة. والغزالي يتمسّك بالدين أساسًا لنهجه السياسي، في حين أنَّ مكيافيلي مفكِّر علماني، يفصل بين الدين والأخلاق لتأسيس نهجه السياسي. ومع ذلك، كلا العالمين يستخدمان الإطار نفسه من النظام السياسي، وهو إطار النظام السياسي الاستبدادي، في إسداء المشورة للحكّام في حكم دولهم. وهكذا، هذه الرسالة تحلل مفهوم الإمامة من أجل تبرير الأسلوب الاستبدادي للنظام السياسي الذي تمّ تنظيره من قبل الغزالي، ومكيافيلي، استنادًا إلى "نصيحة الملوك، والأمير" باستخدام إطار جوان لينز للنظام السياسي السلطويِّ، وهو التعدديّة المحدودة، والعقلانيّة، و التعبئة، و القيادة.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Arts in Islamic Thought and Civilization.

………………………………….
Danial Bin Mohd. Yusof
Supervisor

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Arts Islamic Thought and Civilization.

………………………………….
Khairil Izamin Ahmad
Examiner

This dissertation was submitted to the International Institute of Islamic Civilisation and Malay World (ISTAC) and is accepted as a fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts Islamic Thought and Civilization.

………………………………….
Hafiz Zakariya
Acting Dean,
International Institute of Islamic
Civilisation and Malay World

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Nur Adillah Binti Omar

Signature .... Date ....

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It is my utmost pleasure to dedicate this work to my dear parents, Omar bin Abdul Razak and Jauriah Binti Idrus and my family members, who granted me the gift of their unwavering belief in my ability to accomplish this goal. Thank you for your support and patience. I pray you will be granted the highest and most honourable status in the hereafter.

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TABLE OF TRANSLITERATION

Table 1: Transliteration Table: Consonants

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
ب	b		ط	ṭ
ت	t		ظ	ẓ
ث	th		ع	ʿ
ج	j		غ	Gh
ح	ḥ		ف	F
خ	kh		ق	Q
د	d		ك	k
ذ	dh		ل	l
ر	r		م	m
ز	z		ن	n
س	s		ه	h
ش	sh		و	w
ص	ṣ		ء	ʾ
ض	ḍ		ي	y

Table 2: Transliteration Table: Vowels and Diphthongs

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
ـَ	A		ـًا، ـًى	an
ـُ	U		ـٌو	un
ـِ	I		ـٍي	in
ـَا، ـٰ، ـَى،	Ā		ـَوْ	aw
ـُو	Ū		ـَيْ	ay
ـِي	ī		ـُوّ	uww, ū (in final position)
			ـِيّ	iyy, ī (in final position)

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

"Rulership is one of the vital ingredients and enablers to assist management in ensuring continuous improvement of an organization" (Mawdudi, 1984). The idea of rulership is the foundation of all ideas since it is the means that contributes to the stability of and the formation of a perfect community and state. The people in power should be an exemplary to the people in the state by having good morality and humanity. This is because, unconsciously, the people in the state will follow all the attributes of the rulers. Indirectly, it will give a big impact by determining the direction of people in the state. Thus, rulership either positively impact the state as a whole or otherwise depending on their rulers style of rulership.

As we know, the results of each and every style of rulership depend on the quality left from the people in the past to their community. Therefore, it is very significant for the current people to utilise the knowledge from the past scholars who were well-versed in many areas of as a guide and reference in today's situation and development of the state. By doing so, it will lead to a civilized nation. Undoubtedly, we need to learn from the people in the past. After all, history tends to repeat itself. Thus, it is important to critically review the works of al-Ghazali in *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* and Machiavelli in *The Prince* in order to understand the concept of rulership point of as a references for the rulers.

A correlation can be noticed between the scholars' concept of rulership and governmental political system practices. Every scholar has their own thoughts in

choosing any political system of the government ruling the state just like the concept from al-Ghazali and Machiavelli. They choose their own form of government that suits the situations and conditions of the state since they believe it plays a vital task in ensuring the progress and advancement of the state. Besides, this does not only regulate the social and economic life of the community but also conciliate any issue arises as a whole. Clearly, al-Ghazali and Machiavelli have an authoritarian style of rulership since both scholars applied authoritarian form of government as a framework in giving advices to their rulers in reference to *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* and *The Prince* respectively.

All in all, rulership plays a vital role in determining the direction of people in a country and it is one of the important aspects in which successful states rest at the political system of their rulers. This means that the rise and fall of a particular country is determined by the political system used by its rulers, coupled with the decisions and actions they take and/or do not take. The history of both Islamic and Western civilizations has proven that the failure of Muslim and Western rulers in giving proper guidance and the right direction to the people of their various states by practicing a suitable political system has caused destruction to the states. In order to recover from such unwanted situations, the right form of guidance, qualities and suitable political system are needed by the rulers in power. In other words, rulers bear a heavy responsibility in determining the direction of a country and the citizens depend largely on their rulers.

The number of destabilized countries today is on the increase. Hence, it is important to study and understand the different types of political systems around the world, and identify their advantages and disadvantages. This helps to identify the good types of political systems that suit each country's norms and situations. As each country has its different historical, political, socio-economic and cultural factors, it is important

to look back at the history and consider the current situations to get the insights of all types of political systems practiced by the people before. It is, therefore, in this regard that it becomes necessary to study the concept of rulership, as advocated by al-Ghazali in his *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* and by Machiavelli in *The Prince*.

In conclusion, the idea of analysing and comparing the concept of rulership is to justify the practice of authoritarian political system in different contexts and eras. This work focuses on *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* and *The Prince* by al-Ghazali and Machiavelli respectively, using a Juan Linz's framework of authoritarian political system. It is believed that by doing this, a tremendous positive impact to the current world will surface if suitable political systems are selected for each country since this thesis reveals important insights on the concept of rulership of al-Ghazali and Machiavelli in relation to the authoritarian political system framework. All in all, an effective political system in a state is needed in order to safeguard and guarantee the peace, tranquility and stability of the country.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It is evident that, rulers must try their best to get the best results for their countries and to utilise available resources for their people by applying a good political system that suits the situations and norms of the country. There are several types of political systems that have been advocated, practiced and applied around the world, which are democracy, authoritarianism, totalitarianism and post-totalitarianism, to name a few. However, as analysts attempted to construct categories as to compare and contrast all the systems around the world, the authoritarian category was proven useful in the 1960s as two surprising conclusions emerged which are:

1. It is possible that more regimes were "authoritarian" than were "totalitarian or "democratic" mix. Hence, authoritarian regimes were the type of regime in the current world.

2. "Authoritarian regimes were not necessarily in transition to a different type of regime".

There are four peculiar importance of an authoritarian regime as mentioned by Linz which are: a) limited pluralism, b) mentality, c) somewhat constrained leadership and d) weak mobilization. All of these aspects important since they were approximately stable as Linz's research of Spain during the era of 1950s and early 1960s.

Did al-Ghazali and Machiavelli advocate the authoritarian style of political system during their time? And did they advise their respective rulers to adopt authoritarian style in ruling the states based on the concept of rulership, as presented in *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* and *The Prince*? These are the main problems that this dissertation will investigate and explain. Hence, the research questions that need to answers are presented in what follows.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study is to understand the concept of rulership in order to justify the authoritarian style of political system that has been advocated by al-Ghazali and Machiavelli from *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* and *The Prince* based on the framework of Juan Linz's authoritarian political systems framework. This research aims to:

1. examine al-Ghazali's and Machiavelli's concept and framework of rulership as presented in *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* and *The Prince*;

2. find out the reasons why al-Ghazali's and Machiavelli's concept of rulership lead to the authoritarian political system, as presented in the book

Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk and *The Prince*, using Juan Linz's 1960s framework of authoritarian regime;

3. analyse the reasons or wisdoms of practices of the authoritarian regime theorised in *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* and *The Prince*.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is al-Ghazali's and Machiavelli's concept and framework of rulership according to *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* and *The Prince*?

2. Why do al-Ghazali's and Machiavelli's concepts of rulership lead to the authoritarian political system in the book *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* and *The Prince*?

3. How do the reasons or wisdoms of practices of the authoritarian regime be theorised in *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* and *The Prince*?

1.5 FRAMEWORK: AUTHORITARIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

The conceptual framework employed in this study is the authoritarianism by the late political thinker Juan Linz between 1950s and early 1960s. Juan Linz was a Spanish political philosopher of repute; Linz created the concept of authoritarianism political system to distinguish the Franco regime of totalitarianism from those of Hitler and Stalin, which was perfectly adapted to the Mexican political system devised by [*President Plutarco Elías*] Calles in 1929. Certain hallmarks of authoritarianism remained in force in the country even after the alternation of 2000 [*seventy-year PRI hegemony ended when PAN Vicente Fox took office*], erroneously considered by some as the end, not as the beginning, of the democratic transition in Mexico (Cheng & Wu, 2015).

According to this concept, there are four distinctive dimensions of an authoritarian regime:

1. Limited pluralism: Some forms of semi-opposition which the regime does not control are allowed. Criticism is tolerated but the dictator cannot be fundamentally challenged (Sondrol, 1991).

2. Mentality: Distinctive mentalities but without detailed political system and model ideology (Sondrol, 1991).

3. Weak mobilisation: The political system is beyond large or comprehensive political mobilisation excluding at some points in its evolution (Sondrol, 1991).

4. Constrained leadership: A political system, which a ruler or sometimes a small group exercises power within regularly vague though very expected criterion (Sondrol, 1991).

Thus, this dissertation use this framework because of its suitability as it could stand for a long period as an integrated system and reinforcing since it was a approximately durable.

1.6 METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

This research depends on primary and secondary sources. For the primary sources, this research studies the books written by al-Ghazali, *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* and Machiavelli, *The Prince* in order to explore their understanding on the concepts of rulership and their advices for rulers. In addition, this study also relies on secondary sources, which include articles, research papers, project papers, encyclopedia, reference books, journals, magazines, seminar papers and lectures.

This study employs a qualitative method analysis which uses discourse analysis as an interpretive methodology to analyse the written texts: *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* and *The Prince*. It aims at revealing the socio-political characteristics of al-Ghazali's and Machiavelli's patterns in understanding their concept of rulership and ways of giving advices to their rulers by systematically describing and interpreting the written texts. Besides that, by critically analysing both texts, it aims to prove that both scholars advocated authoritarian style of rulership when both of them provided advice to their rulers in support of centralised and authoritarian governance.

A discourse is a language or systems of representation that has developed socially in order to make and circulate a coherent set of meaning about an important topic area (Fiske, 1987). Furthermore, discourse analysis is also known as a set of statements that construct an object (Perker, 1992). In social science, a discourse is considered to be an institutionalized way of thinking, a social boundary defining what can be said about a specific topic. Hence, by using this methodology, it can evaluate the texts to illustrate a theory.

Political discourse analysis is set out to answer numerous questions about the writers, their perceptions and notions in producing the texts. As a result, this research shall derive, evaluate and reconstruct meaning from the texts and the writers' perspectives or overview as a whole according to the theoretical framework. However, by using discourse analysis, definitive answers shall not provided since the insights are based on continuous argumentation and reinterpretations.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is significant for the current world since issues of illiberal democracy are becoming and it is an increasing new. lt is relevant for the current situation to understand

it deeply starting from the historical development of authoritarianism as a concept. With a good understanding of this concept, today's scenario as a whole, as the emergence of *Sultanism.*

As stated in the Journal of Democracy, written by Alfred Stepen form Columbia University and Juan J. Linz from Yale's University, the crisis of "Arab Spring" have shown a clear idea of "sultanism" and consequently its siginificance to democracy. This can be proven when the democractic transitions from authoritarian rule in Post-Communist Europe, Southern and South America in twenty-five years after the 'third wave' of "Arab Spring" (Brownlee, 2012).

Roughly, an authoritarian and *sultanistic* regime are more or less the same due to its peaceful, "pacted" transition, or one that leads to democracy. That is why *sultanism* is another kind of authoritarian regime potrayed from the extreme persona; which means the ruler's presence on all aspects of governance. However, there are cases where the ruler might not be present in the social or economic life, yet this is not the true colour of political power.

The negotiation within the government tends to be difficult with the presence of the *sultan.* In *Sultanistic Regimes,* Linz, Chehabi, and the contributors considered one subset of authoritarianism, a regime revolving around the ruler and characterised by corruption, lack of political ideology, and above all arbitrariness. Consequently, they offer a conceptual framework for analysing politics in some of the countries that have not developed democracy and present different political challenges than those of the well-studied bureaucratic-authoritarian governments of Latin America and southern Europe (Brownlee, 2012).

According to Chehabi and Linz, *sultanistic* regimes share the following characteristics, albeit in different combinations and to different degrees. First, there is

a meld or an overlap between regime and state. Second, there is no seriousness in pursuing ideological project and all the legal-rational norms are distorted and discarder. Third, the rulers build their own clique and clan among themselves, and in a dynastic aspect, the power of inheritance is usually passed to their family members. Fourth, constitutional hypocrisy is the norms between the rulers. Fifth, political coalitions and civil societies that usually give support health to the ruling clique have been cut by the ruling clans. Finally, the exercises of the corruption spread all around the regime since the concentration of wealth is only in one hand and the idea of human rights is neglected.

1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section is separated within three sub-divisions. Division one reviews the concept of rulership in general. Division two discusses authoritarian political system, and division three, gives an account of the writings that discuss the historical political context of rulership according to al-Ghazali in *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk,* and Machiavelli in *The Prince*.

Rulers generally try their best to achieve the best results in all dimensions such as economic and politics, by applying a good political system that suits their situations and norms since it is an orderly way of running institutional affairs. A government acts as a body of people who have legitimate power to make the people in the state behave in certain ways. The political system that the ruler is practicing depends on the political environment of the state. Since states have varieties of histories, ethnic compositions, social problems, and philosophical backgrounds, the ruler needs to practice the best style of rulership in order to solve obstacles at the same time adequately preserving the institutions.

In the 1960s, analysts attempted to construct categories with which to compare political systems in the world. The authoritarian category was prove useful because it was increasingly shown that new regimes were "authoritarian" than "totalitarian or "democratic" mixed. Undoubtedly, authoritarian regimes were the model of regime category in the modern world and could stand for a long term as they were relatively stable due to its integrated system.

1.8.1 Concept of Rulership

Rulership takes a central role in an institution. This is because the accomplishment of a government to reach a goal relies totally on its political system. The logic is that persuasive rulership explains to sensible public policy implementation and formulation also good public service delivery to meet the requirements and goals of civilians (Baah, 2014).

This shows that rulership can positively contribute to the struggle against insecurity (Chizea & Osumah, 2015). The rulership dynamism depends on the surrounding situations (Allio, 2013). Surrounding situations refer to the political system that is being practiced based on the political, economic and social situations of the state. There are several political systems that are deemed suitable for the modern times, e.g. democracy, totalitarian and authoritarian.

1.8.2 Al-Ghazali: *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk*

According to Rusli Kamaruddin (2002), Imam al-Ghazali is a political philosopher whose goal was to combine and integrate Islam with politics because the requirement for a ruler is neither commanded reason, nor by revelation. This can be proven when he

argued comprehensively and widely the ideas of *khilāfah* and *imāmah* specifying their basics and the abilities needs for the office holders.

There are four concepts of rulership that will be discussed in the literature review, according to Juan Linz's authoritarian framework, which are ministers, justice, devout *'ulamā'* and Islamic teachings- *Qur'an* and *Sunnah.*

1.8.3 Authoritarian System

According to Slater (2011), the greater influential on weapon in the authoritarian arsenal is the state power (Slater, 2011), Besides that, authoritarian states help govern more effectively (Kalathil, 2003). According to Grzymala-Busse (2011), authoritarian is the best measure of the powerful states due to its ability to survive challenges and overcome potential crises. For example, it has been mentioned by Somek (2015) that authoritarian rule is a managerial strategy that is good for the economy, as proven in the case of EU, where it overcomes the case of money crises.

1.8.4 Limited Pluralism

According to Rashid Moten (2010), there are three main aspects that have been refined by al-Ghazali: The Caliph, the Sultan, and the Sultan handle fundamental authority, the caliph consumed the institutional authority, and the *'ulamā'* were honored for the effective authority of the *Sharī'ah.* Each of the aspects handles some authority under Islamic government and each executes duty prescribed by that authority.

The stability of each and every epoch mainly depended on the sound minister and the intelligence of the companion as al-Ghazali stated "make thought your minister and intelligence your companion!" (p. 82).

1.8.5 Mentality

In *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk,* al-Ghazali reiterates the importance of justice (Mint, 2015). As regards his even relationship such as his dealings with the subjects, al-Ghazali summaried ten fundamentals which are related to the division of the tree of faith. These ten fundamentals, admits R. J. McCarthy, bring brought into al-Ghazali's understanding and mystically that can absolutely be termed as an Islamic quintessential of government and politics.

One of the fundamentals illustrated by al-Ghazali is justice. To clarify, he asserts that authority is an immense blessing for he who applies it accurately achieves absolute bliss. Nevertheless, assuming several rulers abandon this application, he acquire misery outweighed alone by the misery of unbelief. This is explain by the *Sunnah* of the Prophet of Islam (P.B.U.H) who said: "One day of just rule by an equitable sultan is more meritorious than sixty years of continual worship." He further cited that "on the day of resurrection, no shade or shelter shall remain except of God on High, in which seven persons shall be found". At the head of them would be the sultan who had conducted his subjects along with justice. Besides being just, the sultan is advised that he must control his laborer, armed forces, companions, slaves and officials, and not ever accept unfair manipulation from them, for he is not only answerable for his endemic unfair acts yet still for those of his organisation.

According to Pines, Kister, and Shaked, based on *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk,* adapted by Bagley, the just ruler is someone who does not abuse his position and who makes sure that his soldiers, officials and other staff likewise refrain from doing so, for he will be held responsible for their conducts. He gives judgement strictly in accordance with the *Sharī'ah*. To do this, he must have justice in him, that is self-control. He should live modestly, avoid overspending on food and clothing, and beware of all the flattery that

will inevitably be heaped upon him. And he should surround himself with devout *'ulamā'* who will instruct him in the way of justice and keep the danger of his role fresh in his mind.

1.8.6 Mobilisation

Another fundamental specified by al-Ghazali is that the ruler's precondition to constantly find faithful *'ulamā'* and inquire for their guidance. Nonetheless, the ruler is advised not either to seek with *'ulamā'* of temporal passion who potency delude, charm and to satisfy him in order to get control over his mundane body by mystery and deception. AI-Ghazali continues that the faithful *'alim* is not one which has selfish attributes on the treasury, however who allows his insight in equitable situation. This fundamental deals with al-Ghazali's concession over the quality of insight for a ruler, as the recent is considered to shift to faithful *'ulamā'* for advice.

1.8.7 Leadership

Kings are considered as the selection of God, who endow with kind and good virtues (Gunduz, 1993).

"Agreeing to Majid Khaduri, for centuries, Islam provided for the believers a way of life, the validity and perfection of which no pious Muslim ever questioned. As a divine system, Islam sets up a principle that an authority belongs to God, but the caliph, though enthroned by the people to enforce God's law, is not constitutionally responsible to the electorate. However, the caliph and his subjects are both bound by the divine law, the violation of which will make them equally liable for punishment. Such a theory of the state, placing ultimate responsibility in God, is not inherently democratic" (1953).

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