



## ISLAMIC LEADERSHIP THEORY: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPTS OF IMAMAH BY AL- MAWARDI AND ASABIYYAH BY IBN KHALDUN

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**Abstract:** This study is motivated by various contemporary leadership issues, including declining public trust, weak accountability, and increasing social conflicts. In this context, the leadership theories of Al-Mawardi and Ibn Khaldun are important to examine as theoretical foundations of Islamic leadership. The problem addressed in this study is how leadership is conceptualized by al-Mawardi and Ibn Khaldun and its relevance to modern society. The research questions focus on identifying the characteristics of ideal leadership according to both scholars and examining their application in contemporary social life. This study employs a qualitative method with a library research approach, analyzing primary sources such as al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah and al-Muqaddimah, as well as other relevant supporting literature. The findings reveal that, according to al-Mawardi, leadership (imamah) is normative in nature, emphasizing justice, trustworthiness, and legitimacy. In contrast, Ibn Khaldun highlights sociological aspects such as social solidarity (asabiyyah), stability, and the dynamics of society. This research seeks to integrate al-Mawardi's normative approach with Ibn Khaldun's empirical perspective in order to formulate a more comprehensive model of Islamic leadership. The study concludes that ideal leadership is a combination of normative values and social realities, making it highly relevant for application in modern society.

**Keywords:** asabiyyah; imamah; Islamic leadership; legitimacy; normative values; social stability.

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh berbagai persoalan kepemimpinan kontemporer yang ditandai dengan menurunnya kepercayaan publik, lemahnya akuntabilitas, serta meningkatnya konflik sosial. Dalam konteks tersebut, pemikiran al-Mawardi dan Ibn Khaldun menjadi penting untuk dikaji sebagai

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landasan teoritis kepemimpinan Islam. Permasalahan yang dikaji adalah bagaimana konsep kepemimpinan menurut Imam al-Mawardi dan Ibn Khaldun serta relevansinya dalam kehidupan masyarakat modern. Pertanyaan penelitian ini adalah bagaimana karakteristik kepemimpinan ideal menurut kedua tokoh tersebut dan bagaimana penerapannya dalam kehidupan sosial. Metode yang digunakan adalah penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kepustakaan (*library research*), melalui analisis terhadap karya utama seperti *al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah* dan *al-Muqaddimah* serta sumber pendukung lainnya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa menurut al-Mawardi, kepemimpinan (*imamah*) bersifat normatif dengan menekankan aspek keadilan, amanah, dan legitimasi, sedangkan Ibn Khaldun menekankan aspek sosiologis seperti solidaritas sosial (*asabiyyah*), stabilitas, dan dinamika masyarakat. Penelitian ini berupaya mengintegrasikan pendekatan normatif al-Mawardi dan pendekatan empiris Ibn Khaldun untuk menghasilkan model kepemimpinan Islam yang lebih komprehensif. Dan juga penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kepemimpinan yang ideal merupakan perpaduan antara nilai normatif dan realitas sosial sehingga relevan diterapkan dalam kehidupan masyarakat modern.

**Kata Kunci:** *asabiyyah*; *imamah*; kepemimpinan Islam; legitimasi; nilai normatif; stabilitas sosial.

## Introduction

Leadership is one of the most decisive factors in human life. From the formation of social communities to the emergence of modern state systems, the presence of leaders has always been a key factor in maintaining order, upholding justice, and ensuring the well-being of society. In practice, leadership is not only about power but also involves moral responsibility and public trust, which must be consistently upheld.<sup>1</sup> From an Islamic perspective, leadership (*imamah*) has a deeper meaning than merely an administrative function. Leadership is viewed as a trust that not only governs social life but also upholds religious values within society. Therefore, it is not enough for a leader to possess merely managerial skills; they must also demonstrate moral integrity, justice, and a commitment to the welfare of the community.<sup>2</sup>

Classical Islamic thought has provided a strong theoretical foundation for understanding the concept of leadership. Imam al-Mawardi, in his work *al-Ahkam al-Sulthaniyyah*, emphasized that leadership must be built upon the principles of legitimacy, justice, and trustworthiness as the primary foundations of power. On the other hand, Ibn Khaldun, in *al-Muqaddimah*, views leadership as a dynamic social

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<sup>1</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *Political Order and Political Decay* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014), h. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Abu al-Hasan, al-Mawardi, *al-Ahkam al-Sulthaniyyah wa al-Wilayat al-Diniyyah* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), h. 5.

phenomenon influenced by the power of group solidarity (*asabiyyah*) and the social conditions of society.<sup>3</sup>

These two schools of thought demonstrate that leadership can be understood not only in terms of ideal values, but also in terms of the social reality that surrounds it. Several previous studies have examined the theme of Islamic leadership from various perspectives. Antony Black explains that classical Islamic political thought, including ideas regarding political legitimacy and authority, has made an important contribution to the formation of the concept of Islamic governance.<sup>4</sup> In addition, Hamid Enayat emphasized that leadership in the Islamic political tradition is not only related to the aspect of power, but is also closely linked to moral values, justice, and social responsibility.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, Syed Farid Alatas argues that Ibn Khaldun's ideas remain relevant for understanding contemporary social and political dynamics, particularly through the concept of *asabiyyah* as a factor influencing the formation and maintenance of power.<sup>6</sup>

Academics have conducted extensive research on Islamic leadership. Mas'adah examined Ibn Khaldun's concept of leadership based on the theory of *asabiyyah* in the *Muqaddimah* and found that social solidarity is a key factor in the continuity of power.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, Rafiqul Islam and Muien et al. examine Al-Mawardi's concept of imamah, which emphasizes the legitimacy, justice, and responsibility of leaders in safeguarding the welfare of the community.<sup>8</sup> A comparative study of these two figures has been conducted by Andrian; however, his analysis remains focused on conceptual aspects and has not yet comprehensively linked them to the dynamics of modern leadership. Therefore, this study aims to fill that gap by conducting a comparative analysis of Al-Mawardi's concept of imamah and Ibn Khaldun's theory of *asabiyyah*, as well as their

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<sup>3</sup> Ibn Khaldun (Abd al-Rahman ibn Khaldun), *al-Muqaddimah* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 2000), h. 190.

<sup>4</sup> Antony Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), h. 90-95.

<sup>5</sup> Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), h. 12-15.

<sup>6</sup> Syed Farid Alatas, "The Contemporary Significance of Ibn Khaldun for Decolonial Sociology: Methodological and Theoretical Dimensions," *Tajseer Journal* 2, no. 1 (2020): 75-98. <https://doi.org/10.29117/tis.2020.0025>

<sup>7</sup> Mas'adah, Isnaini. "Kepemimpinan dalam Pandangan Filsuf Arab (Studi Kitab *Muqaddimah* Karya Ibnu Khaldun)." *Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Ushuluddin* 20, no. 2 (2021): 180-195. <https://jurnal.uin-antasari.ac.id/index.php/ushuluddin/article/view/5441>

<sup>8</sup> Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, "Al-Mawardi's Paradigmatic Theory of Politics: Imamah or Khilafah in Theory & Practice," *Journal of Creative Writing* 7, no. 1 (2023): 12, <https://jocw.ittc.edu.bd/index.php/jocw/article/view/69> dan Muien, Ahmad, S. M. Efaprast, dan Arianto. "Al-Mawardi's Thoughts and Its Relevance to Contemporary Political Systems." *Tapis: Jurnal Aspirasi Politik Islam* 21, no. 1 (2025). <https://ejournal.radenintan.ac.id/index.php/TAPIS/article/view/28980>

relevance to contemporary leadership issues. However, in today's society, the issue of leadership has become increasingly complex. Various phenomena—such as declining public trust in leaders, a lack of transparency, and the emergence of social conflicts that are not resolved fairly—indicate that leadership practices do not yet fully reflect ideal values. In many cases, leadership tends to be viewed as a tool of power rather than a means of serving the public. This highlights a gap between the ideal concept of leadership and the reality on the ground.

Amid these conditions, the need for a leadership model that is not only conceptually ideal but also relevant to the dynamics of modern society has become increasingly urgent. The leadership needed today is one capable of integrating moral values with an understanding of social realities. In other words, leadership must not only be normative but also contextual and adaptive to the changing times. This study focuses on a comparative analysis of leadership concepts in classical Islamic political thought through an examination of the works of al-Mawardi and Ibn Khaldun. More specifically, this study seeks to examine the concept of *imamah* according to al-Mawardi as presented in the book *al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah* and the concept of *asabiyyah* according to Ibn Khaldun as explained in the book *al-Muqaddimah*.

In addition, this study also aims to analyze the similarities and differences in the two thinkers' views on the concept of leadership, while examining the relevance of the ideas they propose in addressing various leadership dynamics and challenges in a modern context. Thus, this study is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the contributions of al-Mawardi and Ibn Khaldun's thought to the development of leadership theory, particularly from the perspective of contemporary Islamic politics.

## METODE PENELITIAN

This study is a (*library research*) study using a qualitative-descriptive approach. This approach was chosen because the study focuses on analyzing the concept of Islamic leadership according to two major figures in classical Islamic political thought, namely Abu al-Hasan al-Mawardi and Ibn Khaldun, through an examination of their major works and other supporting literature.

The data sources in this study are divided into two categories: primary sources and secondary sources. The primary sources consist of Abu al-Hasan al-Mawardi's major work, *al-Ahkam al-Sulthaniyyah wa al-Wilayat al-Diniyyah*, and Ibn Khaldun's work, *al-Muqaddimah*, which serve as the primary references for understanding the concepts of *imamah* and *asabiyyah*. Secondary sources were drawn from various relevant literature, including both books and scholarly journals, such as *The History of*

Islamic Political Thought by Antony Black, Medieval Islamic Political Thought by Patricia Crone, A History of Islamic Societies by Ira M. Lapidus, as well as several scholarly journals discussing Islamic leadership and classical Islamic political theory.

Data collection was conducted through a documentary study, which involved reading, identifying, classifying, and recording various pieces of information related to the research topic from predetermined sources. The data obtained was then analyzed using a descriptive-qualitative method with a comparative approach, which involved comparing the ideas of al-Mawardi and Ibn Khaldun to identify similarities, differences, and the relevance of their ideas in the context of modern society.

To ensure the validity of the data, this study employs source triangulation, which involves comparing data from various primary and secondary sources to ensure the consistency, validity, and objectivity of the analysis results. Using this method, it is hoped that the study will produce a systematic, in-depth, and academically accountable analysis. Data analysis was conducted qualitatively using a descriptive-comparative approach. The collected data was then reduced and classified based on themes related to al-Mawardi's concept of imamah and Ibn Khaldun's concept of *asabiyyah*. Subsequently, the data was analyzed through an interpretive process to identify similarities, differences, and the characteristics of each school of thought. The final stage involved a comparative analysis to identify the relevance of these two concepts to the dynamics of modern leadership. To ensure data validity, this study employed source triangulation by comparing various primary and secondary references related to the research theme.

## DISCUSSION

### Leadership According to Imam Al-Mawardi

Abu al-Hasan al-Mawardi's thought in *al-Ahkam al-Sulthaniyyah* represents one of the most systematic formulations in the tradition of classical Islamic political thought. This work not only presents an institutional description of the structure of Islamic government but also establishes a normative framework that positions power as a trust that must be exercised in accordance with the principles of sharia. In al-Mawardi's view, power is not merely a political instrument but a religious mechanism aimed at maintaining a balance between religion and the social life of the community.<sup>9</sup>

Within this framework, the concept of *imamah* becomes the center of the entire Islamic political system. Al-Mawardi defines imamah as an

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<sup>9</sup> Al-Mawardi, *Ahkam al-Sulthaniyyah*, h. 5.

institution that serves to replace prophethood in safeguarding the religion (*hirasah al-din*) and governing worldly affairs (*siyasa al-dunya*). Thus, leadership in Islam has a dual dimension: spiritual and administrative. This indicates that in the classical Islamic political tradition, there is no separation between religion and the state; rather, the two are integrated into a single systemic unity.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, al-Mawardi asserts that the existence of a leader is a fundamental necessity in social life. Without legitimate authority, society would descend into a state of anarchy, where the law cannot be enforced and conflicts cannot be resolved fairly. Therefore, the appointment of a leader is categorized as a collective obligation (*fard kifayah*) that is grounded in both Sharia and rational principles. In this regard, al-Mawardi successfully integrates normative and rational arguments in explaining the urgency of leadership.<sup>11</sup>

When compared to Ibn Khaldun's thought, there is a fairly significant difference in approach. Al-Mawardi employs a normative-sharia approach that emphasizes the ideal nature of the system of government, while Ibn Khaldun employs an empirical-sociological approach that focuses on social and historical dynamics. Nevertheless, both share a common ground in emphasizing the importance of leadership as the primary instrument for maintaining stability and the common good of society.<sup>12</sup>

### 1. Leadership Structures and Social Legitimacy

In al-Mawardi's view, the existence of a leader is an absolute prerequisite for social order. Without legitimate authority, society would experience legal disorientation and the loss of mechanisms for fair conflict resolution.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, the appointment of leaders must be carried out through procedures that are legitimate and accountable both morally and socially.

This mechanism is implemented through the institution of *ahl al-hall wa al-'aqd*, a group possessing the intellectual competence, moral integrity, and social standing necessary to select and appoint leaders.<sup>14</sup> This concept suggests that legitimacy in classical Islam is not individualistic in nature, but is based on collective representation that possesses scholarly and moral authority.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Al-Mawardi, *Ahkam al-Sulthaniyyah*, h. 6.

<sup>11</sup> Al-Mawardi, *Ahkam al-Sulthaniyyah*, h. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Al-Mawardi, *Ahkam al-Sulthaniyyah*, h. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Al-Mawardi, *Ahkam al-Sulthaniyyah*, h. 5.

<sup>14</sup> Al-Mawardi, *Ahkam al-Sulthaniyyah*, h. 8-9.

<sup>15</sup> Patricia Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), h. 238-240.

In a broader theoretical context, this mechanism illustrates a balance between formal authority and social acceptance. A leader must not only be legally legitimate but also accepted by society based on personal qualities and leadership capacity. This demonstrates that legitimacy in al-Mawardi's thought has two dimensions: structural legitimacy and moral legitimacy.

When analyzed conceptually, this idea also contains the early elements of social contract theory within the Islamic tradition, in which power is established through a collective agreement based on the principles of justice, responsibility, and the public good. Thus, legitimacy derives not only from formal authority but also from value-based social recognition.

## 2. The Dynamics and Cycles of Power

Al-Mawardi emphasized that political stability is not determined solely by the structural power of the state, but depends heavily on the moral character and personal integrity of its leaders. Within the normative framework he established, ideal leadership is grounded in the principles of justice (*al-'adl*), trustworthiness, and a commitment to the consistent application of Islamic law.<sup>16</sup> Thus, power serves not only as an administrative tool but also as a moral instrument for bringing about a just and civilized social order.

Furthermore, al-Mawardi observed that moral misconduct among leaders has systemic implications for political stability. When leaders commit injustices, engage in corruption, or abuse their authority, the legitimacy of their power gradually erodes.<sup>17</sup> This situation has led to a decline in public trust, an increased potential for social conflict, and a weakening of the government's effectiveness.

From this perspective, the dynamics of power are not understood as an inevitable historical cycle, but rather as a consequence of the ethical quality of leadership. This suggests that there is room for improvement through moral and institutional reform. In other words, political stability can be maintained as long as ethical values remain the primary foundation of governance.

In addition, al-Mawardi also emphasized the importance of mechanisms for overseeing leaders as part of efforts to maintain stability. This oversight is carried out not only through formal structures but also through social control exercised by the community. Thus, the dynamics of leadership are interactive and involve community participation in maintaining a just political order.

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<sup>16</sup> Al-Mawardi, *Ahkam al-Sulthaniyyah*, h. 8-15.

<sup>17</sup> Al-Mawardi, *Ahkam al-Sulthaniyyah*, h. 16-17.

### 3. Legitimacy and Stability of Leadership

In al-Mawardi's thought, the legitimacy of leadership is the primary foundation for the continuity of power. This legitimacy is not merely formal in nature – through the oath of allegiance – but also has a substantive dimension related to justice, integrity, and the moral capacity of the leader.<sup>18</sup> In this context, the Baiat serves as a symbol of a social contract that binds the relationship between the leader and the community. However, formal legitimacy alone is not enough to guarantee political stability. Without the support of moral legitimacy, power will be fragile and prone to losing public trust.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, a leader must be able to maintain a balance between formal authority and moral integrity in order to continue to enjoy sustained social support.

Furthermore, al-Mawardi emphasized that justice is a key element in maintaining legitimacy. Justice is understood not only as a normative concept, but also as a concrete practice in governance, such as the fair enforcement of the law and the proportional distribution of power.<sup>20</sup> When justice is upheld, legitimacy is strengthened and political stability is maintained. Conversely, an imbalance between formal legitimacy and the exercise of power will lead to a legitimacy crisis. This is characterized by rising public dissatisfaction, a decline in public trust, and the potential for social conflict. In the long term, these conditions can lead to political instability and even the collapse of the government. Thus, legitimacy in al-Mawardi's thought is multidimensional, encompassing formal, moral, and social aspects. Political stability can only be achieved if these three dimensions function harmoniously and support one another.

### 4. The Relevance of Al-Mawardi's Thought in Modern Analysis

In the modern context, Abu al-Hasan al-Mawardi's ideas remain highly relevant, particularly in the discourse on good governance.<sup>21</sup> The fundamental principles he formulated – such as justice (*al-'adl*), trustworthiness, responsibility, and accountability – are universal values that also form the foundation of contemporary systems of government.<sup>22</sup> This indicates that al-Mawardi's thought is not only

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<sup>18</sup> Al-Mawardi, *Ahkam al-Sulthaniyyah*, h. 9-10.

<sup>19</sup> Al-Mawardi, *Ahkam al-Sulthaniyyah*, h. 11-12.

<sup>20</sup> Al-Mawardi, *Ahkam al-Sulthaniyyah*, h. 12-13.

<sup>21</sup> Puja Rahmah, "Konsep Keadilan Sosial dalam Pemikiran Al-Mawardi dan Relevansinya bagi Tata Kelola Pemerintahan Islam," *IBTIKAR* 2, no. 1 (2025): h. 42-51. <https://ejournal.iaimuslimaceh.ac.id/IBTIKAR/article/view/248/312>

<sup>22</sup> Al-Mawardi, *Ahkam al-Sulthaniyyah*, h. 14-15.

normative in the classical context but also highly adaptable in addressing the challenges of political modernity.

Furthermore, al-Mawardi's concept of leadership emphasizes that power must be exercised as a public trust, not as a means of domination or for personal gain. In modern governance, this principle is reflected in the demands for transparency and public accountability, whereby leaders are required to be accountable to the public for every policy they implement. Thus, there is a continuity between the concept of *amanah* in al-Mawardi's thought and the principle of public accountability in modern political theory.<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore, the concept of *baiat*, which in classical tradition served as a means of political legitimization, can be likened to modern democratic mechanisms, particularly through general elections.<sup>24</sup> In this context, the oath of allegiance can be understood as a form of social contract between the leader and the people. However, al-Mawardi emphasizes that legitimacy does not end with procedural aspects alone, but must be accompanied by the implementation of the values of justice and accountability in the exercise of power.<sup>25</sup> This serves as an implicit critique of the modern democratic system, which sometimes emphasizes procedural aspects alone without balancing them with the moral quality of leadership.

From a broader perspective, al-Mawardi's thought is also relevant in explaining the importance of the rule of law (*rule of law*) in a system of government. Al-Mawardi emphasized that leaders must be subject to the principles of Sharia as the supreme source of law. In a modern context, this principle can be likened to the concept of the rule of law, in which power is limited by the constitution and applicable laws. Thus, no power is absolute, as all government actions must be accountable both legally and morally.<sup>26</sup>

Furthermore, al-Mawardi's thought is also relevant to the issue of public participation. Although in the classical context participation was represented by *ahl al-hall wa al-'aqd*, this concept reflects a recognition of the importance of involving competent segments of society in the political process. In modern systems, this can be linked to the roles of legislative bodies, civil society, and various other representative institutions that serve as checks on executive power.

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<sup>23</sup>Risalatul Inayah dan Lina Marlina Susana, "Rekonstruksi Konsep Amanah Al-Mawardi sebagai Dasar Reformasi Tata Kelola Ekonomi Publik Indonesia," *Jurnal Akademik Ekonomi dan Manajemen* 3, no. 1 (2025): h. 45-47. <https://doi.org/10.61722/jaem.v3i1.8656>

<sup>24</sup> John L. Esposito dan John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), h. 18-22.

<sup>25</sup> Al-Mawardi, *Ahkam al-Sulthaniyyah*, h. 9-10.

<sup>26</sup> Al-Mawardi, *Ahkam al-Sulthaniyyah*, h. 11-12.

These principles are also consistent with global governance standards developed by the United Nations, such as transparency, participation, accountability, effectiveness, and the rule of law.<sup>27</sup> This consistency demonstrates that, although it emerged in a medieval context, al-Mawardi's thought has a universal dimension that can be applied to various modern political systems.

However, it is also important to note that there are contextual differences between al-Mawardi's thought and modern political systems. Al-Mawardi formulated his theory within the framework of an Islamic state based on Sharia, whereas modern systems tend to be secular and pluralistic. Therefore, the relevance of his ideas cannot be adopted literally; rather, a contextual reinterpretation is necessary to align them with contemporary sociopolitical realities.

Thus, al-Mawardi's thought not only holds historical value as part of the Islamic intellectual tradition but also makes an important theoretical contribution to understanding the fundamental principles of good governance. Its relevance lies in its ability to integrate moral, legal, and political dimensions into a single comprehensive framework, thereby remaining an important reference in political studies, both classical and modern. Although al-Mawardi's concept of *imamah* provides a strong normative foundation for the exercise of Islamic leadership, this thought emerged within the political context of the Abbasid Dynasty, which had characteristics distinct from modern political systems. Therefore, certain aspects of the concept of *imamah* require reinterpretation to remain relevant in a democratic, pluralistic society that upholds public participation in the political process.

### Leadership According to Ibn Khaldun

Ibn Khaldun's ideas in *al-Muqaddimah* represent one of the most fundamental contributions to the study of classical political sociology. Unlike normative approaches, which emphasize how leadership should be exercised, Ibn Khaldun employs an empirical-historical approach that seeks to explain how leadership is formed, develops, and declines in social reality.<sup>28</sup>

Within his theoretical framework, Ibn Khaldun begins with the assumption that humans are social beings (*al-insan madaniyyun bi al-tab'*) who cannot live as individuals without the help of others. This need for cooperation gives rise to social organizations, which in turn require authority to regulate and maintain order in communal life. Therefore,

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<sup>27</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Good Governance and Sustainable Development* (New York: United Nations Publications, 1997), h. 3-5.

<sup>28</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, h. 190-191.

political power emerges as a functional necessity that is inseparable from human social life.<sup>29</sup>

However, Ibn Khaldun rejected the view that the legitimacy of power stems solely from normative or religious aspects. Ibn Khaldun asserted that power is, in essence, rooted in tangible social forces, particularly the solidarity of a group known as *asabiyyah*.<sup>30</sup> Thus, leadership, from Ibn Khaldun's perspective, is understood not merely as a formal institution, but as a social phenomenon that is strongly influenced by group dynamics.

### 1. *Asabiyyah as a Structure of Social Power*

The concept of *asabiyyah* is at the core of Ibn Khaldun's theory of leadership. *Asabiyyah* can be understood as social solidarity formed through kinship ties, collective experiences, and shared interests that unite a group.<sup>31</sup> This solidarity is the key factor that enables a group to act collectively and gain political power.<sup>32</sup> Ibn Khaldun explains that groups with strong *asabiyyah* tend to dominate other groups and build power. In the early stages, these groups typically originate from simple (*Bedouin*) societies characterized by high solidarity, courage, and a strong collective spirit. Harsh living conditions actually strengthen their social cohesion, enabling them to become effective political forces.<sup>33</sup>

However, the power of *asabiyyah* is not permanent. Once a group has attained power and entered a more stable phase of life, it tends to undergo a shift in lifestyle toward luxury. This shift gradually weakens internal solidarity, thereby diminishing the collective strength that previously formed the basis of its power.<sup>34</sup> As a result, the group becomes vulnerable to internal conflict and loses its ability to maintain power. In this situation, another group with stronger *asabiyyah* will emerge and take their place. Thus, *asabiyyah* is not only a factor in the formation of power but also a determinant of the continuity of leadership.

### 2. The Dynamics and Cycles of Power

One of Ibn Khaldun's most important contributions is his theory of the cycle of power. He argued that every power structure or dynasty

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<sup>29</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, h. 192-193.

<sup>30</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, h. 193-195.

<sup>31</sup> Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Ibn Khaldun: An Essay in Reinterpretation* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003), h. 45-47.

<sup>32</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, h. 196-198.

<sup>33</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, h. 199-201.

<sup>34</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, h. 202-203.

follows a cyclical pattern of development that can be observed throughout the history of various civilizations.<sup>35</sup> The first stage is the formation phase, during which power emerges from groups with strong *asabiyyah*. This stage is characterized by a strong collective spirit and the ability to subdue other groups. The second stage is consolidation, during which leaders begin to establish governmental structures and strengthen their political authority.<sup>36</sup>

The third stage is stability, the phase in which power reaches its peak. At this stage, state institutions are well-established and the system of government functions effectively. However, this stability does not last forever. The next stage is the phase of opulence, in which the ruling elite begins to enjoy an excessively comfortable lifestyle.<sup>37</sup> This opulence led to a decline in discipline and social solidarity, which was then followed by a period of decline. During this phase, internal conflicts intensified, the effectiveness of the government declined, and public trust began to wane.<sup>38</sup> Ultimately, power will collapse and be replaced by a new group with stronger *asabiyyah*, and the cycle will repeat itself.<sup>39</sup>

This theory suggests that power is not static, but rather dynamic and heavily influenced by the surrounding social conditions. Thus, leadership is determined not only by individuals, but also by the collective social forces that underpin it.

### 3. Legitimacy and Stability of Leadership

From Ibn Khaldun's perspective, the legitimacy of leadership cannot be understood merely as a formal, symbolic construct. True legitimacy stems from tangible social support, particularly from groups characterized by strong solidarity (*asabiyyah*).<sup>40</sup> A leader who relies solely on formal legitimacy without social support will have fragile power. Conversely, a leader backed by strong group solidarity will be able to maintain political stability over a longer period of time.<sup>41</sup>

Furthermore, legitimacy, in Ibn Khaldun's view, is dynamic. Legitimacy must be continually maintained through a reciprocal relationship between leaders and the people. When leaders fail to meet the people's expectations—such as in matters of justice and welfare—that legitimacy will gradually weaken.<sup>42</sup> The relationship between

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<sup>35</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, h. 205-207.

<sup>36</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, h. 208-210.

<sup>37</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, h. 211-213.

<sup>38</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, h. 214-216.

<sup>39</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, h. 217-219.

<sup>40</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, h. 220-222.

<sup>41</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, h. 223-224.

<sup>42</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, h. 225-227.

leaders and the public is reciprocal. Leaders need the public's support to maintain their power, while the public needs leadership that can ensure social order. When this balance is disrupted, political stability is threatened, opening the door to a change in power.<sup>43</sup> Thus, from Ibn Khaldun's perspective, the stability of leadership depends not only on formal structures, but also on the quality of the social relationships that underpin it.

#### 4. The Relevance of Ibn Khaldun's Theory in Modern Analysis

Ibn Khaldun's ideas in his monumental work, *al-Muqaddimah*, remain highly relevant to the analysis of modern political dynamics. This is primarily due to his empirical-historical approach, which emphasizes not only how power should be exercised, but also how it actually functions in social reality.<sup>44</sup> This approach makes Ibn Khaldun's theory more flexible and applicable to interpreting complex contemporary political phenomena.

In the modern context, the concept of *asabiyyah* can be understood as a form of social solidarity that manifests itself in various new forms,<sup>45</sup> such as nationalism, ethnic identity, political ideology, and party loyalty. In a democratic system, for example, the success of a political group is determined not only by formal mechanisms such as general elections, but also by the strength of its internal cohesion and its ability to mobilize the masses. This phenomenon shows that *asabiyyah* remains a key factor in determining a group's political success.<sup>46</sup>

Furthermore, this concept can also be linked to developments in modern political sociology, particularly in the theories of social identity and political mobilization. In many cases, groups with strong solidarity are better able to maintain their existence and expand their influence within power structures. This reinforces Ibn Khaldun's thesis that power derives not only from formal legitimacy but also from tangible social power within society.

Furthermore, Ibn Khaldun's theory of the cycle of power provides a highly relevant analytical framework for understanding the rise and fall of modern political regimes. Many countries exhibit patterns similar to those described in *al-Muqaddimah*, beginning with a phase of struggle and consolidation, then reaching stability, and finally

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<sup>43</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, h. 228-230.

<sup>44</sup> Alatas, "The Contemporary Significance" h. 80-82.

<sup>45</sup> Peter C. Little, *Ibn Khaldun and World History: A Reassessment* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). h. 73-75.

<sup>46</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, h. 234-236.

experiencing decline due to weakening social solidarity and increasing luxury among the ruling elite.<sup>47</sup> In this context, regression is often characterized by a decline in the effectiveness of government, rising corruption, and a loss of public trust in state institutions.

In the era of globalization, the relevance of Ibn Khaldun's theory has expanded with the emergence of non-state actors such as international organizations, digital communities, and global social networks. Social solidarity is no longer limited to kinship or geographical ties, but can be formed through shared ideas, values, and interests. This phenomenon indicates that *asabiyyah* has undergone a transformation in form but continues to retain its fundamental function as a source of social and political power.<sup>48</sup>

Furthermore, Ibn Khaldun's theory can also be used to analyze the phenomenon of populism in modern politics. Many populist leaders build their legitimacy through the mobilization of collective identity and the formation of strong group solidarity. This strategy essentially reflects the concept of *asabiyyah* in a more contemporary form. However, as Ibn Khaldun explained, a government that fails to maintain a balance between social solidarity and good governance will gradually decline.

In addition, Ibn Khaldun also emphasized the importance of the reciprocal relationship between leaders and society. In a modern context, this can be seen in the importance of accountability, transparency, and justice in government. When leaders fail to meet the expectations of the people, the legitimacy of their power weakens, potentially leading to political instability. Thus, political stability depends not only on structural power but also on the quality of the social relationship between leaders and the people.

Thus, Ibn Khaldun's thought not only holds historical value but also offers a comprehensive and relevant analytical framework for understanding modern political dynamics. He asserts that power is the result of a complex interplay between social, cultural, and political factors. Without the support of strong social solidarity and sustained legitimacy, any form of power will ultimately decline, following the cyclical pattern he has described.

The concept of *asabiyyah* proposed by Ibn Khaldun has the advantage of being able to explain the dynamics of power empirically, based on the social realities within society. However, this theory tends to prioritize group solidarity as the primary factor in the formation of power, so that the normative, moral, and ethical aspects of leadership

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<sup>47</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, h. 237-239.

<sup>48</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, h. 240-242.

do not receive the same level of attention as they do in al-Mawardi's thought.

### Similarities and Differences

When examined more comprehensively within the framework of Islamic intellectual history, the thought of Abu al-Hasan al-Mawardi and Ibn Khaldun not only reveals simple similarities and differences but also reflects two distinct epistemological approaches to understanding the phenomenon of leadership. Al-Mawardi can be placed within a normative-theological tradition that seeks to formulate how leadership should be exercised based on the principles of sharia, whereas Ibn Khaldun belongs to an empirical-sociological tradition that explains how leadership is formed and develops within historical reality. These two approaches are not only methodologically distinct but also form an important intellectual dialectic in the development of classical Islamic political theory.<sup>49</sup>

Table 1. A Comparison of the Thought of Al-Mawardi and Ibn Khaldun

No	Aspek	Al-Mawardi	Ibn Khaldun
1	Approach	Normative	Empiris
2	Key Concepts	Imamah	<i>Asabiyyah</i>
3	Basis of Legitimacy	Baiat	<i>Asabiyyah</i>
4	Study Focus	Ideal Leadership	Power Dynamics
5	Objective	Protecting religion and the state	Maintaining social stability
6	Characteristics of the Theory	Prescriptive	Descriptive

Based on Table 1, it is evident that al-Mawardi and Ibn Khaldun share a common view regarding the importance of leadership as a fundamental need of society. However, the two differ in their approaches, sources of legitimacy, and analytical focus. Al-Mawardi places greater emphasis on the normative and ideal aspects of how leadership should be exercised, whereas Ibn Khaldun focuses more on social realities and the factors that influence the formation and development of power.

In terms of similarities, both figures agree that leadership is a fundamental (*daruriyyah*) necessity in the lives of human beings as social

<sup>49</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), h. 28-30.

creatures. Without legitimate authority, society would descend into a state of social disorganization, where norms cannot be upheld and conflicts cannot be resolved fairly. In al-Mawardi's view, *imamah* serves as a substitute for prophethood in safeguarding religion and governing worldly affairs,<sup>50</sup> Thus, the existence of leaders is an integral part of the continuity of the social and religious order. Meanwhile, Ibn Khaldun explains that human beings are by nature social creatures (*al-insan madaniyyun bi al-tab'*) who require cooperation and coordination, making the existence of authority a necessity for maintaining social order.<sup>51</sup> Thus, both figures agree that leadership has a functional dimension that is inseparable from human collective life.

In addition, another similarity lies in the emphasis on the importance of legitimacy as the foundation for the continuity of power. Al-Mawardi emphasizes formal legitimacy obtained through the *bai'ah*, as well as the role of *ahl al-hall wa al-'aqd* as representatives of the community's authority,<sup>52</sup> which shows that power cannot exist without collective recognition. On the other hand, Ibn Khaldun emphasizes social legitimacy derived from the strength of group solidarity (*asabiyyah*), which enables a group to acquire and maintain power.<sup>53</sup> Although there are differences in the forms of legitimacy, both agree that power lacking a basis of legitimacy will suffer from structural weaknesses and is at risk of collapse.<sup>54</sup> However, the fundamental difference between the two figures lies in their methodological approaches and analytical orientations. Al-Mawardi employs a normative-theological approach that focuses on how leadership should be exercised (*das sollen*). Within this framework, leadership is viewed as a religious institution that must be subject to moral principles such as justice, *trustworthiness*, and responsibility.<sup>55</sup> This approach yields a prescriptive and idealistic theory that serves as a normative guide for leadership practice.

In contrast, Ibn Khaldun adopted an empirical-historical approach that focused on social reality (*das sein*). He did not seek to formulate an ideal concept of leadership, but rather to explain how power is formed, develops, and declines in historical reality.<sup>56</sup> In this regard, Ibn Khaldun identifies social factors, such as *asabiyyah*, as key elements in understanding the dynamics of power.

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<sup>50</sup> Al-Mawardi, *Al-Ahkam al-Sulthaniyyah*, h. 5-6.

<sup>51</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, h. 97-98.

<sup>52</sup> Al-Mawardi, *Al-Ahkam al-Sulthaniyyah*, h. 78.

<sup>53</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, h. 105-107.

<sup>54</sup> Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), h. 145-147.

<sup>55</sup> Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), h. 12-15..

<sup>56</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, h. 110-112.

Another difference is evident in the way the two figures understand political stability. Al-Mawardi views stability as the result of the application of moral values and just laws in leadership,<sup>57</sup> Meanwhile, Ibn Khaldun viewed stability as a temporary phase in the cycle of power that would ultimately decline due to the weakening of social solidarity.<sup>58</sup>

Furthermore, upon critical analysis, this difference actually reveals a division of roles between normative and empirical theories in understanding leadership. Al-Mawardi provides ideal standards that serve as a moral compass, while Ibn Khaldun offers realistic explanations that help us understand the dynamics of power in a factual manner. Thus, these two schools of thought are not contradictory but rather complementary in building a holistic and comprehensive understanding of leadership.<sup>59</sup>

### **Analisis Komparatif**

Upon closer examination, the thought of al-Mawardi and Ibn Khaldun can be understood as two distinct layers of analysis in understanding the phenomenon of leadership: the normative layer and the empirical layer. Al-Mawardi operates in the normative realm, emphasizing how power should be exercised in accordance with ethical and sharia principles, while Ibn Khaldun operates in the empirical realm, explaining how power functions within a complex and dynamic social reality.

From al-Mawardi's perspective, leadership is an *amanah* with strong moral and religious dimensions. Power is understood not only as a tool for governing society, but also as a responsibility for which one must be morally accountable. Therefore, a leader must possess qualities such as justice, integrity, and the ability to safeguard the common good.<sup>60</sup> This approach places leadership within a strict ethical framework, thereby preventing the abuse of power.

Conversely, Ibn Khaldun points out that, in practice, power does not always operate in accordance with ideal principles. He emphasizes that social factors such as group solidarity, conflict, economic interests, and changes in lifestyle have a significant influence on the direction of power.<sup>61</sup> In his view, power is the result of a complex interplay among various social forces that are often dynamic and unstable.

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<sup>57</sup> Al-Mawardi, *Al-Ahkam al-Sulthaniyyah*, h. 13-15.

<sup>58</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, h. 120-122.

<sup>59</sup> Wael B. Hallaq, *The Impossible State* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), h. 45-48.

<sup>60</sup> Al-Mawardi, *Ahkam al-Sulthaniyyah*, h. 5-7.

<sup>61</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, h. 150.

If these two approaches are integrated, a more comprehensive model of leadership will emerge—one that is capable of combining moral values with an understanding of social realities.<sup>62</sup> This model serves not only as a normative guideline but also as an analytical tool for understanding the dynamics of power.

This integrative approach is also consistent with Max Weber's modern theory of legitimacy, which classifies legitimacy into several forms, such as traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal legitimacy.<sup>63</sup> In this context, al-Mawardi's thought can be linked to normative legitimacy, while Ibn Khaldun's thought relates to social legitimacy.

Furthermore, leadership failure in the modern context is often caused by an imbalance between normative and empirical aspects. Many leaders possess formal legitimacy through legal procedures but lose social support because they are unable to meet public expectations.<sup>64</sup> Conversely, there are also leaders who have strong social support but lack formal legitimacy.

Thus, this comparative analysis shows that the ideas of al-Mawardi and Ibn Khaldun are highly relevant to understanding the complexities of modern leadership. Both can serve as a foundation for developing a more holistic theory of leadership—one that is not only value-oriented but also realistic and contextual.<sup>65</sup> The integration of the ideas of al-Mawardi and Ibn Khaldun demonstrates that the success of leadership is determined not only by normative legitimacy derived from moral and legal values, but also by social legitimacy stemming from public support. Thus, effective leadership requires a balance between ethical and social aspects.

### Contemporary Relevance

In the contemporary context, leadership faces increasingly complex challenges as globalization, information technology, and the public's growing political awareness continue to evolve. These changes call for a leadership model that is not only administratively effective but also possesses strong moral and social legitimacy.<sup>66</sup> Al-Mawardi's ideas remain relevant in laying the foundations of leadership ethics. Principles such as justice, *trustworthiness*, and responsibility are of paramount importance in addressing the moral crises that frequently arise in modern governance, such as corruption and the abuse of power.<sup>67</sup> In this context, al-Mawardi

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<sup>62</sup> John L. Esposito, *Islam and Politics* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998), h. 34–37.

<sup>63</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), h. 212–215.

<sup>64</sup> Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Islam and the Challenge of Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), h. 18–22.

<sup>65</sup> Antony Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought*, h. 90–92.

<sup>66</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *Political Order and Political Decay* (2014), h. 23–25.

<sup>67</sup> Al-Mawardi, *Al-Ahkam al-Sulthaniyyah*, h. 39–40.

provides a normative framework that can serve as a guide for maintaining the integrity of leadership.

On the other hand, Ibn Khaldun's ideas provide a highly relevant analytical framework for understanding modern political dynamics. The concept of *asabiyyah* can be used to explain the phenomena of identity politics, group loyalty, and mass mobilization in democratic systems.<sup>68</sup> In many cases, the success of a political group is determined not only by formal procedures, but also by the strength of its social solidarity.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, Ibn Khaldun's theory of the cycle of power is also highly relevant in explaining the rise and fall of modern political regimes. Many countries follow a similar pattern, namely phases of consolidation, stability, and decline resulting from weakening social solidarity and increasing internal conflict.<sup>70</sup>

Furthermore, the principles put forward by these two figures are also consistent with the concept of good governance, which emphasizes transparency, accountability, and public participation.<sup>71</sup> This demonstrates that classical Islamic thought has universal relevance that can be applied to modern political systems. Contemporary political phenomena show that the success of leadership is determined not only by formal procedures, but also by a leader's ability to build public trust and maintain social cohesion. In this context, al-Mawardi's concept of *imamah* can serve as an ethical foundation for governance with integrity, while Ibn Khaldun's concept of *asabiyyah* can be used to understand the dynamics of social support, identity politics, and mass mobilization in modern democratic systems.

In the Indonesian context, this relevance can be seen in the need for leadership that is not only procedurally legitimate through general elections but also possesses moral integrity and the ability to maintain social stability.<sup>72</sup> Thus, the integration of the ideas of al-Mawardi and Ibn Khaldun can serve as a theoretical foundation for developing a modern leadership model that is values-oriented, grounded in social reality, and adaptable to the changing times.<sup>73</sup> The novelty of this study lies in its attempt to integrate al-Mawardi's concept of *imamah* and Ibn Khaldun's concept of *asabiyyah* into a single framework for analyzing Islamic leadership. Unlike previous studies, which generally discuss these two concepts separately, this study demonstrates that the moral legitimacy

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<sup>68</sup> Asef Bayat, *Making Islam Democratic* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), h. 10-13.

<sup>69</sup> Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), h. 21-24.

<sup>70</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, h. 121-123.

<sup>71</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Governance for Sustainable Human Development* (New York: UNDP, 1997), h. 2-5.

<sup>72</sup> Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), h. 65-67

<sup>73</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, h. 220-221.

proposed by al-Mawardi and the social legitimacy described by Ibn Khaldun can complement one another in constructing an effective leadership model. Thus, this study offers a more comprehensive perspective on understanding Islamic leadership in the context of modern society.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this discussion, the leadership theories of Abu al-Hasan al-Mawardi and Ibn Khaldun reveal two distinct yet complementary approaches to understanding the concept of power in Islam. Al-Mawardi views leadership as a normative-theological institution aimed at safeguarding religion and regulating worldly life through the principles of justice, *amanah*, and formal legitimacy obtained through the mechanism of the bai'ah. Meanwhile, Ibn Khaldun views leadership as a dynamic social phenomenon, in which power is formed and developed based on the strength of group solidarity (*asabiyyah*) and undergoes cycles of rise and fall in accordance with the social conditions of the community.

This difference indicates a shift from an ideal-normative approach to an empirical-sociological approach in understanding leadership. While al-Mawardi discusses how leadership should be exercised in accordance with Sharia values, Ibn Khaldun explains how leadership actually unfolds in historical reality. Nevertheless, both share a common ground in emphasizing the importance of legitimacy and stability as the primary foundations for the continuity of power.

This study shows that effective leadership requires not only normative legitimacy derived from moral and legal values, but also social legitimacy stemming from public support. Therefore, the integration of al-Mawardi's concept of *imamah* and Ibn Khaldun's concept of *asabiyyah* can serve as a more comprehensive model of Islamic leadership in addressing contemporary social and political challenges. This model emphasizes the importance of balancing ethical dimensions, legal legitimacy, and social realities in realizing leadership that is just, stable, and oriented toward the public good.

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