ISLAMIC ORTHODOXY OR REALPOLITIK? AL-GHAZĀLI’S VIEWS ON GOVERNMENT

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I INTRODUCTION

It may be argued that the subject of al-Ghazālī’s political theory has been aired sufficiently and that there is little point in reworking such familiar material. The aims of this article will be to examine certain facets of this topic which have perhaps not yet been studied with sufficient attention and to stimulate further debate on this area of al-Ghazālī’s work. In particular, an attempt will be made, through translation and analysis of crucial passages of al-Ghazālī’s major works on Islamic government, to consider the thorny question of the consistency of his views and the extent to which they were modified during his lifetime by particular historical circumstances. Oddly enough, this has not yet been done in the requisite detail, largely because the scholars who have devoted themselves to the study of al-Ghazālī have had their point of departure in theology and philosophy rather than in political history.

A few words of background will serve to locate the discussion which follows in its appropriate intellectual context. According to the classical theory of Islamic law, the only legitimate political authority in Islam is that of the caliphate. In reality, however, the situation of the Sunni ‘Abbāsid caliphate by the time of Būyid hegemony in the fourth/tenth century had sunk to one of total dependence on the military power wielded by the Būyid military amirs. It was with these men, therefore, that all temporal power lay. Even the réle of the ‘Abbāsid caliph as the religious and legal figurehead of the Muslim community had not gone unchallenged by this time. The establishment in the fourth/tenth century of the “heretical” Ismā‘īli caliphate of the Fāṣimids in Cairo threatened to remove even notional authority from the Sunni caliphate in Baghdad. That counter-caliphate, moreover, was vigorously expanding its influence at a time when the prestige, to say nothing of the actual power, of the ‘Abbāsid caliph in Baghdad had sunk dangerously low.

When the nomadic Saljuq Turks, recently converted to Islam, took Baghdad in 447/1055, they made great play of elevating the status of the ‘Abbāsid caliph and of being the champions of Sunni Islam. To a disinterested observer, this pose may well smack of self-justification, all the more so since, in reality, the heyday of the Saljuq empire (447–85/1055–92) saw the political situation remaining much the same as it had been under the Būyids.

Al-Ghazālī came to prominence during the reign of the third Saljuq sultan Malikshāh (465–85/1072–92), a period which saw the power of the great vizier Nizām al-Mulk reach its apogee. The latter set about the revitalization of Sunni Islam through a network of madrasas, the Nizāmīyyas—historian of Shāfi‘i law which were to produce a class of ulamā’ able to confront the internal and external threat posed by Ismā‘īli missionary activities. As is well known, al-Ghazālī was appointed to a prestigious teaching post at the premier Nizāmīyya, that of Baghdad, in 484/1091, where he remained until he experienced a profound spiritual crisis in 488/1095. This resulted in his resignation from his post to become a wandering Şūfī. The last years of his life (493–505/1100–11) he spent in his homeland of Khurāsan, engaged above all in writing his major works.

The present discussion will be based on a range of works generally attributed to al-Ghazālī, written in Arabic and Persian, both before and after his crisis in 488/1095.

II AL-GHAZĀLĪ’S POLITICAL IDEAS IN THE KITĀB AL-MUSTAZHĪRĪ

(a) Introductory comments

The full title of this work of al-Ghazālī is the Kitāb Faḍūl al-Bāṣīniyya wa-faḍūl al-Mustazhirīyya.1 It has long been accepted as an authentic work of al-Ghazālī,2 and its contents were outlined and discussed by Goldziher as early as 1916.3 The treatise, its title usually abbreviated to Kitāb al-Mustazhirī,4 was written in response to a request from the young ‘Abbāsid caliph al-Mustazhir, who had asked al-Ghazālī to compose a work by means of which the errors of the Ismā‘īlīs would be exposed. According to his own account in his autobiography, al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl, al-Ghazālī studied the writings of the Ismā‘īlīs (the Ta‘limiyya) in order to be able to refute their claims in polemical fashion:

The heresy of the Ta‘limiyya had already appeared, and everyone was speaking about their talk of gaining knowledge of the meaning of things from an infallible Imām who has
charge of the truth. It had already occurred to me to study their views and become acquainted with what is in their books, when it happened that I received a definite command from His Majesty the Caliph to write a book showing what their religious system really is. I began to search for their books and collect their doctrines.

The Mustazhirî can be dated to the short period between the accession of al-Mustazhirî (18 Muḥarram 487/7 February 1094) and al-Ghazālî’s famous departure from Baghdad at the time of his spiritual crisis (Dhu ’l-Qa’dâ 488/November 1095). There is disagreement as to whether al-Ghazālî wrote the work before or after the death of the Fāṭimid caliph al-Mustamīrî (18 Dhu ’l-Hijja 487/29 December 1094). In any case, it is significant that the Mustazhirî probably appeared during the year 488 (11 January–30 December 1095).

As Goldziher points out, there were a number of earlier Sunnî writers who had composed polemical works against the Ismā’îlîs. Nor is the Mustazhirî the only attempt made by al-Ghazālî to refute the doctrines of the Ismā’îlîs. In his autobiography he mentions five such works, including the Mustazhirî. Only one other of these, the Qiyâs al-mustaqîm, is extant. Al-Ghazālî also attacks the Ismā’îlîs in the Miṣyâr al-’ilm, a treatise on logic also apparently written in 488/1095, in which Bouyges believes to pre-date the Mustazhirî and also in the Mustazâfā.

The Mustazhirî is, however, the first work by al-Ghazālî which has as its central aim a refutation of Ismā’îlî beliefs. As is well known, the timing of its appearance may be seen as the result of an increasing preoccupation, both in Saljuq and caliphal circles, with the political threat posed by the Ismā’îlîs. Al-Ghazālî’s mentor, the great Saljuq vizier Niṣâm al-Mulk, whose own work—the Ṣiyâsât-nâmâ—reveals an obsessive zeal against the Ismā’îlîs, and in whose entourage al-Ghazālî had spent some time, had been assassinated allegedly by the Ismā’îlîs in 485/1092. Within Saljuq territory, moreover, Ismā’îlîs under the leadership of Hasan-i Sâbhâl had seized the fortress of Alamût in north-west Iran and now threatened the centre of Saljuq power from within. It is not surprising, therefore, that one of the first actions of al-Mustazhirî after becoming caliph was to commission from al-Ghazālî, as one of the leading theologians of the age, a work of polemic against these Ismā’îlîs whose sophisticated propaganda was exerting growing appeal amongst the intelligentsia and common people alike.

(b) The subject-matter of the Kitâb al-Mustazhirî

One of the two principal aims of al-Ghazālî in this work is a refutation of the Ismâ’îlîs (the Bâtîniyya or Tâ’îmîyya). This part of the work, which broadly speaking covers Chapters 2 to 8, has been extensively described by Goldziher and Laoust. Only a few additional points, therefore, will be raised here. Although Goldziher performed a valuable service in focusing scholarly interest on this particular work, his approach is heavily biased in favour of al-Ghazālî and the Sunnîs. All too often he makes no distinction between his description of the highly-charged polemical text of al-Ghazālî and his own comments on the material, which are emotional and hostile to the Ismâ’îlîs. Corbin rightly takes Goldziher to task for selecting only certain passages of the Mustazhirî and for passing unfavourable remarks about the Ismâ’îlîs. Corbin also points out that the response of the Ismâ’îlîs to al-Ghazālî’s attack was to express surprise that a scholar of his stature should censure them without reference “to any authentic Ismâ’îlî source.” Not for the first time, al-Ghazālî stands accused of too great an involvement in the politics of his own time.

Nevertheless, between them, Goldziher and (to a lesser extent) Laoust provide a valuable digest of the arguments adduced by al-Ghazālî in his attack on the doctrines of the Ismâ’îlîs. He calls his adversaries the Ta’îmîyya, those who follow ta’îlim—a word which Corbin defines as “initiatic knowledge” and which is dispenscd by the infallible Imām. According to al-Ghazālî, the Ismâ’îlîs believe that salvation lies in accepting what is transmitted to them by the Imām and in imitating him. For the Ismâ’îlîs, the impeccable Imām is the deputy (khâlitâ) of the Prophet and after his death the only person qualified to interpret God’s revelation. Every age must have an immaculate Imām and it is inconceivable that there should be two such Imâms at any one time. The Sharî’a for the Ismâ’îlîs, is different from what Sunnîs believe it to be. Although following the Sharî’a is an obligation for the Ismâ’îlîs, such an obligation is based on the Sharî’a as interpreted solely by their Imām and not in accordance with the views of the orthodox Sunnî maddahâh. The Ismâ’îlîs claim that the true Imām is the one who occupies the imamate in Egypt and that all mankind owes him obedience. The other aim of the Mustazhirî—which is in fact inextricably linked to the refutation of the Ismâ’îlî imamate—is to prove the legitimacy of the ‘Abbâsid caliph al-Mustazhirî. This aim is realized in Chapters 9 and 10 of the work. Al-Ghazālî begins in Chapter 9 by clearly stating his aim, namely to demonstrate that the imamate of al-Mustazhirî is in conformity with Islamic law, that he is God’s caliph (khâlit) over mankind and that obedience to him is a religious obligation (farâd) incumbent on all mankind. According to al-Ghazālî, the existence of the caliph at the head of the community is an obligation based on the Sharî’a. The caliph is, in short, the mainspring of all legitimacy. Public functions are valid only if they spring from the wish of the caliph, whose existence is the very foundation of the continuity of the Sharî’a. If there were no caliphate, all religious institutions would.
be suspended and the Shari'a itself would be threatened with extinction.28

Al-Ghazâlî adds three arguments to support his assertion that the Imam is the source of all legitimacy, the principle from which all other public functions spring. The first is based on the consensus of the community (ijmâ'), and the second is the valuable precedent of the Companions who, in order to preserve the unity of the umma and the survival of Islam, acted speedily after the death of the Prophet to elect an Imam. The third argument is the necessity for authority to be vested solely in one man and not in a consultative council (shura), since the rule of a single Imam is the only way of preventing disunity and disorder.29

Al-Ghazâlî then moves on to a discussion of the right method of appointing the Imam. For the Ismâ'ilis, the Imam is appointed by divine nass,30 and this method has nothing to do with the number of people who may or may not support such an appointment. If appointment by nass is invalid, there only remains election (ikhtiyâr) by the Muslims.31 This is not a foolproof method, since election may be variously defined as the consensus (ijmâ') of all Muslims; or only that of the people of "loosing and binding" in every land; or that of the inhabitants of the city where the caliph lives; or the consensus of a small number of people, or only one. Al-Ghazâlî dismisses as impossible the idea of universal consensus and that of the people of "loosing and binding" and of a specified small number of people.32 The only remaining viable solution is that of one person making the bay'a. Al-Ghazâlî states categorically, "We would say: 'Yes, there is no source for the Imam except nass or election. Since nass is invalid, election holds good.'"33

The ensuing passage is the core of his whole argument. He says that election of the Imam by one person making the oath of allegiance is sufficient if that one person is obeyed and possesses unsurpassed military strength (shauka), since his compliance is the compliance of the masses.34 If this cannot be achieved by one person, then two or three should come to an agreement; but what is important here is not the number of those making the oath of allegiance but the establishing of a power base (shauka) for the Imam. That can be achieved by means of anyone who seizes power (mustawâlina) and who is obeyed.35 The desired object in setting up the Imam is the establishment of unity. The only way that this can be achieved is by a manifestation of force (shauka), and shauka can only be accomplished by the compliance of the majority of the respected people of every period. Election, al-Ghazâlî alleges, is not a human stratagem but a God-given blessing.36 In contrast to the Ismâ'ilis (and Shi'ti) view that the Imam is designated by God, for al-Ghazâlî God is also involved in his theory: the Imamate is, so to speak, ratified by shawâra, and shauka undertakes the act of allegiance. The act of allegiance in turn is obtained only when Almighty God by force turns hearts to obedience and loyalty, and this cannot be done by humankind.37

According to al-Ghazâlî, ten qualities are necessary for an Imam if he is to be fit for his office; six are natural or innate (khilâfyya) and cannot be acquired, whilst four may be acquired.38 In the first category are adult status, sound intellect, freedom, maleness, descent from Quraysh and good hearing and sight.39 In each case, al-Ghazâlî outlines his arguments for the presence of these qualities in an Imam. In the second category are four so-called "acquired" attributes: najda, kifâya, 'ilm and wara'. Al-Ghazâlî then states that the requisite attributes, both innate and acquired, are to be found in the person of al-Mustazhir, that his Imamate is in accordance with the Shari'a, that it is incumbent on all 'ulama' to pronounce fatwa under his overall authority, and that they are to execute his judgments.40 In the remainder of the chapter, al-Ghazâlî goes on to explain and justify the four "acquired" attributes.41

In his discussion of the first "acquired" quality, najda,42 al-Ghazâlî embarks on a long excursion about the Turks.43 This is of considerable interest, yet it has not received the attention it deserves in the context of scholarship on al-Ghazâlî's political theory. He begins as follows:

Our view is that what is meant by najda in the case of Imams is a show (zuhûr) of strength (shauka), a plentiful supply of equipment, seeking the help (istiqhârah) of armies, the putting up of banners and standards, possessing the ability—through the help of parties and followers—to subdue rebels and wrongdoers, to fight against infidels and those who are inordinately proud, to still the manifestation of discords and to stop the flow (hasm) of the accumulated swell of trying afflictions, before their evil (sharar) becomes apparent (yastazghira) and the harm (darar) they cause becomes widespread. This is what is meant by najda.44

The above passage, which has been translated literally, is written in a high-flown style with verbal conceits and rhetorical devices which cannot be reproduced in English. To take only a single example, the appearance in quick succession of three words (zuhûr, istiqhârah and yastazghira) which are formed from the same root as the name al-Mustazhir is probably deliberate.

Al-Ghazâlî then turns his attention to the Turks: In this age of ours, from amongst the (various) kinds of human beings it is the Turks who possess force (shauka). Almighty God has given them the good fortune to befriend and love him (sc. the caliph) to such an extent that they draw near to God by helping him (sc. the caliph) and by suppressing the enemies of his state (dawa). They yield themselves to belief in his caliphate and Imamate and in the necessity (wujûb) of obedience to him, just as they submit themselves to
the (religious) obligations of God's commands and the confirmation of the truth (taṣdiq) of His message by His messengers. So this is a naẓda, the like of which has not (ever) been established for anyone but him, so how can there be any dispute about his naẓda?

It is conceivable that in the phrases "befriend and love him" and "his caliphate and imāmāte" al-Ghazālī is referring to God; but in view of the subsequent sentences, which speak more clearly of the parallel between obedience to the caliphate (on earth) and obedience to God and Islam, it seems more likely that these are references to the caliph, namely al-Mustazhir. The last sentence is a clear allusion to the caliph, who has not been mentioned by name or office anywhere in this section of the text.67

Al-Ghazālī continues, using the format of question and answer which occurs so frequently in his work:

If it is argued, "How can his (i.e. the caliph's) naẓda be achieved by them (sc. the Turks) when we see them venturing to oppose his commands and prohibitions and exceed the limits laid down for them in his regard—for shauka is achieved only by those who as far as possible show unswerving obedience, whereas these (sc. the Turks) are unswerving only in pursuit of their passions, and whenever they are aroused by anger or stirred by lust, or violent rancour inflames their breasts, they do not care about obedience and they can only revert to the bonds of their innate bestial nature. So how can shauka be achieved by them?"68

We would reply, "This is an extremely invalid question, seeing that the obedience required of mankind for the providing of (military) support (shauka) for the Imām is no more than the obedience required of slaves and bondsmen in respect of their masters, and no more than the obedience imposed on those who have a religious obligation to God and His prophet. Neither the conditions of bondsmen in the matter of submission to their master nor the conditions of mankind in the matter of submission to their Lord are loosened by being divided into obedience and disobedience, for (just as) when Muslims are divided into those who obey and those who disobey and are not thus divested of the covering of Islam, nor excused (lit. "removed") thereby from being subservient to it, as long as they continue to believe that obedience to God is an obligation and disobedience is forbidden and abominable, (so also) is the situation when one obeys whoever holds (temporal) power. For even if they (sc. the Turks) disobey one of the commands which it is incumbent (upon them) to obey, they believe that disobedience is a sinful act and that obedience is a virtuous one. For this reason you would not see them violating their commitment to offer friendship (to the caliph) even if they were to be cut up limb by limb. Nobody can oppose him in one of his commands unless that person, when reaching the noble threshold, himself stoops down to the ground, rubs his cheek in the dust in token of abasement, stands in the position of the most abject slave at his door and rises to his feet again on hearing his (sc. the caliph's) discourse. Moreover, if there should be an insurrection in any region of the earth against this resplendent state (dauwa) there is not one amongst them (sc. the Turks) who on seeing strife beyond its frontiers would not fight in the way of God, waging jihād against the infidels. What obedience in God's world (ʻilm) exceeds this obedience? What shauka in this world matches this shauka?"69

Al-Ghazālī then asks why the Bābīnīyya in answering this question do not remember what disturbances and dissensions befell 'Ali. Al-Ghazālī argues that the same mistakes must not be made in his own time as in the case of 'Ali. It would have been better for 'Ali to have come to an accommodation with Mu'āwiya, who had already military strength, than to launch himself into a course of action which could only culminate in disaster.

Great emphasis has been laid in the present discussion of this section on naẓda, not only because it has been given scant attention by Goldziher and Laoust but also because, as will be shown later, al-Ghazālī's discussion here is central to an understanding of his political theory.

It is perhaps appropriate here to discuss the question of the authenticity of this section. It has never before been called into question, although possible insertions and tampering by later authors in other parts of al-Ghazālī's works have been brought to light by scholars before now. The spirit of the passage on naẓda is entirely in accord with al-Ghazālī's arguments elsewhere in the Mustazhirī, so too is the question-and-answer device used for the exposition of al-Ghazālī's viewpoint. The high-flown epistolary style of the first paragraph may be unusually intricate and more typical of the Arabic of al-Bundārī than that of al-Ghazālī, but the Mustazhirī is a work of panegyrical, and similar stylistic techniques are found in other parts of a book whose authorship is not in dispute. Suspicion may be aroused by the accolades showered on the Turks; perhaps some later member of a Saljuq chancery added and embellished the original text of al-Ghazālī here. Yet the spirit of the passage remains consistent with the main argument. On balance it seems probable that it was indeed written by al-Ghazālī.

Al-Ghazālī now turns to a discussion of the remaining "acquired" attributes which should be present in the Imām. The second of these is kifāya, the meaning of which is "competence to govern" and the aim of which is to order "religious and temporal matters". Al-Ghazālī stresses the deeply disturbed nature of his own time, which he describes as one of sātra, effacement of the signs of religion, a time overflowing with afflictions and strife. In the accomplishment of kifāya, al-Ghazālī sets great store by the powers of discrimination possessed by the Imām himself but also by the need for consultation with good counsellors and especially the Imām's vizier. There follows a long panegyrical of the caliph in the same style as the preceding one devoted to the Turks.62

The third "acquired" quality is wara' "piety", which al-Ghazālī views as the most splendid of the attributes. It is a quality which can only be exercised personally by the caliph; it cannot be acquired through
outside help.\textsuperscript{64} It is the very foundation of authority. It is difficult to reconcile \textit{wara\textquotesingle} with the exercise of power, but the basis of this is strict adherence to justice.\textsuperscript{65} It is noteworthy that al-Ghazālī does not demand that the \textit{imām} be sinless.\textsuperscript{66}

The fourth \textquotedblleft acquired\textquotedblright attribute is \textquoteleft\textquoteleft\textit{ilm} \textquoteleft\textquoteleft knowledge\textquoteright\textquoteright.\textsuperscript{67} This denotes a knowledge of religion but does not necessitate that the caliph should be a qualified \textit{muqaddim}. In order to establish the \textit{imām}ate in accordance with the \textit{Shar\textacuted{a}}, it is not important whether the caliph knows about the Law through his own knowledge or through the help of the best advisers of his age.\textsuperscript{68}

(c) \textit{Chapter 9 of the Kitāb al-Mustazhirī}

The \textit{Mustazhirī} has long attracted the attention of scholars of medieval Islamic political thought. Apart from the detailed treatment accorded to this work by Goldziher and Laoust, it is not surprising to note that Rosenthal devotes some space to a discussion of this work, which he says reveals \textquoteright political realism and preparedness to make concessions to expediency\textquoteright.\textsuperscript{69} What is surprising, however, is that Binder, in his oft-cited article \textquoteleft\textit{Al-Ghazālī's theory of Islamic government}\textquoteright, makes only one reference to the \textit{Kitāb al-Mustazhirī}.\textsuperscript{70} The purpose of the remarks which follow is to avoid rehearsing familiar arguments and instead to raise some new questions, thereby moving the discussion forward.

The \textit{Mustazhirī} is a work on the \textit{imām}ate. It does not cover other aspects of Islamic government. In many ways it follows the standard, indeed classical, Islamic theory on the \textit{imām}ate and covers much the same ground as al-Ghazālī's predecessors had done, even using similar arguments.\textsuperscript{71} Yet it is much more than that. It is written against a background of unusual political turbulence in the period which immediately followed the deaths (in quick succession) of the famous vizier Niẓām al-Mulk and his master the Saljuq sultan Malikshāh in 485/1092, both of whom had enjoyed a long tenure of power. With the death in 487/1094 of the \textit{Abbāsīd} caliph al-Muqtadī, who had himself ruled for 19 years, there was in a period of no more than two years a clean sweep of the major political figures in the eastern Sunni world. In this situation of political flux, the accession of a new \textit{Abbāsīd} caliph, al-Mustazhirī, took on an unwanted importance.

It is possible that al-Ghazālī’s high-flown panegyric of the new caliph should be attributed to the desire to please his patron, who had altered all personally commissioned the \textit{Mustazhirī}. But such a view is unduly harsh and cynical. Moreover, it ignores al-Ghazālī’s subsequent works on government, which were apparently not written for any specific patron and which nevertheless reveal views consistent with those expressed in the \textit{Mustazhirī}. It would appear, therefore, that al-Ghazālī was writing out of personal conviction in the latter work.

A significant dimension is, of course, the attack on the Ismā‘īlī imām of Cairo. It is to counter the grandiose claims of the Ismā‘īlīs, who assert that their infallible Imām is the only person qualified to interpret the \textit{Shar\textacuted{a}} and that all mankind owes him obedience,\textsuperscript{72} that al-Ghazālī is emboldened to pronounce that it is the \textit{Abbāsīd} caliph, al-Mustazhirī, who is God’s caliph over mankind and that obedience to him is a religious duty incumbent on all men.\textsuperscript{73} It seems legitimate to assume that al-Ghazālī is motivated here by Sunnī zeal. Moreover, like must be countered by like. It is inconceivable that, whatever the real status of the \textit{Abbāsīd} caliph within the Saljuq empire, al-Ghazālī—with his deep commitment to the Shāfī’ī madhhab and with his knowledge of the views on government held by his predecessors, especially his teacher al-Juwainī—could so break out of the traditional Sunnī mould as to elevate the temporal authority, the sultanate, to serve as the institution through which to refute the Ismā‘īlī imām of Cairo. So it is the \textit{Abbāsīd} caliphate which is deemed, once again and according to precedent, to be the sole institution worthy of representing orthodox Islam in the tussle with the Ismā‘īlīs. Moreover, the linchpin of al-Ghazālī’s argument justifying the \textit{Abbāsīd} caliphate is that it is the very foundation of the continuity of the \textit{Shar\textacuted{a}}. The \textit{Abbāsīd} caliph himself, however, is not the sole interpreter of the \textit{Shar\textacuted{a}}, as is the case with the Ismā‘īlī Imām; for he is advised by competent \textit{ulamā‘}. It is important to stress that al-Ghazālī does not say that the \textit{Abbāsīd} caliph is infallible.

There are, however, certain puzzling aspects to the \textit{Mustazhirī}. Above all, the passage on the Turks raises certain questions which are worth discussing further. Why does al-Ghazālī, while writing a polemical work refuting the Ismā‘īlīs and arguing for the legitimacy of the \textit{Abbāsīd} caliph, al-Mustazhirī, feel constrained to include a long excursion on the virtues of the Turks? Why does he go to the trouble of justifying and exonerating the Turkish invaders who have seized military supremacy within the eastern Islamic world, and why does he address this apologia for the Turks to the \textit{Abbāsīd} caliph, who is without any real power at all?

Al-Ghazālī is in a serious dilemma here. To ignore the existence of the Turkish military authority altogether and to write, instead, a blueprint for Islamic government based on the \textit{Abbāsīd} caliphate would have no basis in reality. It is clear that al-Ghazālī’s contacts with the prominent political figures of the age—he spent time both in the entourage of Niẓām al-Mulk and in al-Mustazhirī’s circle, even before the latter’s accession to the caliphal office—would not have predisposed him to write such a manifestly
redundant treatise. Instead, al-Ghazālī attempts to accommodate the political status quo into his own system of beliefs on Islamic government. The result is pious dishonesty.

The idea of symbiosis between the caliphate and the temporal authority was not of course new by al-Ghazālī’s time. Moreover, earlier scholarship on al-Ghazālī has rightly stressed that his ideas are motivated by an overriding desire for stability and unity within the Sunni world. Here in the Mustazhīrī, al-Ghazālī views unity of purpose between the caliphate and the secular Turkish authority as the best defence against the Ismā‘īlī threat. It is for this reason that he praises the Turks, emphasizing their zeal as warriors for the faith, and deflects attention away from the reality, namely that they have usurped power. To depict them as insubordinate, wayward creatures whose fundamental loyalty to Islam is nevertheless unswerving constitutes a plea for some kind of accommodation with this alien implant into the Islamic body politic; but it cannot of course possibly reflect a true picture of how turbulent must have been the daily contact between the Persian–Arab bureaucracy and religious élite on the one hand and the Turkish military leadership and their nomadic followers on the other. Nor is it likely that the rank-and-file Turcomans were anything other than superficially Islamized. The audience to whom al-Ghazālī addresses the work was small and select; only the caliph and the ‘alama’ would have had the intellectual and linguistic ability to understand al-Ghazālī’s argumentation and the flowery Arabic style which he used. So the panegyrical of the Turks is directed at those who have to deal at ceremonial, legal and bureaucratic level with this alien power group. The panegyrical, patronizing in tone and insulting to the Turks in content, will not be understood by the Turks but will flatter the caliph and his entourage. More fundamentally, however, al-Ghazālī is trying by his insistence on the innate and consistent devotion to Islam which he attributes to the Turks to consolidate the working relationship between the temporal and spiritual authorities which he knows to be more important than ever to the stability of the realm. That stability, as he often argues elsewhere in his works, is a prerequisite for stability of religion.

Is there a more specific and less lofty aim behind the Mustazhīrī? It is well known that al-Ghazālī left Baghdad and its highly-charged political atmosphere shortly after the composition of this work. Here is not the place to discuss in detail the complex causes of al-Ghazālī’s spiritual crisis. The evidence from his “autobiography” should be treated with caution, however, not only because of the obvious problems of veracity inherent in this literary genre, but also because—as Van Es has pointed out—the Munqīḍīh is full of topos and clichés and is intended as a work of guidance and instruction.

One component of al-Ghazālī’s complex decision is worth discussing further here in the context of the Mustazhīrī. Leaving aside Jabre’s assertion that al-Ghazālī left Baghdad because he was afraid of being assassinated by the Ismā‘īlīs—a claim that can obviously be linked in particular to the material in the Mustazhīrī but which is argued in too simplistic a fashion by Jabre—there is quite another possible motive to be considered, and this too makes of expedience. Macdonald alleges that al-Ghazālī withdrew from the Nizāmīyya at Baghdad because the caliph al-Mustazhīrī had backed Tutush, the unsuccessful Saljuq claimant to the sultanate after the death of Malikshāh in 485/1092. Al-Ghazālī had been involved in the recognition of Tutush by the caliph al-Mustazhīrī in 487/1094. Tutush was subsequently defeated and killed by Barkyāruz in Saft 488/Feburary 1095. The latter then became sultan. Al-Ghazālī left Baghdad in Dhū’ l-Qa‘da 488/November 1095.

Al-Ghazālī’s close involvement with the entourage of the Saljuq sultan Malikshāh, and more especially with Nizām al-Mulk and his son Pākhr al-Mulk, is well known. Although the work under discussion was commissioned by the caliph, it seems that al-Ghazālī was loth to lose this opportunity of pressing the case of the Saljuqs, and of arguing—by whatever means, honest or “dishonest”—that a modus vivendi with the Turks was vital for the continuing stability of Sunni Islam.

But is there more to this than this? Does the Mustazhīrī contain in veiled terms an appeal to the caliph to accept a particular Saljuq claimant to the sultanate? This is improbable. More likely is the hypothesis that al-Ghazālī feels the need to issue a warning to the caliph, who was after all young and inexperienced and who may well have had ideas of exploiting Saljuq dissunity after the death of Malikshāh and of reasserting caliphal authority. Certainly, such a caliphal revanche, namely a full military involvement by the caliph as one warring element amongst many, was to occur later, after al-Mustazhīrī’s own death in 518/1118, with the activities of his successor al-Mustarshīd.

To summarize, then, it would appear that behind the device of addressing his praise of the de facto military rulers to the powerless ‘Abbāsid caliph, as illustrated by the passage translated above, al-Ghazālī may well have wished to emphasize to the caliph that his role should not be to interfere with the sphere of operations of the temporal authorities, the Saljuq sultans. At the same time, al-Ghazālī—prompted to a large extent by the polemical edge of his attacks on the Ismā‘īlīs—makes truly grandiose claims for his patron, the ‘Abbāsid caliph, whom he describes as God’s caliph to whom all mankind owes obedience. Political opportunism may be apparent in the Mustazhīrī, but it is more slanted towards supporting the Saljuqs than the caliph.

This is not to say that al-Ghazālī is necessarily
esposing wholeheartedly the interests of the Turks. This is a time of crisis, both politically and theologically, when it behoves the new caliph to tread warily and not to come into collision with the Turks. Al-Ghazālī makes it clear that he disapproves of their insubordinate ways; indeed, he views them as an inferior species of human being. Nevertheless, he argues implicitly that their continuing presence is an inevitable fact and even a necessity.

III THE KITĀB AL-IQTISĀD FI 'L-FTIQĀD

This treatise has been called al-Ghazālī’s “chief theological work” and has received considerable scholarly attention, forming the basis of many of the generalizations made about al-Ghazālī’s political theory. Bouyges dates the composition of this work to the year 488/1095, before al-Ghazālī’s departure from Baghdad, although Bouyges also concedes that it could have been written just after that event. What is certain is that the Iqtisād follows the Mustaṣghir and precedes the Ilyās. It would appear likely that al-Ghazālī did not write this work with any particular patron in mind. In view of the short interval between the composition of the Mustaṣghir and the Iqtisād (they were written within a year or so of each other) it would, at first glance, seem improbable that al-Ghazālī would have expressed in the second of these two works views very different from those already expounded at greater length in the Mustaṣghir. The absence of a patron for the Iqtisād might, however, have freed him from the particular constraints imposed on him by the Mustaṣghir in which he focused on one particular caliph.

(a) Al-Ghazālī’s views on the caliphate in the Kitāb al-Iqtisād: the content

This subject is discussed in Chapter 3, “On the imāmāte.” Al-Ghazālī begins by saying that a consideration of the imāmāte is not a matter of great moment, nor is it the stuff of rational speculation. It is a matter of fiqh. Moreover, such a discussion excites factions and is better avoided if one’s views are right—and even more so if they are wrong. Since, however, such discussions are customary at the end of works on dogmatic theology (mu’taqidāt), al-Ghazālī says that he too will treat the subject of the imāmāte, but in summary form.

He divides his discussion into three parts. The first is an exposition of why it is necessary to appoint an Imām. The necessity for an Imām is not deduced from reason (‘aql) but from revealed Law (sharī‘). In establishing decisive legal proof for the necessity of an Imām, al-Ghazālī is not satisfied merely to use the argument of the consensus of the community. He goes further, analysing the basis of such an imām, and says that the establishment of the good ordering of religion was an aim of the Prophet himself, whom he calls the “Lord of Revealed Law” (ṣāliḥ al-sharī‘). This, he states, is his first irrefutable premise. He then adds a second premise, namely, that the good ordering of religion is achieved only by an Imām who is obeyed. From these two premises it is proved that the appointment of an Imām is necessary.

Al-Ghazālī then challenges anyone who might argue that his second premise—that good order in religion is achieved only by an Imām who is obeyed—is not Islamic. He then demonstrates the proof of this second premise, arguing that the good ordering of religion is achieved only by the good ordering of this world, and that the good ordering of this world is in turn achieved only by an Imām who is obeyed. These two premises are, he maintains, irrefutable.

He then examines the first of these two premises more closely. To those who would allege that religion (dīn) and this world (dunya) are two opposites and that preoccupation with promoting one of them leads to the destruction of the other, al-Ghazālī defends himself by developing a clear definition of dīn and dunya. This term does not denote excessive enjoyment of this world’s pleasures—a definition which would indeed be the antithesis of dīn—but rather means what one needs in this life. This latter definition of dunya, al-Ghazālī argues, is a necessary condition for the accomplishment of dīn. Above all, security in this world is essential, for if one has to spend one’s time in defending oneself against tyranny and in searching for food, one cannot devote oneself to knowledge and good works which are the means of acquiring happiness in the next world. Al-Ghazālī therefore concludes that the good ordering of this world is a prerequisite for the good ordering of religion.

Turning to his second premise, which he expressed a few lines earlier as the good ordering of this world being dependent on an Imām who is obeyed (imām muṭla‘), al-Ghazālī continues as follows:

As for the second premise, namely, that this world and security for oneself and one’s property can only be ordered by an authority which is obeyed (or: a sultan who is obeyed, sultan muṭla‘), seeing the periods of strife on the death of sultans (sulṭān) and Imāms testifies to it (sc. the truth of the premise) and (the fact) that if that (situation) should last and if another authority which is obeyed (sultan μuṭla‘) were not appointed immediately, discord would continue, the sword would be everywhere, drought all-embracing, beasts would perish, crafts would become ineffective and all who conquered would seize (the property of others) by force and nobody would be able to apply himself exclusively to worship (sc. of God, ‘ibāda) and knowledge if he remained alive, and otherwise many would die under the shades of the swords. For this reason, it is said that “Religion and (temporal) authority (sultan) are twins” and for this reason, it is said that “Religion is a foundation and (temporal)
authority (sultan) a guardian. That which has no foundation falls into ruins, and that which has no guardian is destroyed. 78

In sum, the reasonable person cannot dispute the fact that human beings—because of the difference of their natures, the inherent diversity of their passions and the divergence of their opinions—would perish to the last man if they were left to their own devices and if there were not an obeyed opinion to reconcile their differences. This is an illness whose sole remedy is by means of a powerful authority (sultan) who is obeyed (and) who unites diversities of opinions. So it has been demonstrated that authority (sultan) is necessary for the good ordering of this world, and the good ordering of this world is necessary for the good ordering of religion, and the good ordering of religion is necessary for the acquisition of happiness in the hereafter. That is undoubtedly the aim of prophets. So the necessity of appointing the Imam is one of the necessities of the shari'a which must not be abandoned, so take heed of that! 79

The second section of Chapter 3 tackles two questions: the qualities which the Imam must possess and the right method of designating him. Al-Ghazali asserts that the person to be appointed Imam must possess special attributes which differentiate him from the rest of humanity. These attributes are either personal or are connected with other people (min jihat ghayrihi). In the first category, al-Ghazali states that in order to be able to govern the people and keep them on the right path the Imam must possess kifaya, 'ilm, tawara, and descent from Quraysh. 80

It may be, however, that there are a number of suitable people of Quraysh descent. The decisive factor—and here al-Ghazali introduces his second category of attributes—is being appointed to govern (tauliya) or being entrusted with authority (tafiid) by other people. This bestowal of authority may be achieved in one of three ways: through designation (tanzil) by the Prophet himself; by the appointment of a suitable successor from amongst his sons by the ruling Imam; or, thirdly, by the entrusting of authority (tafiid) to a suitable person by a man who wields military power (dhu shayaka). This last method would require that other people should follow suit and pay allegiance to the Imam. At certain times this may be achieved by one person who is well respected and enjoys the support of the people and the total authority, since his act of allegiance and his entrusting of authority (to the Imam) dispense with the necessity for others to do so. The aim, after all, is to reconcile differences of opinion under one "obeyed person" (shakhsh mu'ta). The Imam is also obeyed by virtue of the oath of allegiance made to him by the "obeyed person". Should there be more than one person possessed of military strength, the men concerned must pay allegiance and agree on the person to whom they should entrust authority, so that obedience may be achieved.

Al-Ghazali goes on to say that if, on the death of an Imam, there is only one Qurashi who can command obedience and who possesses shawka, a following amongst the people by virtue of his shawka and his competence to govern, and the necessary attributes of an Imam, then his imamate is valid and obedience to him is incumbent on the people. Such a person will certainly be able to have the oath of allegiance paid to him by the important men (akabir) of the age, and by the 'ulama. 81

Al-Ghazali then turns to the case of an Imam who possesses all the necessary attributes except that of legal knowledge, but who after consultation with the 'ulama acts upon their advice. Should such an Imam be deposed or obeyed? Al-Ghazali argues that he should be replaced by someone who fulfils all the necessary conditions only if such action does not engender strife. Otherwise, such an Imam should be obeyed and his imamate is valid. 82

Al-Ghazali defends himself against those who would accuse him of making compromises by saying that these views which he has expressed are forced on him by necessity: "This is not a voluntary concession. Necessities, however, make prohibitions allowable. We know that taking carrion (majla) is prohibited, but death (from starvation) is worse than that." He then presents two possible situations to anyone in his own time who might deem the imamate to be invalid because its conditions are not fulfilled. First, there is the following possibility. If there is no Imam, then judges are dismissed from their office, all public functions (wuzukd) are null and void, marriages are not legal, the activities of provincial governors are invalid and the whole of mankind are perpetrating forbidden deeds. Alternatively, one may say that the imamate is valid and that its activities and functions are effective by virtue of the present situation and necessity. In view of this there are three options. First, people must be prevented from contracting marriages and engaging in other activities connected with the Law. This would be an absurd, divisive and destructive course of action. Second, one may say that people do contract marriages and engage in other legal activities but that they are perpetrating what is forbidden. Nevertheless, they should not be condemned as disobedient because of the exigencies of the moment. The third possibility is that, in view of the contemporary necessity, the imamate should be considered as valid in spite of the fact that its conditions are not fulfilled. This is the choice for which the reasonable person must opt. 83

(b) Analysis of al-Ghazali's discussion of the imamate in the Kitab al-Iqtiad

It is noteworthy that at the beginning of this chapter, al-Ghazali expresses reluctance to discuss the question of the imamate, which he describes as contentious. Although this stance of his may well in fact be a literary device—he has in any case dealt with the imamate in
extentem in the Mustazhirī—there is a clear note of disillusionment here. Such a sentiment may spring from the reception accorded to the Mustazhirī, about which the sources are silent, or—more generally—it may indicate a wider disenchantment with the political circles of Baghdad, which he was soon to leave (if, indeed, he had not already left the city at this time).

The concepts expressed here in Chapter 3 are very similar to those set out in Chapter 9 of the Mustazhirī. Once again the main emphasis is on the need for political stability, on the unifying force of the Imām and the necessity for his existence so that he can reconcile diversity within the dār al-Islām and create conditions suitable for religion to thrive. Once again, too, al-Ghazālī seeks a basis in the Shari'a when arguing for the necessity of the imāmate.

There are, however, certain differences in approach and emphasis which distinguish the Iḥtiṣād from the Mustazhirī. The whole tone of the opening of the third chapter of the Iḥtiṣād is decisive and succinct. It is devoid of the verbal conceits of the Mustazhirī. The aim is to argue a case convincingly, and for this purpose al-Ghazālī employs a series of syllogisms.

His extended treatment of his second premis, namely, that the good ordering of this world is achieved only by an Imām who is obeyed, deserves further discussion at this point. Here he uses terms to denote “rulers” with apparent imprecision and ambiguity. At the beginning of Chapter 3, the word imām is used five times and is used to mean the authority. This is said in the text of the Mustazhirī. Thereafter, however, the phrase Imām muṭāl is replaced, when the premis is repeated, by sultān muṭāl. The next sentence, moreover, the phrase “on the death of sultans (sultān) and Imāms” appears. At the end of the second premis, al-Ghazali reverts to the use of the term imām.

Various questions are raised by these usages. Does al-Ghazali deliberately employ imām and sultān to denote different concepts, or do they have the same meaning here? Alternatively, is his terminology unintentionally loose? The word sultān is of course problematic, representing as it does both the concept of “authority”, “ruling power”, and the holder of such power. The first example of sultān (bi-sultān muṭāl) could have both meanings but probably refers to the actual holder of power, in view of the fact that it is a suitable term in the context of the Mustazhirī. This also holds good for the second example: bi-sultān ḍarārī. When he cites the well-known saying “Religion and sultān are twins”, however, sultān obviously refers to the abstract concept of authority. The remaining two examples of sultān—the phrase bi-sultān ghir ṭul ṭul ṭul ṭul and al-sultān ḍarārī—could denote either the abstract concept or the actual holder of authority.76

As for the use of the term imām, this too is sometimes imprecise. When it occurs in a discussion of the institution of the imām, it is relatively unambiguous. In the phrase “on the death of Imāms and sultans” the juxtaposition of the two seems to “devalue” the Imām, or at any rate to suggest that al-Ghazālī may be aware of little actual distinction between them. In his concluding statement jā-kāna nash al-imām min dhārīyyāt al-sharḥ, al-Ghazālī quasi-automatically reverts to the term imām, probably because of the mention of sharḥ in the same sentence.

A few tentative conclusions may be drawn here. The Iḥtiṣād is of course a work on the articles of faith. It is not a treatise on Islamic government. Nor is Chapter 3 the central part of the Iḥtiṣād. In it, al-Ghazālī emphasizes the need to create the conditions conducive to the maintenance of good religion in this world, but he is not intent on creating a blueprint for Islamic government. In the Mustazhirī, where the central theme is that of the imāmate, al-Ghazālī does not fail to use the term imām or, less frequently, khāliṣ. In this short passage of the Iḥtiṣād, the term khāliṣ does not appear at all and there is no apparent consistency in the use of imām and sultān. It would be unduly bold to interpret this shift as a fundamental change of attitude on the part of al-Ghazālī towards the imāmate. This would be an unlikely development in the short interval of time between the two works. It would seem more reasonable to attribute this looseness of terminology to a conscious or unconscious lapse on al-Ghazālī’s part from the theoretical plane of the Mustazhirī to the practical level of the reality of Saljuq rule revealed in this discussion in the Iḥtiṣād.

It may well be that the turbulent events which followed the completion of the Mustazhirī only enhanced al-Ghazālī’s conviction that what mattered were political stability and the existence of a strong government in order to produce the right conditions for the conduct of good religion. Here, at any rate, he may well be indifferent as to whether these conditions are to be achieved with the imāmate or without it.

At the beginning of the second section of Chapter 3, in which the attributes necessary in the Imām and the method of appointing him are discussed, al-Ghazālī is back on the conventional path, making a clear distinction between the Imām and the holder of military power, whom he calls “an obeyed person” (shakhs muṭāl). Of the three so-called methods of appointing the Imām, only the third really interests al-Ghazālī. This is the situation in which the possession of military force (dhā shawka) entrusts authority (tāfṣīl) to a suitable person as Imām. The act of allegiance paid to the Imām by the holder (or several holders) of power symbolizes the allegiance of all those under his (or their) authority, and assures unity.

It is interesting to speculate on the nature of al-Ghazālī’s formula here and to ask whether such an arrangement corresponded to the political realities of
the relationship between the Saljuq sultans and the 'Abbasid caliph—a relationship to which al-Ghazâlî is attempting to accord legitimacy—or whether he is here describing an idealized scheme whereby to ensure unity. It is also relevant to ask whether al-Ghazâlî sees any justification for dispensing with either caliph or sultan at any time.

In the arrangement outlined by al-Ghazâlî, it is the sultan who appoints the caliph. This act validates the government of the sultan. Such an emphasis on the sultan is of course an accurate reflection of the contemporary balance of power between the two institutions in the heyday of Saljuq power. Yet even then the sultans felt the need to link themselves with the 'Abbasid caliph by marriage ties and public ceremonies. After the death of Malikshâh in 485/1092 and the ensuing disarray among his successors, many Saljuq pretenders saw the need to seek caliphal approval in their bids for power. As already mentioned, the caliph al-Mustazhir himself may well have nurtured the ambition of profiting from this fragmented situation and of trying to reassert caliphal authority not as an arbiter but as a participant in the struggle for political power. This is of course not mentioned in the sources, as it is in the case of his successor al-Mustarshid, but al-Ghazâlî certainly leaves such an option open by conceding that a suitably qualified candidate for the imâmât may appoint himself if he possesses competence to govern and (more important) the necessary 'shaunka' to impose his rule upon the people. In other words, it is conceivable for an Imâm to dispense with a sultan.

There is an unusually strong element of compromise in al-Ghazâlî's ideas as presented here. He himself puts up a strong defence of this position in his forceful analogy that eating carrion is prohibited but that starvation is worse. There is also an element of compromise over the question of the necessity for the Imâm to possess knowledge of the Shari'a. Here al-Ghazâlî suggests that deposition should only occur if it does not cause civil strife. Otherwise it is preferable for such an Imâm to seek the advice of the 'ulamâ' and to act upon it. This emphasis on the role of the 'ulamâ' is a consistent preoccupation of al-Ghazâlî.

Binder argues, mostly on the basis of the arguments in the Iqtiṣâd, that al-Ghazâlî has a "tripartite concept of the caliphate". A close examination of the text does not support his unwieldy theory. Certainly the three elements of caliph, sultan and 'ulamâ' are present in al-Ghazâlî's argument, but Binder stretches the evidence too far by postulating a definition of the caliphate itself as being "composed" of these three elements. Laoust propounds a rather similar theory, claiming that al-Ghazâlî is aiming at a mixed theory of the caliphate and that he combines the caliphate and the sultanate in the same institution.

Above all, it is important to note that, despite the exigencies of the disturbed times in which he lived, al-Ghazâlî was not prepared to dispense with the caliphal institution altogether.

IV THE IHTÂJ 'ULûM AL-DÎN

(a) Introductory comments

This, the most monumental work produced by al-Ghazâlî, was written in the period of his retreat from public life, probably between the years 489/1096 and 495/1102. Its authenticity is beyond doubt and need not be discussed here. The Book of what is licit and what is forbidden (Book 14, Chapter 5) contains a short section which deals once again with the imâmât and its relationship with the military warlords.

(b) Content

Al-Ghazâlî argues that in the case of an unjust, ignorant sultan who is sustained by military force (shâwêka), and whom it would be difficult to dislodge without stirring up violent strife, he must be left in office and obedience is due to him, just as it is due to amîrs. Indeed, there are traditions which enjoin obedience to amîrs. Al-Ghazâlî continues,

Our view is that the caliphate (khilâfa) is given contractually to that person from the 'Abbasid family who has taken it (sc. the office) upon himself and that sovereignty (wilâyâ) is legally exercised (nûfâla) in the case of sultans (sâ-latûn) in the (different) regions of the lands who pay allegiance to the caliph.

There then follows a succinct summary of al-Ghazâlî's mature view on the relationship between sultans and the caliph:

In short, we consider attributes and conditions in sultans with a view to (deriving) the optimum advantages. If we decreed that public functions (wilâyât) are now invalid, the interests of the common weal would also be invalid. Why lose one's capital by seeking (to gain) interest? No indeed, sovereignty nowadays is possible only through force (shâwêka). The caliph is the person to whom the possessor of force (shâb al-shuwêka) pays allegiance. Anyone who seizes power by force (shâwêka) and is obedient to the caliph in respect of the khâhiba and the zikka is a sultan wielding valid jurisdiction (hukm) and judgment (qâdi'a) in the (different) regions of the earth by virtue of a sovereignty (wilâyâ) whose decisions (akhbâm) are legally valid (nûfâla).

Al-Ghazâlî concludes by referring the reader to his discussion of the imâmât in the Iqtiṣâd.

(c) Analysis

This passage reveals a remarkable consistency with the earlier remarks of al-Ghazâlî on this subject. There is, however, some development. The tone is now more pessimistic than ever before. Obedience is incumbent on the people even when they are ruled by an unjust sultan who is ignorant of how to rule or of how to
conduct himself according to the precepts of the Shari'a. The use of such terminology as khalîfa and sultan is clear, but it is noteworthy that this passage implies the existence of a number of sultans wielding power at the same time (again, a true reflection of the historical reality in the first decade of the sixth/twelfth century). Even so, al-Ghazâli still adheres to the beliefs that the caliphate is a legal necessity and that there should be only one holder of that office.

V AL-GHÂZÂLI’S “MIRRORS FOR PRINCES”

No discussion of al-Ghazâli’s views on government would be complete without reference to those of his books, or parts of his books, written within the Führerspiegel genre. Three works of al-Ghazâli will be discussed here in chronological order.

(1) Chapter 10 of the Kitâb al-Mustazhîri

As has already been mentioned, Chapter 10 contains material which places it firmly within the Führerspiegel genre. The Mustazhîrî is a work commissioned by a caliph, and it deals with the caliphate as its central theme. Al-Ghazâli therefore addresses his counsels to the caliph, who is enjoined to observe strict personal piety and self-discipline. There is an emphasis on justice on the part of the caliph, who is in duty bound to observe the Shari'a strictly. If he deviates from the path of justice, his subjects may regard him as a ruler who has usurped power. Obedience to him is incumbent upon them only as long as he rules in accordance with the Shari'a. Al-Ghazâli stresses the need for the ruler to consult the 'ulamâ', and illustrates this point with numerous examples from an Islamic context.

Al-Ghazâli’s approach here is the same as elsewhere in his writings. He supports his arguments with quotations from hadith and with anecdotes from the lives of the caliphs 'Umar I and 'Umar II. The material is exclusively Islamic. There is one isolated reference to Yazdagird, the last of the Sasanian rulers, but it is made in connection with 'Umar I.

Chapter 10 begins with a section which is strongly Sufi in tone. In it, al-Ghazâli stresses the transitory nature of this world, which is merely a staging-post on the route to the after-life. The leitmotif of man sharing attributes both with beasts and with angels—a theme which recurs in al-Ghazâli’s later works—is also found here. The same ideas and images also recur in the section of his later work written in Persian, the Kimiyâ-yi sa‘îdat, which is discussed next.

(2) The Kimiyâ-yi sa‘îdat

As is well known, this work is a long summary in Persian of the Ihyâ 'ulûm al-dîn, and it is addressed to the common people. A close examination of this work reveals that it is not just a summary of the Ihyâ. More especially, the Kimiyâ contains, in Section 10, Pillar 2, a complete section entitled “On government and exercising authority”—a Führerspiegel which is not found in the Ihyâ. Much of this material is identical, or at any rate similar, to Chapter 10 of the Mustazhîrî. Moreover, the same subject-matter, as Bagley has already pointed out, recurs in Part I of the Naṣîḥat al-mulûk. Indeed, it would appear that this section of the Kimiyâ is the prototype of Part I of the Naṣîḥat, which has almost identical material. It is, however, presented in a different order.

In this section of the Kimiyâ, al-Ghazâli urges that the ruler should constantly keep in mind the transience of this earthly life. Thus he will be able to govern justly, removed from a preoccupation with the passions of this world. Although the section begins with a reference to the caliphate of God (khilâfat-i khâdis), the term used for the person who governs is wâli'î, which can be applied to either caliph or sultan. Yet the tone is strongly Sufi and is far removed from a preoccupation with demarcation disputes between the authority of the caliph and that of the sultan. The instructions to the ruler are given in the form of ten rules which stress the need for justice and the dangers of injustice. As elsewhere in his work, al-Ghazâli exhorts the ruler to frequent the pious 'ulamâ', for whose company he should thirst, and to eschew the counsels of the worldly 'ulamâ'. The activities of the ruler are seen as symbolic and exemplary. His punishment for injustice will be greater than the punishment of the ordinary man. The ruler must see to it that his entourage also follows the path of justice. The symbolic value of the ruler’s actions is shown by means of imagery exploiting the associations of light:

The sun of justice appears first in the breast (of the ruler). Then its light falls on the people of the (royal) house. Then it penetrates to the entourage (of the ruler). Then its rays reach the subjects. Anyone who hopes for rays, without the sun is seeking the impossible.

As is usual in al-Ghazâli’s writings, the material supporting his precepts is drawn from the Qur’an, the hadith and anecdotes of the early Muslims.

(3) The Naṣîḥat al-mulûk

A work of this name has long been attributed to al-Ghazâli and was allegedly written by him towards the end of his life, probably just before his death in the years 503-5/1109-11. The work was originally written in Persian and was dedicated either to Muhammad b. Malikshâh or to Sanjar. A work by al-Ghazâli with this title is mentioned by Ibn Khallikân, who says that it was translated from Persian into Arabic by al-Ibîlî at the request of his patron Alp Qutlugh Beg QayÎmzâd (d. 595/1199).
A short discussion of the authenticity of this treatise is highly relevant to the general theme of this article. As early as 1956, Isaacs cast doubt on the authenticity of parts of the Naṣīḥa, but Bagley did not find grounds for undue concern. More recently, Patricia Crone has taken up the problem.

It is clear that Part I of the Naṣīḥat al-mulāk can be attributed with confidence to al-Ghazālī. As already noted, it contains material which is also found in the Mustazfīrī, the Kīmiyā-yi saʿādat, the Ihyāʿ and the Bidāya, all of which can safely be said to have been written by al-Ghazālī. Part I is not addressed to the caliph. It begins with a short sermon to the sultan urging him to behave in accordance with the precepts of religion.

It is, however, very difficult to argue that Part II of the Naṣīḥa was also written by al-Ghazālī. Its approach is at variance with that demonstrated by al-Ghazālī in the rest of his writings, both in Arabic and in Persian, and in general it clashes with the ethos of Part I of the very same work. Here is not the place to try to pinpoint in detail those sections (if any) of Part II of the Naṣīḥa which might or might not have been written by al-Ghazālī. A few general remarks must suffice. In his authentic works, it is not his wont to draw on non-Islamic material to support his arguments, nor to express the ethos of the Sasanian Persian heritage of statecraft as explicitly as it appears in Part II of the Naṣīḥa.

This is not to say that Islamic material in the form of quotations and anecdotes is absent from Part II of the Naṣīḥa. On the contrary, as is customary in al-Ghazālī's genuine works such as the Kīmiyā and the Ihyāʿ, there is frequent reference here as well to the Prophet, the caliphs Umar I and Umar II, Ali, Hārūn al-Rashid, and al-Mansūr, as well as sayings attributed to Jesus. It is not, however, al-Ghazālī's usual practice to draw on anecdotes from Sasanian or other non-Islamic sources, as happens repeatedly in Part II of the Naṣīḥa. A detailed examination of a number of al-Ghazālī's works in both Arabic and Persian reveals a common approach: the statement of an argument followed by Qur'anic corroboration and examples from the hadīth, the Companions or the early Sūfis. This approach, which can be discerned in al-Ghazālī's Persian letters and in the Kīmiyā as well as in the Arabic writings discussed in this article, is a far cry from Chapters II to VII of Part II of the Naṣīḥa which deal with topics such as viziers, secretaries, women and aphorisms, and which obviously emanate from a milieu very different from that of al-Ghazālī the Shāfiʿī lawyer and Sūfī Muslim.

It is of course conceivable that there is a primitive core of Part II of the Naṣīḥa which may also have been composed by al-Ghazālī. It is, however, more likely that two works, the indisputably authentic Ghazālī work which survives as Part I of the Naṣīḥa and another Fürstenspiegel written by an unknown author who moved in official Saljuq circles, had been uneasily yoked together by the time that al-Ibrāhīm translated the composite piece into Arabic.

It is now time to consider the implications of this finding for an assessment of his political theory. It could be argued by those eager to include the entire Naṣīḥat al-mulāk in the canon of al-Ghazālī's authentic works, that in this part of the work al-Ghazālī bypasses the caliphate and instead emphasizes the divinely ordained sultanate. The sultan is seen as the "shadow of God on earth" and is imbued with the Sasanian concept of the divine effulgence (farr-i izādī). By virtue of his God-given position he must be obeyed. In other words, al-Ghazālī—if indeed he was responsible for this section of the work—would have made a significant move away from the central theme of his earlier writings, i.e. the tightly-argued concept of the dual government of caliph and military warlord. Now that it appears clear, however, that al-Ghazālī did not write the second part of the Naṣīḥa, such a hypothesis cannot stand.

VI GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The preceding discussion has focused on a certain number of well-known works by al-Ghazālī which shed light on his views about government. Other works of his have been omitted, either because they yield disappointing results or because they merely corroborate the ideas expressed in his major works.

It seems reasonable to argue from the evidence presented above that there is a considerable degree of consistency in al-Ghazālī's views on government. The same themes and the same preoccupation with political and social stability are found in his early and his mature works alike. The ideas which he expresses so forcefully in the Mustazfīrī are repeated time and again in his subsequent works.

At no point can al-Ghazālī shake off his training as a faqīh. There is a constant emphasis in his writings on the necessity for a Shariʿa-based solution to the problems of Islamic government. However much he may try to bend in order to accommodate the imperfections of the political status quo, he always seeks to produce a theory of government which involves the imāmāte. Indeed, he cannot envisage a solution without it. Quite simply, without the imāmāte the umma would cease to function or even to exist. For this reason, an indissoluble link must be forged between the caliph and the most powerful military warlord, the sultan.

It is argued that al-Ghazālī did not write the controversial Part II of the Naṣīḥat al-mulāk, there is no evidence at all in his later writings that he was moving towards a theory of government which elevates the sultanate and bypasses the caliphate. Within the harsh
political realities of Saljuq disarray, in-fighting and outright civil war, al-Ghazālī still holds fast to the legal necessity of retaining the caliphate. Moreover, like his contemporaries—including the Saljuq sultans—he was probably incapable of divesting himself of the inbuilt emotional attachment which he obviously felt towards the caliphal institution.101 The sultan cannot yet fulfill the role of the caliph, even if the reverse is true.

Within this framework of overall consistency in al-Ghazālī’s œuvre, slight changes of emphasis may be discerned. It is perhaps possible to trace his increasing disillusionment with the political systems of his time in the years after his crisis and his departure from Baghdad. Indeed, one may even detect him adopting a quieter stance, and thus emphasizing personal piety and the transitory nature of this world. Given the turbulent times in which his lot was cast, that response had much to recommend it.

1 Ed. ‘Abd al-Rahmān Badawi (Cairo, 1582/1964).
4 This is not the only work commissioned by the caliph al-Mustazhir and called the Mustazhirī. Ibn Khallikān mentions another work of the same name, a compendium of Šahīfī law composed by Abū Bakr al-Shāhī who, like al-Ghazālī, was a pupil of al-Jawāyini and who was also appointed to the Niẓāmīyya in Baghdad (in 504/1110–11). Cf. Brockelmann SI, p. 489; Ibn Khallikān, Waqīyat al-dā'īn, tr. Baron M. de Slane (Paris, 1842–71), II, pp. 625–6.
6 For a detailed discussion of the different views on the exact date of the composition of this work, cf. Bouyges, op. cit., 51–2. Bouyges concludes with good reason that the Mustazhirī was written in 488 (11 January–30 December 1095).
10 Ed. V. Chelhot (Beirut, 1959).
12 Iden, Kiāb al-Mustazhirī min ‘ilm al-will (Cairo, 1933/1914).
14 El ‹s–v., “al-Ghazālī.”
17 Terms such as “insinuate” and “cunning” are inappropriate in Goldziher’s own comments on the Ismā’īlī threat (op. cit., p. 23).
20 Ibid.
22 Goldziher, op. cit., p. 17.
23 Ibid., p. 42.
24 Ibid., p. 46.
25 Ibid., p. 73.
27 Mustazhirī, p. 169.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid., pp. 171–2.
30 “Revealed text”: ibid., p. 174.
31 Ibid., p. 175.
32 Ibid., p. 176.
33 Ibid.
Naṣīḥat al-mulk "This chapter will be discussed later under the category of al-Ghazzālī’s Fīrtamāṭīsī.


63 Mustaḥfīrā, pp. 46, 73.

64 Ibid., p. 169.


70 The edition of Cairo, n.d., is used here.

71 Watt, op. cit., p. 199.

72 Ibid., p. 34.

73 There is in the Iṣṭīḥāṣ a reference to the Mustaḥfīrā which al-Ghazzālī describes as a refutation of the Bāṭiniyya (op. cit., p. 107).

74 The Iṣṭīḥāṣ is mentioned in the Iḥyā‘ on a number of occasions (e.g. II, 179).

75 Iṣṭīḥāṣ, pp. 105–10.

76 Laṣa mīn al-maḥāmmāt (ibid., p. 105).

77 Ibid.

78 Ibid. The terms used in this part of the chapter are imāmāt and imānīn.

79 Al-Ghazzālī expounds his definition of the necessities of life to embrace health, survival, adequate clothing, housing, food and above all security (ibid.).

80 Ibid., pp. 105–6.

81 Cf. the tradition al-jannāt al-fāthiyya ("Paradise is beneath the shades of the swords"), i.e. fighting unbelievers is a means of attaining Paradise. Cf. Lane, Lexicon, 1, p. 1915.

82 Iṣṭīḥāṣ, p. 106.

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid., pp. 106–7.

85 Iṣṭīḥāṣ. Al-Ghazzālī goes on to say that what is lost by having such an Imām is less than what is lost by following another and stirring up discord, with untold consequences.

86 That which has not been slaughtered in the way prescribed by the Law.

87 Iṣṭīḥāṣ, pp. 107–8. The third part of this chapter is concerned with the Companions and the order of precedence of the first four caliphs, and is not directly relevant to the present discussion. Cf. ibid., pp. 108–10.

88 Ibid., p. 105, line 15 onwards. Cf. the translation given above.


90 Iṣṭīḥāṣ, p. 105.

91 Ibid., p. 106.

92 In his biography of the Saljuq sultan Muḥammad b. Malikšāh, Ibn Khallikān gives a detailed account of the visit of Muḥammad and his brother Sanjar to Baghdad in 493/1091–2. The caliph al-Mustaḥfīrā received them with great pomp and placed insignia of power upon the two of them. Shortly afterwards, the kūhba was said in Baghdad, naming Muḥammad as sultan instead of his half-brother Barqiyārūq.

Such events as these would of course have been familiar to al-Ghazzālī. A sermon of his addressed to sultan Muḥammad is mentioned in the same biography (de Slane, op. cit., III, pp. 232–4).

93 According to Binder, the caliph represents "institutional" authority, the sultan "constitutional" authority, and the 'ulamā‘ "functional" authority (op. cit., p. 240).


98 As Goldziher puts it, "Even the mighty vassals who in reality held the caliph a prisoner, seem to have attached to the latter’s person some sort of awe" (Muslim Studies, I, pp. 69–70).