"A'lamu anna Sahabata- Ridhwaan Allahu 'alayhim - Ajma'bo 'ala anna nasab al-Imaamata ba'd in qira'adhi zaman in-Naboowa waajibon bal ja'aloohu ahamu wajibaat hayth ushtaghloo bihi 'an dafani rasool illah". "It is known that the Sahabah (r.a.h) consented that selecting the Imaam after the end of the era of Prophethood was an obligation (Wajib). Indeed they made it (more) important than the (other) obligations whilst they were busy with it over the burial of the Prophet (saw)".

Imam al-Haythami in al-Haythami in Sawaa'iq ul-haraqah:17

Why would the prophet (SAW) leave an issue untouched or undecided, an issue which the Sahabas considered very important, so important as to miss the burial rituals of the Prophet himself.

..... This day have those who disbelieve despaired of your religion, so fear them not, and fear Me. This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favor on you and chosen for you Islam as a religion ..... Quran [5:3]

If the religion was completed, why then did the Sahabas consider something wajib which was not mentioned by the Prophet (SAW), thus was not a part of religion.

Abu Bakr understood that he should assign a person as his successor to keep the system and community working in order, As it is well-known Abu Bakr assigned Umar as his successor. If we believe that the Prophet failed to appoint his successor, then we must admit that the Prophet failed to realize this important task, which the sahabas considered very important, that the Islamic community needs a qualified leader after him, or perhaps it was not important for the prophet that who is going to take over the power after him!

Is it possible that the Prophet of Islam who has tried hard to implement Islam, and tolerated a lot of problems, disasters, and paid big price to establish Islam in Arabian peninsula, leaves people without assigning any person to keep this religion alive after him?! If the companions gave so much importance to the appointment of a successor that they failed to attend the prophet’s fuennal, why didn' the prophet gave as much importance to the matter? The religion that is to be the last religion of God for this world; the religion that was supposed to be for every nation all over the world both inwardly and outwardly (political authority). What happened that we Muslims are in this miserable situation in the world for centuries? What happened that the chain of successors/rulers has reached to people like King Fahd, King Husain, Saddam Husain, Husni Mubarak, ...? Something is terribly wrong!

Yes, The problem is leadership and Guardianship. Was this problem not so important for prophet or he didn't take it serious? Of course, he did take it serious and he must have assigned a chain of successors (Caliphs) who where the most qualified as the head of Islamic state and as the guardian of Shari'ah (divine law).

Another question that came out to my mind was that: Are Allah and His prophet more qualified to assign the Caliphs, or people? Is I am on the basis of democracy (government of people over people) or on the basis of theocracy (Kingdom of Allah over the earth)?

The kharjites raised the slogan, "Al Hukmul Allah, Al Mulk ul Allah", which means, that Verdict belongs to Allah as well as the kingdom/land/earth belongs to Allah.

When Amir al-mu'minin heard the cry of Kharijites that “Verdict is only that of Allah” he said: The sentence is right but what (they think) it means, is wrong. It is true that verdict lies but with Allah, but these people say that (the function of) governance is only for Allah. The fact is that there is no escape for men from ruler good or bad. Peak of Eloquence, Sermon 40, About the Slogan of Kharjites

If the Verdict belongs to Allah and the country belongs to Allah, why shouldn't the caliph be appointed by Allah then? Why do we choose the khaliifa if the country doesn’t belong to us?

Quran gives a detailed breakdown of how to distribute one's property, it tells us how much shall our daughters have and how much shall our sons, irrespective of our personal desires. If Quran has not given us the right to appoint inheritors to our own property according to our own will, how can we appoint successors/inheritors for the Religion of Allah and Shariah of Muhammad (SAW).
The history of Islam testifies that the government after the death of prophet was neither democratic nor theocratic. Just a few people gathered in "Saqifah bani Saaedah" and assigned Abu Bakr as Caliph while Imam Ali was busy of the burial of the holy prophet in Medina.

The Messenger of Allah said to Ali: "Your position to me is like the position of Aaron (Haroon) to Moses, except that there shall be no Prophet after me"

Sahih al-Bukhari, Arabic-English version, Traditions 5.56, 5.700
Sahih Muslim, Arabic, v4, pp 1870-71
Sunan Ibn Majah, p12
Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, v1, p174
al-Khasa'is, by al-Nisa'i, pp 15-16
Mushkil al-Athar, by al-Tahawi, v2, p309

Let us see what the Quran tells us.

And We gave to him out of Our mercy his brother Haroun a prophet.
Quran [19:53]

And give to me an aider from my family: Haroun, my brother, Strengthen my back by him, And associate him (with me) in my affair. So that we should glorify Thee much, And remember Thee oft. Surely, Thou art seeing us. He said: You are indeed granted your petition, O Musa
Quran [20:29-36]

And We appointed with Musa a time of thirty nights and completed them with ten (more), so the appointed time of his Lord was complete forty nights, and Musa said to his brother Haroun: Take my place among my people, and act well and do not follow the way of the mischief-makers.
Quran [7:142]

Haroon (as) was Musa (as)'s Brother, Vizier, and in his absence the Khalifa (arabic word used in 7:142). And thus so was Ali (as). The Prophet (PBUH&HF) thereby meant that as Moses had left behind Aaron to look after his people when he went to Miqaat (meeting Allah), in the same way he was leaving Ali behind to look after the affairs of Islam after he met Allah (i.e., his death). Let this reminder be food of thought for the possessors of pure heart and open mind.

The verses of Quran concerning Aaron show that even the prophet does not assign his deputy/successor, and it is rather Allah who does that. Prophet Moses prayed to Allah and requested that Aaron becomes his deputy, and Allah approved the suggestion/request of Prophet Moses (AS).

"It is the majority opinion that there is a duty to appoint an Imam. But there is a difference, as to whether this is Allah's duty or whether this is incumbent on the public. The belief in the eyes of Ahl'ul Sunnah and Muttazalites is that the duty to appoint an Imam is a duty of the public. In terms of hadith and logic this is a duty of the public. In accordance with this belief, there is a hadith in Sahih Muslim, narrated by Abdullah ibne Umar 'He who dies without giving bayah to an Imam dies the death of one belonging to the days of jahiliyya'. This is why the Sahaba viewed the appointment of the Imam as so important that they preferred it to attending the Prophet’s funeral, because the Muslims need an Imam so that orders can be made on Jihad, and so that Islamic Laws can be implemented”
Sharh Fiqh Akbar, by Mulla Ali Qari, Chapter “Masala Nusbul Imamah” p 175 (publishers Muhammad Saeed and son, Qur'an Muhall, Karachi)

The word Imam means “A Leader”. Prophet (SAW) was an Imam. After the prophet, there were Twelve Imams. As the prophet said, "Those who die without giving bay'ha to the Imam of his time, he has died a death of an Ignorant." Prophet chose Ali as the Imam of all people at Gadeer. If you recognize Al-mahdi as an Imam, you have to recognize all 12.

Narrated Ibn Humayed, from Salamah, from Muhammad Ibn Is'haq, from Abd al- Ghaffar Ibn al-Qasim, from al-Minhal Ibn Amr, from abdallah Ibn al-Harith Ibn Nawfal Ibn al-Harith Ibn Abd al-Muttalib, from Abdallah Ibn Abbas, from Ali Ibn Abi Talib: When the verse "And warn your close tribe (Quran 26:214)" was revealed to the prophet, he called me and said to me, "Ali, God has commanded me to warn my tribe of near kindred. I was troubled by this, since I knew that when I discuss the matter to them they would respond in a way which I would not like. I kept silent until Gabriel came to me and said "If you do not do what you are commanded, your Lord will punish you." So prepare a measure of what for us, add a leg of lamb to it, fill a large bowl of milk for us, and then invite
sons of Abd al-Muttalib for me so that I may speak to them what I have been commanded to tell them." I did what he had told me to do. At that time they numbered forty men more or less, including his uncles Abu Talib, Hamzah, al-Abbas, and Abu Lahab. When they had gathered together, he called me to bring the food which I had prepared. I brought it, and when I put it down, the prophet took a piece of meat, broke it with his teeth, put it in the dish. Then he said, "Take in the name of God." They ate until they could eat no more, and yet the food was as it had been. I swear by God, in whose hand Ali's soul rests, that a single man could have eaten the amount of food which I prepared for them. Then he said "Give them something to drink." So I brought them the bowl and they drank from it until they became full, and I swear by God that one man could have drunk that amount. When the prophet wanted to speak to them, Abu Lahab interrupted him and said "Your host has long since bewitched you." Then they dispersed without the prophet speaking to them. On the following day he said to me "Ali, this man interrupted what I wanted to say so that people dispersed before I could speak to them. Prepare the same food for us as you did yesterday, and invite them here." I did this, and brought them food when he called me. He did as he had done the other day, and they ate until they could eat no more. Then he said, "Bring the bowl," and they drank until they could drink no more. Then he spoke to them, saying, "Banu Abd al-Muttalib, I don't know of any young man among Arabs who has brought for his people something better than what I have brought to you. I bring the best of this world and the world after, since God has commanded me to summon you to him. Which of you will aid me in this matter, so that he will be my brother, my executor (Wasi), my successor (Caliph) among you?" They all held back, and even though I was the youngest, I said "I will be your helper, O' prophet of God." He put his hand on the back of my neck and said "This is my brother, my executor (Wasi), my successor (Caliph) among you, so listen to him and obey him." They rose up laughing and saying to Abu Talib, "He has commanded you to obey your son and to obey him!"

"Shia" means "The Followers", and it is exclusively used for "The Followers of Imam Ali". Thus Shia school of thought was in fact established by the Holy Prophet of Islam (PBUH&HF) from the beginning of his mission.

If we follow Imam Ali (AS), this is because the Holy Prophet asked us to do so. Moreover, whatever Imam Ali (AS) (and other 11 Imams) has said is the exact teachings and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, and whatever Prophet Muhammad has said is the exact teachings and sayings of Allah. This is because the prophets and imams are infallible and they do not say anything contrary to what they have been commanded to say.

Note that in the above incident the Prophet had only addressed his own family Banu Abd al-Muttalib. He had offered his successorship to his family only. The prophet according to the orders and laws of god wanted to maintain the pure lineage of caliphs and imams. Besides, a heir or wasi comes from your own family, not an outsider.

Moreover, it was not the only time that the prophet declared Ali as his successor. However, it was the first time. There are many traditions inside Sunni collections of traditions which either implicitly or explicitly indicate whom the Prophet (PBUH&HF) chose as his successor. The official announcement, however, was in "Ghadir Khum", which will be dealt in another article.

Prophet (PBUH) said: Ali is with truth, and truth is with Ali

Tarih, by al-Khateeb al-Baghdadi

"The One with whom was just a part of the Knowledge of the Book said: 'I shall bring it to you within the twinkling of an eye!' Then when (Solomon) saw (the throne) set in his presence, he said: 'This is by the grace of my Lord! to test me whether I am grateful or ungrateful!"'

Quran [27:40]

A Non Prophet was able to transport the atoms inside of the throne of Bilqis before Hadhrath Suleyman within the twinkling of an eye. He had a control over these atoms, this does not mean that this faithful Servant was Allah (swt)! How did he attain that feat? Simple the verse states he had a 'partial' knowledge of the book. If one with partial knowledge can obtain control over the atoms, what power do you think is possessed by Imam Ali (as) who has a complete knowledge of the Book?

As the Sahaba and Hafiz of the Qur'an Ibn Masud himself testified:
"The Holy Quran has outward and inward meanings, and Ali Ibn Abi Talib has the knowledge of both."
Hilyatul Awliyaa, by Abu Nu'aym, v1, p65

I Imam Ali (as): “Ask me about the Book of Allah, because there is no Ayah but that I know whether it was revealed at night or in daytime, on the plain or in the mountain”
History of the Khalifas’s who took the right way by Jalaladeen Suyuti, pg 194

If Imam Ali possessed a complete knowledge of the Book as is vouched by Ibn Masud and other traditions then he to by the will of his Creator had the ability to control the atoms of the Universe.

“During the Battle of Siffin, the army under the command of Ali were unable to find any water. There was a church nearby and Ali went there to ask the people inside where water could be obtained from. They replied that water could only be found several miles away. The army then asked Ali if they could go and drink from it, Ali told them not to worry. The army began to travel west, all of a sudden he stopped and pointed to the ground and told the army to start digging there. They began to dig, and they found a big stone, Ali (as) told them to lift the stone, but they were unable to do so. Ali, then pulled the stone out with his hand, and fresh water began to spurt out of the ground. A Christian priest had been watching the episode, he went upto Ali and asked: ‘Are you a Prophet?’ to which Ali replied ‘No’, the priest then asked ‘Are you an Angel?’, Ali replied ‘No’. The Priest then said ‘You are not a Prophet or Angel, so what are you?’. Ali replied ‘I am a wasi of the Seal of all Prophet’s, Muhummud al Mustapha’. The Priest then said ‘Take out your hand so that I can embrace Islam’. Ali told him what to say (ie. the shahada) and the Priest then said the following “I testify there is no God but Allah. I testify that Muhummud is the Prophet of Allah, and I testify that Ali is the wasi of the Prophet Muhummud”
Shawahid un Nubuwwa, by Abdul Rehman Jami, (Urdu edition printers Maktaba Nabavi, Gunjbaksh Rd, Lahore), p 287

Clearly the existence of the spring was ghayb but Allah (swt) had unlocked the key in this regard on account of Maula Ali (as)’s position as the Wasi of Rasulullah (S).

At the same time the Prophet (saaws) told us which party would be saved, when he said "I am leaving amongst you two things, the Qur’an and my Ahlulbayt, if you follow them you will never go astray".
Sahih Muslim, part 7, Kitab fada’il alSahabah pp. 122-123

The Prophet recounted this tradition to his Sahaba, which proves the Sahaba could go astray if they turned away from these two sources of guidance.

But whoever disputes with you in this matter after what has come to you of knowledge, then say: Come let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and our near people and your near people, then let us be earnest in prayer, and pray for the curse of Allah on the liars.
Quran [3:61]

When the Christians of Najran came to debate with the Prophet (saaws) he first presented Islam as a theory via verses from the Qur'an, when the challenge of mubahila was made to prove which Deen is correct, the Prophet (saaws) took with him those who presented Islam on a complete practical level, he took his Ahlulbayt and no one else. To fulfill the condition of "near people", the prophet took none other than Mawla Ali (AS).

When reason and facts failed to convince the opponents, the medium of mubahilah (prayer to curse the liars) had to be used. It was a test of the truthfulness of the persons chosen to establish the truth and carry out the divine mission. The nearest and the dearest have to be exposed to danger. The nearest and the dearest of a prophet (who has devoted himself and whatever belonged to him to Allah and has been purified from all likes and dislikes based upon self interest, mundane desires and carnal passions) must naturally be of his class and quality in devotion and purification. According to verse 46 of al Ahzab the Holy Prophet was a summoner unto Allah by His permission; therefore, it was not his choice but Allah's will to summon a certain class of people to invoke the curse of Allah on the liars.
Aqa Mahdi Puya, Tafsir Quran, Tafsir of 3:61

For those who do not know, Right from the commencement of his mission to the last moment of his departure from this world, the Holy Prophet called only Ali on all important occasions.
• He called the ten year old Ali at the time of making known his mission.
• At the time of inviting his tribe to the worship of one Allah, it was the thirteen year old Ali who gave answer to the call of the last prophet of Allah.
• At the time of migration from Makka to Madina, he called Ali and asked him to lie down on his bed to face his enemies, who had planned to kill him during that night, and Ali wholeheartedly agreed to give his life to save the messenger of Allah.
• It was Ali, who was designated, as his executor of will, to return the deposits entrusted by the residents of Makka to the al-amin prophet after the Holy Prophet migrated to Madina.
• In the battle of Badr, Ali was asked by him to fight and repulse the hordes of enemy soldiers when many of his companions were quietly watching the fighting from a safe distance.
• In the battle of Uhud, when the enemy had an upper hand and the danger to the Holy Prophet’s life was imminent, because all his companions had run away from the battlefield and disappeared, it was Ali who stood by the Holy Prophet and brought to naught all the plans of the enemy.
• In the battle of Khundaq, Ali was called, as the embodiment of faith to fight against the incarnation of disbelief, Amr bin Abdwud, to win victory for the disheartened Muslims.
• In Khaybar, when all the companions of the Holy Prophet tried and failed to subdue the enemy, Ali was called to come to the rescue of the deficient and depressed Muslims and conquer the fort of Khaybar single-handedly.
• At the time of going to Tabuk, the Holy Prophet designated Ali, as his vicegerent, to take charge of the affairs in Madina, saying that Ali was to him as Harun was to Musa.
• Ali was called to preach the verses of al Barat which contain complete disassociation from idolatry, because only he or the Holy Prophet, according to the command of Allah, were competent to convey them to the people (on account of exact similarity or equality between the two). So Ali went to Makka and relieved Abu Bakr who had earlier been sent to do this job.

Muhammad bin Ishaq reported a narration from Abu Ja`far Muhammad bin `Ali bin Al-Husayn who said, "When Bara'ah was revealed to Allah's Messenger , and he had sent Abu Bakr to oversee the Hajj rites for the people, he was asked, 'O Messenger of Allah! Why not send this message to Abu Bakr' So he (SAW) said, (It will not be accepted to have been from me if it is not from a man from my family.) Then he called for `Ali and said to him, (Take this section from the beginning of Bara'ah and proclaim to the people on the day of the Sacrifice while they are gathered at Mina that no disbeliever will enter Paradise, no idolator will be permitted to perform Hajj after the year, there will be no Tawaf while naked, and whoever has a covenant with Allah's Messenger, then it shall be valid until the time of its expiration.) `Ali rode the camel of Allah's Messenger named Al-`Adba' until he caught up with Abu Bakr in route......

Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Tafsir of Surah 9, Verse 3

• The Purge of the Symbols from the Walls of the Kaaba was significant in that the Holy Prophet made Ali his partner in their effacement. The Prophet’s move in making Ali stand on his shoulders with the seal of prophet-hood under his feet, was intended to convey to the people around and to show the world that he had designated Ali as his partner and Successor in the very House of God.
• The Final declaration at Ghadir-E-Khum confirmed finally what had been formerly pointed out time and again.

"Only Allah is your Wali, and His messenger and those among believers who keep alive prayers and pay Zakat while they are in the state of bowing'.

Quran [5:55]

It is narrated by Ammar Yasir (RA) that a beggar came to Ali and stood besides him. Ali was kneeling in prayers. Ali put out his ring and gave it to the beggar. Then Ali (AS) called on the Prophet (SAW) and gave him the news. At this occasion, this verse (5:55) was revealed.

Click below for scanned page:

The Ghadir Declaration, by Dr Muhammad Tahir ul Qadri, pages 48-49

Hazrat Ali was the only one at the time of Prophet who paid Zakat while he was in the state of bowing (ruku').

Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, v5, p38
Tafsir al-Kashshaf, by Al-Zamakhshari, v1, p505, 649
The final verdict is however discussed in an article which deals with Gadeer Khum, where Ali (AS) was declared a mawla by Prophet Muhammad (SAW) himself.

Prophet said: "O Allah! You also may witness. 'O my people! Allah is my Mawla and I am mawla of the faithful and I have superior right on and control over their lives. And this Ali is the mawla of all those of whom I am mawla. O Allah! Love him who loves him and hate him who hates him."

Mohammed Ibn Idris al-Shafi'i (Imam al-Shafi'i, d. 204) per "al-Nihayah" by Ibn al-Athir
Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (Imam al-Hanbali, d. 241), in "Masnad" and "al-Manaqib"
Ibn Majah (d. 273), in "Sunan Ibn Majah"
al-Tirmidhi (d. 279), in "Sahih al-Tirmidhi"

Sunnis however do agree that the event of Gadeer is true. References will be presented in the article related to Gadeer. But most of them interpret the verse Mawla as friend and perhaps not a master/Imam/Caliph. Even if we take the word Mawla to be a friend, then those who fought Mawla Ali (AS) did not obviously consider him to be their friend, and similarly they rejected their loyalty to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as well. I will not name who did what in this article.

So be wise when you choose the meaning of the word Mawla, for dignity of many people depend upon you, people who either fought Imam Ali (AS) or hated him.