

## “The Impossible State” Book

### Fallacies, Delusions, and Impossible Imaginations

(Translated)

On “The Interview” program, on December 12 and 19, 2021, Al Jazeera broadcasted an interview with Dr. Wael Hallaq in two episodes about his book, **The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament**. The book was published by Dr. Hallaq in English in 2012. It was translated by Dr. Amr Othman into Arabic, then it was issued by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies in 2014, and this center is affiliated with Qatar and headed by Azmi Bishara. The book was promoted upon its release, and a lot was written about it on sites such as Al-Jazeera and others. Seminars were held to discuss it in which university professors in philosophy and political thought participated. The book was praised by many; there are those who admired it to the point of fascination, such as Sheikh Abu Qatada al-Filistini, and those who considered it confusing and useless, such as Dr. Muhammad Mukhtar al-Shanqiti. This contributed to the fame of the author of the book and the promotion of his book and his other books. Then the talk about him stopped for a few years until Al-Jazeera raised his name again in the two mentioned episodes.

Yes, there is a strong and well-crafted promotion of the book. The book is a war against Islam, especially against the Islamic political orientation that revolves around the establishment of the Islamic state. However, many of the workers in the Islamic field were deceived by some of his statements, which they did not realize their intent. And some of them did not realize the misguidances in the book because of its praise of the centrality of morals in Islamic jurisprudence and historical application. This lack of realization has increased due the book's attack on the modern state; that is, on the West and the state prevailing in it because it is devoid of morals and the lack of controls in it.

Many people have been deceived by the book, **even though the intention of the book titled *The Impossible State* is targeting the Islamic State**. And they were not aware of its intellectual dependence on the West, even though the first sentence in it says: “The thesis of this book is very simple: **“The concept of the “Islamic state” is impossible to materialize and involves an internal contradiction, according to any prevailing definition of what the modern state represents.**”. Despite the repeated hidden poison in the book, and the teaching that involves clear ignorance in it, its loose generalizations sometimes to the point of vagueness, along with its great promotion, make it one of the tools of soft power in both intellectual and political invasion which must be warned about.

The idea that the author highlighted strongly, and was emotionally attractive to many or deceiving to them is that the Islamic system of governance is based on sovereignty belonging to Allah (swt), and that Allah (swt) made morals central and pivotal pillars in the rules of Islamic jurisprudence and the laws of the system of governance. Among the morality of these rulings is that they do not favour anyone, so people must submit to them, the rulers, all the authorities of the state and the rest of the people are equal before them. This is in contrast to the modern and nationalist Western state, the state of Westphalia, which lacks morals and destroys the human being, and in which sovereignty is for the state. So, the state is the constant, the center and the end of the laws, and the laws revolve around its interests and there is no room or role in it for ethics. As he put it: What this modernity has practically produced is that the state is God, and that there is no god but the state. Since the people are one of the pillars of the state in the Western definition, the sovereignty of the state in his view is the sovereignty of nationalism, and therefore he says: that nationalism is like a god in the modern state.

Hallaq argues that this contradiction between the modern state and its characteristics and laws and between the Islamic system of government and Islamic law is what makes the existence of an Islamic state impossible. The dominant Western state today is strong and

dominant. It does not accept any other basis for any emerging state or system of government. Therefore, establishing an Islamic state today is impossible.

And he knows, like others with a Western orientation, that this impossibility does not exist among those with Islamic political orientations, and he knows that the aspiration to revive the Islamic state is an unavoidable Islamic goal. Therefore, he does not stop at proposing this impossibility and tries to delude by saying that the immoral Western state may collapse under the weight of its destructive immorality of man. Therefore, it needs Islamic morals, just as those working to implement Shariah need a state. In the face of this predicament, Hallaq presents his vision of a solution, which is the necessity of cooperation between Muslim jurists who are convinced of this understanding with Western moral philosophers. He says, "Muslims and their intellectual and political elites, in the process of building new institutions that require reformulating the rules of Shariah and presenting a new conception of political society, can and should interact with their Western counterparts regarding the necessity of making the morals the central domain." Some have promoted this solution as enlightening. In this alleged and imaginary solution lies a delusion, rather deception.

On the one hand, Hallaq spread his wings and flies in his fantasies and proposes immunizing the modern state with Islamic morals, and sees that this matter places burdens on Islamic jurists and mujtahids, who have to play this role, and who confirms that they do not currently exist.

The brief comment on this proposition: is it either naive or innocent? Or deceptive to fool Islamic scholars and thinkers into working for Western intellectual and philosophical goals? Or is it a great ignorance on the part of (the Professor) that makes him propose such absurdity; that advocates of Islam work to serve a Western philosophical doctrine based on disbelief in Islam and atheism?

On the other hand, it proposes changing the Islamic Shariah rulings, and the laws related to the system of government and the state to be subject to the rules and laws of the Western state. This is one of the delusions that should be alerted to. The reader may wonder: How does Dr. Hallaq propose changing Shariah rulings and laws in the Islamic system of governance after he praised the jurisprudence of Islam and its laws as based on the sovereignty of Allah - as he put it - and that Allah made morals the focus of jurisprudence and its rulings and laws of governance? Here Hallaq comes up with his lie: that morals change according to times and places, and this change is governed by other moral constants that are more central than them, and otherwise it fails.

Therefore, there have been many Islamic ruling systems throughout the 12 centuries, not a single system. This happened through the development of jurisprudence, where the science of jurisprudence emerged with time, then the investigations of good (Husn) and ugliness (Qubh), and then the idea of a consensus of jurists which represents the sovereignty of Allah. The rulings on developments are issued as fatwas by jurists who are experienced in understanding the Shariah and understanding the community, its needs and issues, after a process of Ijtihad to know and determine it. What they unanimously deduce from the Shariah, the accepted customs and what the reality requires is a new jurisprudence that includes morals attributed to the Shariah, i.e., to Allah. Allah's sovereignty means, according to Hallaq, giving the authority to legislate to the jurists. These are the ones who craft fiqh through the ages and times, and Allah (swt) has given them this authority through the source of the scholars' consensus or the jurists' consensus. In every age, they represent the wise people who decide what is good and what is bad.

Based on that, they determine the rules of governance and the laws of its system, and they obligate rulers and people to the jurisprudence they decide, because it is thus Shariah rulings with consensus as its evidence. Thus, the Islamic system of governance remains a system based on the centrality of morals, which was produced by the jurists in a way that meets the connotations of Shariah and the requirements of reality and the common sense in society. He says: "We have to ask the question: If Sharia is not the work of the Islamic ruler or the Islamic state... what and who made it? The answer is the Ummah did, that is the

common social world, organically produced its legal experts, and they are individuals qualified to perform the various legal functions that were established as a whole, the Islamic legal system. The Islamic jurists lived the values and rules of the general social world... Their mission was determined by those rules and values strongly inspired by the egalitarian tendency spread in the Qur'an... They were the cornerstone of legitimacy and religious and moral authority.”

It is worth noting that although this misguided idea is central to the book, none of those whom I have read their comments on it have noticed it. They also did not notice that the sovereignty for Allah (swt) is - in the writer's view - a common myth in society as it is an indisputable custom, and its reality is the agreement of senior jurists. Therefore, he says that there was not a single system of government throughout Islamic history, but rather that there were different systems. Although this proposition is a clear delusion, it was overlooked by the Muslims who were interested in the book, and perhaps one of the reasons for this, is the writer's style of ambiguity and generalization.

One of the sources of danger in this proposition is that there are young people who feel the impossibility of the Islamic state based on their vision of the current balance of power, and the domination of the modern state technologically, militarily and economically. Therefore, they are deceived by narrative of the book and see in it the sincere intentions of a just man. Another source of danger is that there are dangerous misconceptions among Muslims, and even among sheikhs and scholars among them, that the Shariah rulings change with the change of time or place. Therefore, it is necessary to be aware of this danger, and these traps and delusions, and to confront and expose them.

Thus, Hallaq's proposal is based initially on the idea of the stability of morals, and then ends with the opposite of what he started with, which is that they are variable. And that it should be replaced to become capable of deducing rules and laws that are accepted and absorbed by the modern state. Moreover, the expression "Allah's sovereignty", through which Hallaq begins praising Islam as ethical, ends with the meaning that sovereignty belongs to moral jurists, and that Islam is the creation of those who have historically controlled sovereignty in it, and they are the jurists and mujtahids, and this is the same idea of the Western philosophers, secular thinkers of their clergy and the church. Thus, he presents the Western philosophical, ethical and secular doctrine, and these are atheistic ideas and doctrines.

I conclude this brief comment on this book by emphasizing that it is characterized by generalization to the point of ambiguity in many of its ideas, and in the connotations of many of its sentences and paragraphs, which obliges the reader to re-read, and then think and make connection and analysis as solving a puzzle. More than one of the commentators expressed that it is necessary to read the book more than once to understand it. They attributed it to the depth of the book and the importance of its topics. In fact, this is not the case. The ambiguity is not worthy of praise. Rather, it is a methodological error that downgrades the book and raises questions about its author. Looking deeply shows that this loose and ambiguous generalization is due to the intention of fighting Islam. What this comment presented is just the tip of the iceberg of the malice in the book "The Impossible State" in combating Islam and Islamic political thought, and it is a small part from the policy and cunning of the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies that issued the book and that of Al-Jazeera channel that promotes it.

﴿وَيَمْكُرُونَ وَيَمْكُرُ اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الْمَاكِرِينَ﴾

**“But they plan, and Allah plans. And Allah is the best of planners” [Al-Anfal: 30]**

**Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by  
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