



Causes and Effects: Are Results Achieved at our Hands? (Victory (Nasr) as an Example)

(Translated)

The study of causes and effects, the relationship between causes and effects, or what is known as the law of causality (sababiyyah), and whether this relationship is constant and unchanging, is a topic long addressed by scholars of academic, intellectual and Shariah research. The accepted, practical view among all people is that this relationship is self-evident and definitive. This interconnectedness is the Qadr (Predetermination) of Allah (swt) and His unchanging law for all things and people.

The term “cause” is used in this context in two senses. One is the intended meaning in both rational and tangible matters, i.e., something that is the cause of something else that results from it. This is like the shattering of glass upon impact, with something solid, or the falling of something suspended by a rope if the rope breaks, or the explosion of a closed object if the pressure inside it continues to increase. This impact, rupture, or pressure is a rational cause of a result or effect, namely the shattering, falling, or explosion. The effect inevitably results when it occurs and by its occurrence, that is, with it and by it. The term “cause” is also used in the technical, Shariah sense in the foundations of jurisprudence (usul al-fiqh). This is like sighting the Hilal crescent moon of Ramadan or Shawwal to establish the Shariah obligation of Sawm (Shariah fasting) or Eid, or like the setting of the sun to establish the Shariah obligation of the Maghrib Salah (Shariah prayer). This is a cause (sabab) in the sense that it brings the ruling of Sawm, Eid, or Maghrib Salah into existence, but not in the sense of granting the ruling Shariah evidential basis. That is, the Shariah ruling is formed upon the basis of its Shariah evidence, but not brought into existence because it is not a rational cause. Therefore, it is said that in rational matters, a cause establishes the effect is both brought into existence by the cause and substantiated by it. However, in Shariah matters, the cause only brings the Shariah ruling into existence, but does not substantiate it as a ruling evidentially. What is meant in this research is the cause of rational or tangible matters, and it is the action, or actions, by which a goal is intended to be reached, and the intended goal is the effect or result.

The discussion of causes and effects is general for every cause and effect, or what is likely to be a cause and effect. For example, a study is a cause whose intended and desired result is success. Agriculture is a cause whose intended and desired result is harvest. Preparing for war and fighting is a cause, whose intended result is victory, the expansion of influence and power, and terrorizing the enemy. Punishments are a rational, material, and practical reason for preventing violations. The Shariah method for establishing the Islamic State is a material and practical cause for its establishment, which is the intended result. The topic of causes and effects is general, and all of these issues and examples fall under it. It also includes the meaning of the Arabic saying, مَنْ جَدَّ وَجَدَ وَمَنْ زَرَعَ حَصَدَ “Whoever strives will generate, and whoever sows will reap,” in all its generality.

Since this research is general in its coverage of these topics, what applies to any one of them in terms of its being a cause and effect, a result, or a goal, will apply to all others. The most frequently mentioned and questioned topic is the topic of victory (nasr), as a result of the actions that achieve it.

If the relationship between cause and effect is inevitable, and it is so, this means that taking the causes into account will inevitably lead to their results. That is, taking the causes of victory (nasr) will inevitably lead to victory. Is this true? If the causes of victory are in the hands of those who target it, this means that the results are also in their hands. Is this true? These questions are the requirements of this research.

It also requires, after establishing the inevitability of the connection between victory and its causes, to reconcile this fact with the Shariah texts that are definitive in narration, and definitive in evidencing, that victory comes from Allah (swt) Alone, such as the Almighty’s saying, ﴿وَمَا النَّصْرُ﴾ “And victory comes only from Allah—the Almighty, All-Wise.” [TMQ]

Surah Aali Imran: 126], and His saying, **﴿إِنْ يَنْصُرْكُمُ اللَّهُ فَلَا غَالِبَ لَكُمْ وَإِنْ يَخْذَلْكُمْ فَمَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَنْصُرُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَعَلَىٰ﴾** **“If Allah helps you, none can defeat you. But if He denies you help, then who else can help you? So in Allah let the believers put their trust.”** [TMQ Surah Aali Imran: 160], and His Saying, **﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنْ تَنْصُرُوا اللَّهَ يَنْصُرْكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَكُمْ﴾** **“O believers! If you stand up for Allah, He will help you and make your steps firm.”** [TMQ Surah Muhammad: 7]. Some observers see this as a contradiction that raises doubt about this truth or casts doubt on it. In other words, questions arise: Does achieving victory depend solely on causes based on the material law of causality, or does it come from Allah (swt) Alone, whether or not the causes are taken into account? In other words: Is there a contradiction between victory having material causes, and being an inevitable result of them if properly considered, and its coming from Allah (swt) Alone? Does the statement that if the causes are taken into account, victory is inevitable and always achieved, contradict the texts that limit victory (nasr) to coming from Allah (swt)? Does the statement that victory (nasr) comes from Allah (swt) and is given to whomever He wills, regardless of taking the causes, mean that the matter of preparation is merely a Shariah, ritual obligation, with no negative or positive impact whatsoever on victory, and that it contradicts the law of causality? Thus, the apparent problem that arises and raises questions becomes clear. The problem is that the relationship between cause and effect is a definitive rational truth, whilst the Shariah texts’ evidencing that victory comes from Allah (swt) is also a definitive truth, and confirmed truths do not contradict each other. What is the explanation? How can this problem be resolved, the contradiction between these two truths resolved by reconciliation, and their compatibility demonstrated?

The answer, first of all, does that truth contradict or conflict, whether they are either rational truths in themselves, or Shariah truths in themselves, or both Shariah and rational truths. They are all truths. If any apparent conflict between them occurs, it is not real. Instead, it is a misconception that can be dispelled with knowledge, scrutiny, and careful consideration. Therefore, it is called an apparent, not a real, conflict.

Therefore, there is no contradiction between the law of causality, or the inevitable relationship between causes and their effects, and the truth that victory (Nasr) comes from Allah (swt) Alone. If the cause occurs completely, then the occurrence of the effect or the result is inevitable. This is how Allah (swt) has ordained and mandated matters. If we see that the result does not occur, this does not mean that the law has been violated. Instead, it means that the cause did not occur, or did not occur completely. There may be an error, such as when the faa’il (the doer of an action) thinks that what he is doing is a cause when it is not, or events may have aborted or obstructed the cause, and acted as obstacles, and this occurs frequently, or taking the causes into account may be incomplete and deficient, which makes the result probable, rather than certain. The strength of its probability is proportional to the taking of the causes. This matter is permanent, as no one, no matter how knowledgeable or important, can fully take the causes into account, because he will not be able to fully know them, nor will he be able to take into account everything he knows about them, let alone ignorance of the events and changes that arise. This makes taking the causes into account incomplete, and it is impossible to take them into account completely.

Therefore, the error, or flaw, in achieving a result is not due to a flaw in the law of linking causes to their effects. Instead it is due to an error and deficiency in taking the causes into account. This deficiency, in addition to the presence of causes that are not within human perception or human ability, makes the results uncertain. Therefore, it is certain that the results are in the Hand of Allah (swt) Alone and not in the hands of the doer, no matter how much the causes are taken. Man strives to take the causes that he believes will lead to the result, and when he does so, he can only take what he perceives of them, and what he is able to do from what he perceives. Since his perception is limited and imperfect, and his ability is also limited and imperfect, achieving the result or goal is not in his hands, but in the Knowledge of Allah (swt), and in His Hand Alone.

It may be said, ‘However, it is observed in many actions that achieving results occurs without lag, whether the action is simple, such as demolishing a wall or a murder, or complex, such as actions with many steps and stages, such as modern, advanced industries, for example.’ The answer is that the closer and more uncomplicated the causes of the desired goal are, or the

causes of the desired result are, and the more comprehensible and attainable the possibility of taking the causes into account, the more the result is achieved. However, the result will still not reach completion. This is because there is always something beyond human comprehension and ability. There are obstacles or impediments that occur, preventing the completion of taking the causes, such as forgetfulness, death, the occurrence of counter-actions, or natural disasters such as an earthquake, stormy winds, or widespread diseases, and so on. Taking the causes certainly leads to the result, but no human being, no matter how much knowledge and ability he is given, even if he is a prophet, can take the causes completely.

The matter is made clearer by the Almighty's saying, ﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغَيِّرُ مَا بَقِوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ﴾ **“Indeed, Allah would never change a people's state, until they change all that is in themselves.”** [TMQ Surah Ar-Raad: 11]. This Shariah text indicates that Allah (swt) is the One Who changes what is with a people, in terms of their state and situation. It also indicates that He (swt) will not change what is with them until they change what is within themselves. This also raises considerations, because if they change what is within themselves, then they have changed, and the change has occurred, so why does Allah (swt) say that He will change what is with them after that? The answer is what was mentioned above, that there are causes for change that are within people's hands, and there are those that are beyond their understanding and capabilities. So, they must change what is within them, that is, within their hands. If they do so, Allah (swt) will change what is not within their hands, and the desired change will be achieved.

Taking victory (nasr) in war as an example, the above becomes clear. Victory is an intended outcome, achieved through its causes, such as preparation, planning, combat, and so on. Taking the causes of victory is essential to achieving it. However, no matter how much intellectual, material and military power, or the ability to analyze and plan, those who take the causes may never fully grasp all the causes of victory (nasr), or even its cause. Preparation will remain incomplete. In addition, the enemy also plans and takes the causes into account. Also included are the emergencies that only Allah (swt) knows about, such as a breach, betrayal, coup, assassinations, the death of leaders, the spread of diseases, natural disasters, and so on. These real-life examples demonstrate that the causes of victory cannot be fully grasped, and that the causes taken into account may be disrupted by human or natural causes. This demonstrates that tangible truths also indicate that results and goals, including victory (nasr), come from Allah Alone. Thus, the aforementioned alleged contradiction is resolved through reconciliation, revealing that it is an apparent and illusory contradiction.

There are other issues related to this topic, such as the fact that victory comes from Allah (swt). If the kuffar are victorious over other kuffar or over Muslims, is it Allah (swt) who grants them victory? Another issue is that the Quranic verses indicate that Allah's victory for believers is conditional upon their supporting Him, and that if they support Him, He will grant them victory. Supporting believers for Allah (swt) means that they worship and obey Him. Does this condition mean that if they disobey Him, He will not grant them victory? Another issue is that saying that outcomes are in Allah's Hand, not ours, means that people and those charged with Shariah obligations, are not responsible for defeats or their failure to achieve goals?

The answer to the first question is that Allah (swt) says, ﴿وَمَا النَّصْرُ إِلَّا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ﴾ **“Victory comes only from Allah. Surely Allah is Almighty, All-Wise.”** [TMQ Surah Al-Anfal 10]. Victory is limited to Allah (swt) Alone, and this applies to all victories, whether they are for believers or for kuffar. This means that Allah (swt) grants victory to believers and those who are committed to His Will, as well as to kuffar, those who are not believing, worshipful or obedient.

This leads to the following question: If the victory (nasr) of the disobedient, the kuffar, and their like is from Allah (swt), does this not contradict the verses that indicate that the Iman of the believers and their support for Allah (swt) is a condition for His support for victory for them? These Quranic verses include Allah's Saying, ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنْ تَنْصُرُوا اللَّهَ يَنْصُرْكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَكُمْ﴾ **“O believers! If you support Allah, He will support you and make your steps firm”** [TMQ Surah Muhammad: 7], and His Saying, ﴿إِنْ يَنْصُرْكُمْ اللَّهُ فَلَا غَالِبَ لَكُمْ وَإِنْ يَخْذَلْكُمْ فَمَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَنْصُرْكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ﴾ **“If Allah supports you, none can defeat you. However, if He denies you support, then who else can support you? So in Allah let the believers put their trust”** [TMQ Surah Aali Imran: 160] and His Saying, ﴿وَكَانَ حَقًّا عَلَيْنَا نَصْرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾ **“It is Our duty to support the**

believers” [TMQ Surah Ar-Rum: 47]. It is well known that, أَنْ الشَّرْطُ يَلْزِمُ مِنْ عَدَمِهِ الْعَدَمُ “the condition necessitates through its own absence, absence of the conditioned.” Is there no contradiction between the statement that Allah (swt) grants victory to sinners and kuffar, and the statement that Iman and obedience are conditions for attaining Allah’s victory?

The answer is that there is absolutely no contradiction between these Shariah texts. Allah (swt)’s statement, ﴿وَمَا النَّصْرُ إِلَّا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ﴾ **“And victory comes only from Allah,”** [TMQ Surah Al-Anfal: 10] is general in every victory, whether for the kuffar or the believers. In addition to this general evidence, there is specific evidence on the subject that confirms its generality. It is Allah (swt) support for victory of the Romans over the Persians, as He, Allah (swt), informed us that the Romans would be victorious, and that this would be due to the support of Allah (swt) for them. Allah (swt) said, ﴿وَيَوْمَئِذٍ يَفْرَحُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ * بِنَصْرِ اللَّهِ يَنْصُرُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ﴾ **“And on that day the believers will rejoice (4) at the victory willed by Allah. He gives victory to whoever He wills. For He is the Almighty, Most Merciful (5)”** [TMQ Surah Ar-Rum: 4-5]. It is well known that the Romans are kafir, meaning that the condition of Iman and obedience is not met among them. This statement is established. The texts also indicate that the believers’ support of Allah (swt) is a condition for His support of them. Allah (swt) says, ﴿إِنْ تَنْصُرُوا اللَّهَ يَنْصُرْكُمْ﴾ **“If you support Allah, He will support you”** [TMQ Surah Muhammad: 47]. This is definitive evidence. However, this does not mean that disobedience negates the possibility of the victory of Allah (swt). The explanation for this is that this condition is not a condition for victory in itself. Instead, it is a condition for the inevitability of the victory of Allah for the believers, because they deserve His victory. That is, Allah (swt) determined upon Himself that the Iman of the believers and their support for Him necessitates His victory for them. It is a promise from Allah or a covenant He prescribed upon Himself as a favor from Him to the believers. As in the Saying of Allah (swt), ﴿وَعَدًا عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا فِي التَّوْرَةِ﴾ **“This is a true promise binding on Him in the Torah, the Injeel, and the Quran. And whose promise is truer than Allah’s?”** [TMQ Surah at-Tawba 111] and He (swt) said, ﴿كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ﴾ **“Your Lord has prescribed Himself to be Merciful.”** [TMQ Surah al-Anaam 54] The same is true here in the matter of victory, and is confirmed by the Saying of Allah (swt), ﴿وَكَانَ حَقًّا عَلَيْنَا نَصْرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾ **“For it is Our duty to support the believers.”** [TMQ Surah Ar-Rum 47] It is a right upon Allah (swt), i.e. a covenant from Him, or a promise that He, glory be to Him, prescribed upon Himself, that if you do such and such, He will support you. So the condition in the Saying of Allah (swt), ﴿إِنْ تَنْصُرُوا اللَّهَ يَنْصُرْكُمْ﴾ **“If you support Allah (swt), He will support you”** [TMQ Surah Muhammad: 47] is not a condition for Allah’s victory for them. Instead, it is a condition for the Covenant and Promise from Allah (swt) to them to grant them victory, and Allah does not break His promise or covenant. Therefore, if Iman or obedience is absent, victory from Allah (swt) is not absent, but His promise of victory is absent. Then He does what He wills, so He grants victory or does not grant victory, He grants victory to this group or that, and He abandons this group or that, as Allah (swt) said in Surat Ar-Rum: ﴿يَنْصُرُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ﴾ **“He gives victory to whoever He wills. For He is the Almighty, Most Merciful.”** [TMQ Surah Ar-Rum: 5]. If they believe and commit, then Allah (swt) will grant them victory.

As for the question of responsibility for failure, defeat, or the lack of victory, the answer is that these are all consequences. It has already been stated that outcomes are in the Hand of Allah (swt) lone, and are beyond the control of humans. Allah (swt) says, ﴿لَا يَكْلَفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ﴾ **“Allah does not require of any soul more than what it can afford. All good will be for its own benefit, and all evil will be to its own loss.”** [TMQ Surah Al-Baqarah: 286]. Therefore, it is not correct to hold those in charge of actions accountable for the results. However, it is correct and necessary that they be asked about, and held accountable for, taking the causes that would lead to the results. They are held accountable for negligence, shortcomings, or errors in taking them. This is because results are reached through their causes. The Shariah obligation falls on taking the causes, not achieving the results. Therefore, we do not find in the Shariah, for example, “secure victory for yourselves.” Instead we find in the Noble Quran, ﴿وَأَعِدُّوا﴾ **“And prepare”** ﴿انْفِرُوا﴾ **“go forth,”** ﴿قَاتِلُوا﴾ **“fight,”** ﴿اقْتُلُوهُمْ﴾ **kill them,** ﴿فَضْرِبَ الرِّقَابِ﴾ **“strike their necks”** and ﴿فَقَسِّدُوا الْوَتَاقَ﴾ **“then secure the bindings.”** If a Shariah command is given as a result, then it must be diverted from the result to its causes. An example of this is that

Shariah law commands Muslims to love one another. However, love is not a predetermined action that a person performs. It is not like selling, fighting, performing Salah, or speaking. Instead, it is a result that only occurs through diverting to its causes. Therefore, the Prophet (saw) instructed us to perform predetermined actions that are likely causes that lead to the result of love, such as greeting one another and exchanging gifts. He (saw) said, «لا تَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ حَتَّى تُؤْمِنُوا، وَلَا تُؤْمِنُوا حَتَّى تَحَابُّوا، أَوَلَا أَدَلُّكُمْ عَلَى شَيْءٍ إِذَا فَعَلْتُمْوهُ تَحَابَبْتُمْ؟ أَفَسَوْا السَّلَامَ بَيْنَكُمْ» **“You shall not enter Paradise so long as you do not affirm belief, and you will not believe as long as you do not love one another. Should I not direct you to a thing which, if you do, will foster love amongst you? Exchange salaams.”** This is narrated by Bukhari and Muslim, with the wording of Muslim, here, whilst Bukhari narrated «تَهَادُّوا تَحَابُّوا» **“exchange gifts and you will love each other.”** Regarding the issue of accountability and responsibility, and that it is based on taking causes and not results, I will briefly point out instances that occurred with the Prophet (saw), and contemplating them fully demonstrates what was mentioned above. These instances are when the Muslims lost the Battle of Uhud while under the Prophet's (saw) leadership. He cannot be held accountable for this outcome, nor accused of negligence because of it, as he was the infallible (ma'soom) one to whom revelation was sent. Likewise, it can only be said that he took the necessary measures to the best of his ability. The same can be said of the Battle of Hunayn, where the Muslims lost at the beginning of the battle before achieving victory. As for the Battle of Badr, the Prophet (saw) had chosen a location for his military camp, and this was taking the necessary measures. However, Al-Hubab ibn Al-Mundhir (ra) argued with him that there was a better location than this to achieve victory, so he (saw) accepted his advice and changed his location. This demonstrates that taking the necessary measures is subject to shortcomings and errors, but also involves diligence, and requires sincere advice and accountability. Contrary to the results, there was no accountability for the loss at Uhud, nor for what happened at the beginning of the Battle of Hunayn. The Prophet (saw) almost made concessions at the Battle of the Trench, despite having dug the trench and prepared as much as he could. These concessions were a reason within his control, one he intended to take to prevent a potential defeat beyond his control. However, the Companions (ra) argued with him about the reason, and he changed his mind.

Examples of the above are numerous, and they demonstrate that people's adherence to the necessary causes is insufficient to achieve definitive results. They also demonstrate that results are in the Hand of Allah (swt) Alone, and that accountability is based on the adoption of the causes, not the results. They demonstrate that since adopting the causes is incomplete, is beset by a lack of knowledge and miscalculations, is hindered by obstacles, and leads to failure, then the causes must be reconsidered to address any obstacle, error, or deficiency. And Allah is the Grantor of success and the One sought for help.

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