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The Qur'anic Perspective on Historical Causality

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the epistemological debate surrounding the principle of causality in history, a concept frequently dismissed for allegedly undermining human free will. Employing a hermeneutic approach grounded in a Qur'anic perspective, the study analyzes this issue to construct a rational and scientific framework for historical explanation. The findings reveal that historical causality is inherently more complex than natural causality due to the unique intricacies of human behavior. Consequently, this study classifies historical causality into three distinct categories. First is categorical causality, denoting an absolute cause-and-effect process with no room for human intervention. Second is hypothetical causality, a conditional process wherein individuals possess the agency to manipulate specific circumstances to achieve desired outcomes. Third is orientative causality, a directional law of cause and effect that allows for a degree of deviation but triggers destructive consequences when its boundaries are breached. Ultimately, through this tripartite classification, the Qur'anic perspective provides a comprehensive conceptual solution for understanding the complex dynamics of history.

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini mengkaji perdebatan epistemologis mengenai asas kausalitas dalam sejarah, yang sering kali ditolak karena dianggap menegasikan kebebasan manusia. Dengan menggunakan metode hermeneutik melalui perspektif Qur'ani, artikel ini menganalisis permasalahan tersebut guna memberikan penjelasan sejarah yang logis dan ilmiah. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa kausalitas historis memiliki kompleksitas yang lebih tinggi daripada kausalitas alam karena melibatkan keunikan manusia. Kausalitas ini diklasifikasikan ke dalam tiga jenis. Pertama, kausalitas kategoris, yaitu proses sebab-akibat mutlak tanpa ruang intervensi manusia. Kedua, kausalitas hipotetis, yakni proses yang terjadi jika kondisi atau syarat tertentu terpenuhi, di mana manusia memiliki kemampuan untuk merekayasa kondisi sedemikian rupa demi mencapai akibat yang dikehendaki. Ketiga, kausalitas orientatif, yaitu hukum sebab-akibat dengan orientasi tertentu yang memberikan kelonggaran deviasi, namun akan memicu dampak destruktif jika batasnya terlampaui. Melalui klasifikasi ini, perspektif Qur'ani berhasil menawarkan solusi konseptual yang komprehensif dalam memahami dinamika sejarah.

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1. INTRODUCTION

There is a compelling discourse regarding the underlying forces that drive history. The central question is whether historical processes and events unfold by mere chance or are governed by a specific mechanism. Some scholars reject the existence of any underlying mechanism in historical events, arguing that such a framework would undermine human freedom and uniqueness. However, if this premise is dismissed, it begs the question of how one can comprehend and explain history logically and scientifically. The crux of this issue

lies in how different perspectives conceptualize causality, how this principle applies to natural events or processes, and similarly, how it operates within socio-historical contexts.

Causality is a fundamental principle in human life, positing that 'everything has a cause.' The existence of this principle is both necessary and rational. Through it, humans find a foundation to explain their life experiences and can articulate the reasons for their existence by uncovering underlying causes. Without the principle of causality, it would be impossible to demonstrate the objectivity of sensory perception, draw valid conclusions from any phenomena or evidence, or formulate scientific theories and laws. All of these endeavors are only possible if causality genuinely underpins every natural and human phenomenon (Shadr, 2013).

Consequently, causality serves as the bedrock of all scientific and philosophical endeavors. This is based on the reality that humans, whether researchers, scientists, or philosophers, cannot access or comprehend all parts of nature. They can only examine limited fragments of a universe that is fundamentally harmonious. By generalizing their findings, they formulate theories or laws applicable to any part of nature that mirrors their object of study. Such generalization, however, is impossible without relying on the principle of causality (Shadr, 2013). Logical and justifiable historical knowledge likewise cannot be realized without being grounded in this principle. Yet, the problem remains: is the causality operating in history identical to, or different from, the causality governing nature? Humans, as the material objects of history, are beings endowed with intellect and free will, distinguishing them from inanimate objects, plants, and animals. If historical causality is identical to natural causality, where is the uniqueness and superiority of humans in finding their field of actualization? Conversely, if it is different, what is the exact nature of this distinction?

In addition to elucidating various scholarly perspectives, this study will analyze Qur'anic verses related to socio-historical events. It seeks to understand how these events transpire and whether underlying causal factors dictate their occurrence. If causal factors do exist, the study questions whether historical events allow room for human intervention and, if so, to what extent such intervention effectively influences the outcome.

Numerous articles have been published in various journals concerning the theme of historical causality from a Qur'anic perspective. These articles discuss causality across different scopes and contexts, such as *sunnatullah* (divine laws of nature and society) and various historical events recounted in the Qur'an. The narratives delivered in the Qur'an are authentic historical accounts, not fictional tales as suggested by certain Orientalists (Habib et al., 2023), and some have even been corroborated by archaeological discoveries (Yaseen, 2011). Given the historicity of these Qur'anic narratives, they can serve as a robust foundation for scientific and philosophical studies (Haris, 2018), particularly regarding the discourse on historical laws and their inherent causality.

Causality in the Qur'an is rooted in the concept of *sunnatullah*, the fixed, consistent, and unchanging divine decrees that govern the order of the universe, society, and the trajectory of historical processes. Ontologically, *sunnatullah* represents permanent laws established by God to regulate the existence of living beings. Epistemologically, it provides

a cognitive framework for humans to comprehend reality through intellect and experience (Tazul Islam & Gilani, 2021);(Hashi, 2025). In his monumental work, the Muqaddimah, Ibn Khaldun extended the concept of *sunnatullah* into the socio-historical realm by introducing social laws (*al-sunan al-ijtima'iyyah*) as a subset of *sunnatullah*, enabling humans to study historical patterns and formulate strategies for civilizational development (Raharjo et al., 2025).

The Qur'an establishes a strong textual foundation for causality through the term "*sabab*" (plural: *asbab*), which etymologically means a path, intermediary, or connecting thread. A prime example in the Qur'an is found in the story of Iskandar Zulqarnain, who was granted authority and a "path" (*sababa*) to achieve all things. Exegetes interpret *sabab* in this context as knowledge, power, and the instruments required to attain objectives. This implies that every event in the universe, including historical occurrences, does not happen randomly or by chance, but rather through rational processes or mediums that humans can comprehend. The Qur'an affirms a principle of causality wherein every event derives its definitive characteristics and qualities from its preceding causes (Silfiah, 2018).

A philosophical-historical study of the story of Prophet Yusuf as presented in the Qur'an offers another relevant example. From the perspective of the philosophy of history, Qur'anic narratives serve not only as knowledge of the past but also as a means to anticipate and prepare for the future through signs comprehensible to humans. The Qur'an indicates that historical change does not occur abruptly; rather, it is the accumulation of gradual causes. Within such a causal framework, humans are dynamic and creative historical actors possessing the freedom to actualize themselves within the flow of time (Munir & Pandin, 2023). The story of Prophet Yusuf also carries an axiological dimension, demonstrating the virtues of patience and forgiveness, which brought goodness not only to the Prophet himself but also to his family and broader society (Halim, 2016).

The discourse on causality in Islam is also intertwined with the theological debate between the Ash'arite and Mu'tazilite doctrines regarding human agency and God's omnipotence. In this regard, the Ash'arites proposed the theory of *kasb* (acquisition), positing that God creates human actions, and humans "acquire" these actions, forming the basis of moral responsibility. In modern discourse, the challenge of causality emerges in the form of algorithmic determinism, which attempts to predict human behavior based on historical data. From the perspective of Islamic theology, algorithmic determinism is rejected because it is a posteriori and limited, in stark contrast to God's knowledge, which is eternal, creative, and transcends closed mechanisms. Historical causality places human agency within the framework of Divine sovereignty, providing space for spiritual transformation and prayer as a force capable of influencing destiny (Amin et al., 2026).

These articles collectively demonstrate a scholarly consensus on the existence of a causal principle underlying the course of history. This historical causality operates within the framework of *sunnatullah*, the divine decree that governs the unfolding of events. The Qur'anic perspective on historical causality posits God as the Almighty and the creator of *sunnatullah* on one hand, while granting human agency the space to make choices and anticipate the course of history on the other. However, these prior studies have yet to

elucidate whether historical causality manifests in a singular or pluralistic form, nor do they specify the exact extent of human freedom within it. It is precisely this gap that the present article seeks to explore further.

2. METHOD

This article endeavors to unravel the aforementioned issue from a Qur'anic perspective by employing a hermeneutic method. This approach is utilized to analyze the texts and their interpretations by various scholars, ultimately aiming to unearth a novel understanding of historical causality. Hermeneutics serves as both a methodical approach to textual analysis and a systematic philosophical inquiry designed to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

As a hermeneutic study, this research transcends mere data collection; it represents an intellectual endeavor to extract the underlying essence and profound insights of the topic. Simultaneously, it cultivates self-awareness regarding the researcher's own positionality within the dynamic arena of diverse scholarly opinions that have evolved in interpreting the sacred text of the Qur'an. Establishing one's position is paramount in hermeneutic inquiry. The fundamental assumption is that a researcher is an actively engaged participant who profoundly digests the material and subsequently asserts their own distinct stance amidst the spectrum of prevailing perspectives (Poespoprodjo, 1987).

The operational procedure of this study unfolds through four dynamic stages: distantiation and critique of ideology, comprehension (verstehen), fusion of horizons, and conclusion (Ricoeur, 1981); (Gadamer, 2004); (Poespoprodjo, 1987).

1. Distantiation and Critique of Ideology

By maintaining analytical distance and conducting an ideological critique, the researcher establishes a standing position relative to both the sacred text (the Qur'an) and the paradigms, worldviews, or ideologies of the authors of the profane texts (books and articles) under review. This ideological critique aims to emancipate the researcher's mind from becoming entirely submerged in the texts being examined. Through this process, the researcher cultivates critical distance (process transcendence), enabling a dynamic and existential engagement with the texts.

2. Comprehension (Verstehen)

Having identified the philosophical positioning of the examined texts via ideological critique, the researcher transitions into their own conceptual horizon. This horizon bridges the researching subject with the field of study through a personalized vantage point. The researcher pursues an in-depth understanding and interpretation (verstehen) of the texts utilizing the principle of the hermeneutic circle. This involves deducing an understanding of the whole (the text or overarching thought) by examining its constituent parts, while reciprocally comprehending the parts in relation to the entirety of the text or overarching thought.

3. Fusion of Horizons

Through the application of the hermeneutic circle, the researcher anticipates achieving a more nuanced understanding of both the Qur'anic verses and the conceptual horizons of

the scholars and their respective ideas. Concurrently, this process fosters profound self-awareness and a deeper comprehension of the researcher's own horizon. In this dynamic interaction, the researcher may encounter aspects of the authors' arguments with which they disagree; however, such friction serves to activate the researcher's intellectual faculties, compelling them to forge their own independent conclusions. Conversely, the researcher will also find points of agreement, allowing their own perspective to be illuminated by the horizons of these scholars. It is precisely at this juncture that the "fusion of horizons" between the researcher and the studied authors transpires. The researcher begins to internalize the horizons of the authors as extensions of their own. During this stage, the researcher will articulate the views of the scholars accurately, as originally intended, but articulated through the researcher's own academic view. Ultimately, the researcher progresses beyond the fusion of horizons to establish their own definitive philosophical stance. The researcher arrives at a synthesized conclusion, formulating a robust and convicted perspective on the myriad positions and debates surrounding historical causality within the Qur'anic framework.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Cause as the Bedrock of Historical Events

The term 'cause' in history is frequently defined as any preceding event within an interconnected, sequential complex. A single cause never operates in isolation; rather, it functions as part of a complex matrix or series. Consequently, a more rigorous and defensible usage of the concept when denoting a driving force or phenomenon should be articulated in its plural form: 'causes' (Gottschalk, 2008). The relationship between cause and effect is not a mere temporal sequence; it is an intrinsic and fundamental connection such that the existence or non-existence of the cause directly determines the existence or non-existence of the effect. Within this causal link lies a principle of uniformity, summarized by the rule: 'if the causes are identical, the effects must also be identical' (Soekadijo, 1991).

A cause is sometimes conflated with the term 'condition' or 'requirement'. A distinction is drawn between two types of conditions: necessary conditions and sufficient conditions. A necessary condition is a cause without which the effect cannot occur; effect A exists if and only if cause C is present. Within this framework, the presence of effect A allows one to infer the existence of cause C. Conversely, a sufficient condition is a cause whose presence guarantees the occurrence of the effect; thus, the presence of the cause implies the occurrence of the effect (Soekadijo, 1991). As Stanford elucidates:

> "*A necessary condition is determinate, a sufficient condition is not determinate; there may be several alternatives; but it must guarantee the result. A necessary condition does not guarantee the result; its only guarantees that the result cannot occur without it*" (Stanford, 1998).

A rigorous inquiry into causality addresses not only the question of 'how' but also that of 'why'. The question of how pertains to processes and mechanisms, encompassing determinism (social, natural, etc.), contingency, historical trends, alongside biological,

mechanical, and technological methods. Conversely, the question of why addresses psychological dimensions, such as objectives, motives, and incentives. At times, causal explanations do not rely explicitly on the word cause or causes; instead, terms like 'purpose', 'opportunity', 'antecedent', 'goal', or 'motive' are employed. A continuous awareness of this complexity necessitates a conscientious effort to employ terms carrying causal connotations with utmost precision (Gottschalk, 2008).

The concept of causality holds such a pivotal position that, without it, historical writing would degenerate into a mere catalog or chronology. Yet, despite its centrality, historians must recognize that investigating 'causes' in history must operate within arbitrary delimitations regarding:

a. The temporal scope of the past within which preceding interrelations are sought; and;
b. The boundaries of influential factors assumed to remain constant, as well as the delicate question of a 'first cause' or 'sole cause'—which constitutes a metaphysical rather than an empirical historical inquiry (Gottschalk, 2008).

History distinguishes between 'immediate causes' and 'indirect' or 'fundamental causes. The immediate cause of World War I was the assassination in Sarajevo, whereas the immediate cause of World War II was the Nazi invasion of Poland. In contrast, the indirect causes of both World Wars encompassed power politics, global anarchy, commercial rivalry, nationalistic aspirations, mutual paranoia, and territorial ambitions. Immediate causes are relatively easier to identify and achieve scholarly consensus on. Nevertheless, historians frequently diverge regarding the exact catalysts of major historical movements (Gottschalk, 2008).

Immediate causes often possess a contingent or accidental character. For instance, had Henry VIII's offspring been a son rather than a daughter (Mary), he might not have sought a divorce from Catherine of Aragon, thereby potentially averting the English Reformation. Similarly, had Franz Ferdinand's driver not reversed to correct a wrong turn at an intersection in Sarajevo, the Archduke might not have presented a clear target for assassination, potentially preventing the outbreak of World War I (Gottschalk, 2008).

However, an immediate cause is not the true underlying cause; it merely represents a single point in an extended chain of events, trends, influences, and structural forces where the effect becomes manifest. The event acting as the immediate cause serves merely as a spark, analogous to a lighted match falling into fuel or a hammer striking an explosive. As a trigger, an immediate cause is useful primarily for identifying the deeper antecedents that more properly deserve the label 'cause'. The appropriate question to ask is not what would have transpired had the 'accident' not occurred, but rather how historical developments progressed to reach such a juncture. A sheer coincidence, such as a delayed royal decree or a wrong turn during a parade, cannot by itself ignite a world revolution or a global war. We must recognize that if one coincidence had not occurred, another would likely have produced the same outcome, because the prevailing trends, influences, and decisive factors continued to operate in that direction. If a kingdom falls for want of a horseshoe nail, it is the systemic

vulnerability of the kingdom that warrants historical scrutiny, not the history of the nail itself (Gottschalk, 2008). As Stanford notes:

> "*... the immediate cause explains why the event occurred at that moment rather than at another, but not why it happened at all. The fundamental or ultimate cause is held to be something that, sooner or later, would bring about the effect (war, revolution, and so on), but not at any particular time*"(Stanford, 1998).

Indeed, the problem of historical causality is profoundly complex and, as Gottschalk suggests, remains fundamentally unresolved. At our current state of knowledge, evaluations regarding whether historical philosophies are correct or incorrect, intelligent or foolish, adequate or inadequate, grand or trivial, inevitably rest upon debatable criteria (Gottschalk, 2008). Causal explanations generally entail explaining how and why specific events transpired (Popper, 1986). Regarding historical causality, Ibn Khaldun, as cited by Zainab, asserted that everything in existence, whether objects or actions points to underlying causes behind them (Al-Khudhairi, 1987).

This study analyzes Qur'anic verses pertaining to socio-historical narratives to discern how these events transpired and whether causal factors underpinned them. Where causal factors exist, this study investigates whether historical events afford room for human intervention and, if so, the efficacy of such intervention in shaping outcomes. All historical events are grounded in causality; they occur when their specific prerequisites are satisfied and aligned with particular spatial and temporal conditions. Conversely, historical events fail to materialize in the absence of necessary prerequisites and conditions. It is this principle that provides determinacy regarding whether an event must or must not occur (Muthahhari, 2002).

3.2 Categorization of Historical Causality Based on Qur'anic Indications

Based on the Qur'anic depiction of various socio-historical events, the causality governing the movement and direction of history can be classified into three distinct types: categorical causality, hypothetical causality, and oriented causality.

3.2.1 Categorical Causality

Categorical causality refers to a causal process operating in such a manner that human agency lacks the power to alter its course. It unfolds inexorably. Humans can only ascribe meaning to historical events occurring under this categorical framework. Examples of historical processes governed by categorical causality include the life cycle of a nation and the overarching evolutionary trajectory of human history.

A nation, as a historical subject, constitutes a collective persona (Muthahhari, 1991) that undergoes a life cycle analogous to that of an individual: birth, childhood, adolescence, maturity, old age, and ultimate death. Determining when these stages begin and end in social life is far more complex than in individual life, where birth, youth, adulthood, and mortality are comparatively easy to identify. Yet, this trajectory remains unavoidable for both individuals and nations alike.

This principle is reflected in the following Qur'anic verse:

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ ۖ فَإِذَا جَآءَ أَجَلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً ۖ وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ

Translation: "*And for every nation is a specified term. So, when their time has come, they will not remain behind an hour, nor will they precede [it]*." (Q.S. Al-A'raf [7]: 34) (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2022)

The existence of an inevitable life trajectory that a nation must traverse sequentially does not imply historical fatalism. While it is true that every nation, once born, will grow, age, and ultimately perish—an outcome that cannot be averted—this does not mean that nations lack freedom throughout their existence. A vast array of choices and actions remain available during a nation's youth, maturity, or decline. Just as an individual is not considered devoid of free will simply because they must undergo a natural biological life cycle, neither is a nation devoid of agency simply because it is subject to historical life cycles.

Furthermore, just as not every individual completes a full life cycle, some dying in infancy, youth, or early adulthood, nations share a similar fate. Not all nations reach full maturity; some collapse in their infancy, youth, or at the onset of adulthood. This represents an inescapable historical reality. Yet, once again, just as individual mortality does not negate human freedom, neither does this historical vulnerability negate national agency.

On a broader scale, human history as a whole undergoes an evolutionary progression characterized by continuous development. Successive generations inherit, sustain, and advance civilizational progress. Contemporary society in the 21st century enjoys transportation and information technologies vastly superior to those of the 20th century, just as the 20th century enjoyed higher standards of living than the 19th century. Through the cumulative heritage of historical evolution, we experience and participate in history differently from past generations. It was not a matter of individual or collective choice to live in this specific phase of historical evolution; rather, historical circumstance placed us in the contemporary era. Similarly, 18th-century societies did not choose to live in an era less technologically advanced than ours; it was an unavoidable historical reality (Ismail, 2012).

Yet, just as an individual is not deemed unfree simply because they are born into a specific historical epoch, neither is a nation. Past civilizations exercised freedom within their historical contexts, just as contemporary nations exercise agency today, and future generations will exercise theirs. Human freedom is not an abstract concept operating in a vacuum; it is inherently contextualized by historical conditions.

Another manifestation of unalterable categorical causality is the historical alternation of triumph and decline among nations. No nation enjoys perpetual dominance. The Qur'an articulates this historical reality in reference to the defeat suffered by Muslims at the Battle of Uhud:

إِن يَمْسَسْكُمْ قَرْحٌ فَقَدْ مَسَّ ٱلْقَوْمَ قَرْحٌ مِّثْلُهُۥ ۚ وَتِلْكَ ٱلْأَيَّامُ نُدَاوِلُهَا بَيْنَ ٱلنَّاسِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ وَيَتَّخِذَ مِنكُمْ شُهَدَآءَ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ ٱلظَّـٰلِمِينَ

Translation: "*If a wound touches you, be sure a similar wound has touched the others. Such days [of varying fortunes] We alternate among the people so that Allah may make evident*

those who believe and choose from among you martyrs—and Allah does not like the wrongdoers." (Q.S. Ali 'Imran [3]: 140) (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2022)

Two key insights emerge from this verse. First, victory, glory, defeat, and decline are not the exclusive prerogative of any single nation or group. Second, if a community seeks victory, it must act in accordance with historical laws rather than relying solely on passive expectation of divine intervention. History demonstrates that no empire or civilization remains supreme indefinitely; great civilizations of the past have vanished, making way for new societies previously absent from the global stage. Furthermore, historical laws operate universally: whosoever fulfills the prerequisites for success will attain it, regardless of their faith. Belief alone does not guarantee historical victory; compliance with the underlying laws of historical development is required to achieve triumph, failing which defeat and stagnation become inevitable.

3.2.2 Hypothetical Causality

In hypothetical causality, historical determinism operates in a conditional (if-then) manner: whenever specific conditions, prerequisites, or causes are fulfilled, their corresponding effects inexorably follow. The vast majority of causal processes encountered by humans, both individually and socially, fall under this category (Shadr, 1992). This hypothetical framework is explicitly articulated in the Qur'an:

...اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتّٰى يُغَيِّرُوْا مَا بِاَنْفُسِهِمْۗ...

Translation: "...Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves..." (Q.S. Ar-Ra'd [13]: 11) (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2022). And in another verse:

ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَمْ يَكُ مُغَيِّرًا نِّعْمَةً اَنْعَمَهَا عَلٰى قَوْمٍ حَتّٰى يُغَيِّرُوْا مَا بِاَنْفُسِهِمْۙ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌۙ

Translation: "*That is because Allah would not change a favor which He had bestowed upon a people until they change what is in themselves. And indeed, Allah is Hearing and Knowing.*" (Q.S. Al-Anfal [8]: 53) (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2022)

In the natural world, hypothetical causality results in deterministic or mechanistic outcomes, as nature lacks consciousness and volition to choose desired results. Natural processes thus proceed mechanically. In the human realm, however, individuals and societies possess the agency to engineer or select the necessary conditions to achieve desired outcomes. Once these causes or conditions are satisfied, the ensuing results cannot be halted. Conversely, humans can prevent unwanted outcomes by suppressing the conditions necessary for their occurrence. Human success in realizing or avoiding specific outcomes depends directly on their capacity to manipulate or restrain these required causes. Nature cannot perform such functions because it lacks reflective consciousness, the ability to maintain critical distance, analyze, plan, and execute structured programs.

Because history concerns collective destinies, the fate of a nation hinges upon its collective capacity to engineer the conditions required for desirable outcomes and eliminate those leading to undesirable ones. This is manifested, for instance, in the establishment of

constitutions and legal frameworks within a state, outlining national objectives and binding regulations. It is similarly reflected in national development policies prioritized according to collective needs, executed through organized governance. These represent collective actions carrying collective responsibility, as their consequences are borne by society as a whole. A miscalculation in national policy leading to state bankruptcy, for example, inflicts suffering upon the entire nation, not merely the policymakers. Consequently, in social life, matters carrying widespread social ramifications must remain subject to social oversight, even if initiated by individuals or specific groups. State regulations governing social order are thus both natural and necessary; the pertinent debate concerns not whether regulations are needed, but rather the legitimate scope and extent of such interventions (Shadr, 1993).

If a nation aspires to become a democratic society, it can construct republican institutions; conversely, if it seeks a feudal order, it can establish a monarchical system with supporting legal codes. A nation desiring an educated populace prioritizes educational policies; one aiming for a capitalist, socialist, industrial, or agricultural economy must establish the specific prerequisites for those systems. Once the requisite causes are set in motion, the corresponding outcome becomes an inescapable reality. Humans cannot choose the outcome of a causal process directly; rather, they exercise freedom indirectly by engineering the underlying causes. We manipulate conditions to produce desired results, while the final outcome follows as a necessary consequence of those fulfilled conditions. Failure to achieve desired outcomes despite deliberate effort does not imply that history is chaotic or uncontrollable. Rather, such failures stem from human limitations, strategic errors, or insufficient capacity to establish the necessary conditions adequately. Unintended outcomes occur due to flawed predictions, poor planning, inadequate knowledge, or resource constraints (Ismail, 2012).

Human freedom within history is preserved because individuals are confronted with a multiplicity of causes within their lived reality. Humans can step back and select which causes to activate to produce desired outcomes. They can intervene to halt a process or allow events to take their natural course. Furthermore, they can manipulate variables to yield outcomes that would never occur spontaneously under purely natural conditions. It is precisely this capacity for intentional agency that enables humans to cultivate culture rather than remaining strictly immanent within nature, as is the case with animal life or physical-chemical phenomena (van Peursen, 1988).

3.2.3 Oriented Causality

Another distinct category of historical causality is oriented causality. In this framework, historical determinism operates according to natural directional tendencies rather than rigid, unyielding mandates. A crucial distinction exists between the strict, deterministic nature of categorical and hypothetical causality on the one hand, and the flexible nature of oriented causality on the other. Social history possesses natural directional trajectories (orientations) that allow a degree of latitude, granting humans room for temporary deviations within certain thresholds without triggering immediate catastrophic failure (Shadr, 1992). This principle is captured in the Qur'an:

وَلَوْ يُؤَاخِذُ اللّٰهُ النَّاسَ بِمَا كَسَبُوْا مَا تَرَكَ عَلٰى ظَهْرِهَا مِنْ دَاۤبَّةٍ وَّلٰكِنْ يُّؤَخِّرُهُمْ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّىۚ

Translation: "*And if Allah were to impose punishment upon the people for what they have earned, He would not leave upon the earth any creature. But He defers them for a specified term...*" (Q.S. Fatir [35]: 45) (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2022)

The gender-based division of labor serves as an illustrative example of oriented causality. The division of labor between men and women historically evolved through empirical, natural processes rather than purely normative legal decrees, aligning with the innate characteristics of each gender. However, human societies can deviate from this natural trajectory by implementing social norms—for instance, mandating that men remain at home to raise children while women serve as primary breadwinners. While such normative reconfigurations are possible, they represent a departure from natural historical tendencies. As Shadr notes, such structural deviations cannot endure indefinitely, as historical laws eventually respond to imbalances:

> "*The process of dividing labor between men and women is an empirical process that occurred naturally, rather than arising from normative legal decrees. It developed in accordance with the natural characteristics of men and women. However, this process can be diverted. It is possible to establish normative laws requiring men to stay at home to care for and educate children while requiring women to seek employment outside the home. This can certainly be enacted through specific normative laws, resulting in a deviation from the natural process. Yet, such a condition cannot persist indefinitely, because historical laws will soon respond to this deviation from the natural order, as it inflicts harm upon human nature itself. Such a deviation freezes the innate potential of women aligned with their natural disposition (fitrah)—such as maternal roles and patient childcare—while suppressing the natural potential of men required for roles demanding intense exertion, endurance, consistency, and resilience... Such deviations cannot last continuously; they will collapse within a relatively short period*" (Shadr, 1992).

Systemic corruption provides another illustration of oriented causality. Corruption unambiguously harms the social fabric of a nation, yet the exact threshold at which corruption precipitates total societal collapse cannot be precisely quantified. This imprecision is a hallmark of oriented causality: minor or localized corruption may not immediately destroy a nation, as historical laws can tolerate small-scale deviations without instantly exacting fatal consequences. However, if corruption becomes pervasive, structural, and prolonged, oriented causality inevitably asserts itself, bringing about destructive societal collapse (Ismail, 2012).

Environmental degradation follows a similar pattern. Small-scale environmental damage may exert negligible effects, but large-scale, sustained environmental destruction yields perilous consequences for humanity. Massive deforestation over extended periods leads inexorably to landslides and flooding. Nature, and by extension, the social systems embedded within it, can absorb minor disruptions, but prolonged, severe violations trigger catastrophic readjustments. While environmental degradation involves physical nature, these destructive practices are driven by human action and directly impact human civilization,

placing them squarely within the domain of historical laws. In sum, oriented causality accommodates deviations, but only up to a critical threshold (Shadr, 1992).

3.3 Synthesis: The Dynamics of Human Agency and Temporal Realms in the Tripartite Framework

To clarify our conceptual stance, we assert that historical causality in the Qur'an operates as a pluralistic, tripartite framework under the sovereign domain of *sunnatullah*. Rather than negating human free will, these fixed divine laws serve as the very foundation that makes genuine human freedom possible by providing a predictable and stable environment for action. Within this framework, the three models of causality unfold in distinct temporal and spatial realms, demanding different postures from human actors:

3.3.1 Categorical Causality (When and Where to Accept Structural Limits)

This model manifests at the macro-structural level of history. It governs the inevitable life cycles of civilizations and the broader evolutionary trajectory of human epochs. Humans encounter this causality when facing historical realities, they cannot directly alter, such as the inescapable decline and "death" of an aging nation, or the specific technological and cultural baseline of the century into which they are born. In this macro-realm, humans must adopt a posture of acceptance, resembling "historical fatalism" only in the sense of acknowledging inescapable structural limits, not to surrender to passivity, but to understand, experience, and derive profound moral lessons (*ibrah*) from these unalterable historical outcomes.

3.3.2 Hypothetical Causality (When and Where to be Voluntarist)

This model operates within the conditional, "if-then" processes of social, political, and economic engineering. It manifests whenever a society actively designs its collective destiny, such as establishing legal frameworks, formulating constitutions, prioritizing education, or implementing economic development policies. This is the primary arena where humans must be fully voluntaristic. Because outcomes in this realm are strictly contingent upon human inputs, individuals and societies must act as dynamic, creative subjects, manipulating variables and engineering specific causes to actively achieve desired progress and prevent unwanted decay.

3.3.3 Oriented Causality (When and Where to Align Agency with Fitrah)

This model applies to natural directional tendencies and intrinsic human dispositions (*fitrah*), such as moral integrity, social justice, and ecological harmony. Humans encounter this causality in areas like systemic corruption, environmental degradation, or foundational social roles. Here, human voluntarism is granted a degree of latitude, allowing temporary deviations or experimental social structures. However, humans must actively align their choices with these natural orientations; exceeding the critical thresholds of deviation inevitably triggers catastrophic civilizational collapse.

Among the three models within the tripartite framework, the Qur'an exhibits a clear preference for and places the strongest emphasis on hypothetical causality. This preference is textually anchored in pivotal verses such as Q.S. Ar-Ra'd: 11 and Q.S. Al-Anfal: 53, which explicitly state that Divine intervention in a nation's condition or favor is strictly contingent upon the nation first changing its own internal state. By framing historical change as a

conditional "if-then" process dependent on human initiative, the Qur'an prioritizes active human responsibility and voluntarism over passive surrender.

Furthermore, from a scientific perspective, hypothetical causality stands as the most reliable and robust model. Scientific inquiry fundamentally relies on the principle of causality to establish predictability, formulate testable theories, and generalize empirical findings. Because hypothetical causality operates on deterministic conditional relations, where the presence of specific, reproducible causes guarantees the occurrence of corresponding effects, it aligns perfectly with the scientific method. It provides historians, social scientists, and policymakers with a reliable framework for empirical analysis, variable control, and structured societal planning, demonstrating that historical progress is an objective, law-governed process accessible to human reason.

4. CONCLUSION

From a Qur'anic perspective, historical processes and events unfold in accordance with the fundamental principles of causality, operating under the sovereign domain of *sunnatullah*, the fixed, consistent, and unchanging divine decrees. Rather than restricting human agency, these immutable laws serve as the ontological and cognitive prerequisite that makes genuine human freedom possible. By providing a stable, predictable, and law-governed historical environment, *sunnatullah* allows human actors to anticipate outcomes, make rational choices, and actively shape their collective destinies.

This study demonstrates that historical causality in the Qur'an is not monolithic, but is instead conceptualized as a pluralistic, tripartite framework, comprising categorical, hypothetical, and oriented models, each unfolding within distinct temporal and spatial realms that demand different human postures. First, Categorical causality governs the macro-structural level of history, such as the inevitable life cycles of civilization (nations) and the overarching evolutionary trajectory of human epochs. In this realm, where structural forces lie beyond direct human intervention, the appropriate posture is one of acceptance, acknowledging inescapable structural limitations not to surrender to passivity, but to intellectually grasp and derive profound moral lessons (ibrah) from these unalterable historical cycles. Second, Hypothetical causality represents the conditional, "if-then" framework of social, political, and economic engineering. Operating as the primary arena of human history, it demands a fully voluntaristic posture. Because outcomes in this realm are strictly contingent upon human inputs, societies must act as dynamic, self-determining subjects, actively manipulating and engineering necessary causes to realize desired progress and avert decay. Third, Oriented causality acts as a flexible, directional framework aligned with innate human dispositions (fitrah) and moral boundaries. While accommodating temporary deviations, it demands a posture of alignment. Pervasive and prolonged violations of these natural ethical and ecological limits will eventually trigger civilizational collapse.

Among these three, the Qur'an exhibits a clear conceptual preference for hypothetical causality, textually prioritizing active human responsibility over passive expectation. Furthermore, from a scientific perspective, hypothetical causality stands as the most reliable and robust model. By operating on consistent, deterministic conditional relations, it provides

the essential predictability, testability, and universality required for empirical social science, demonstrating that the trajectory of human history is an objective, law-governed process fully accessible to human reason.

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