



Jihad and Resistance: The Strategy of Seyyed Ali Tabatabaei in Facing Colonialism

Mohammad Malekzadeh   

1. Assistant Professor of the Islamic Research Institute for Culture and Thought, Tehran, Iran. (Corresponding Author)
Email: malekzadeh1350@gmail.com

Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Article type: Research Article</p> <p>Article history: Received: 22 May 2024 Received in revised form: 30 October 2024 Accepted: 21 December 2024 Published online: 21 December 2024</p> <p>Keywords: <i>Colonialism, Independence of Islamic societies, Iran, Jihad and Resistance, Seyyed Ali Tabatabaei.</i></p>	<p>Shia and Sunni scholars unanimously emphasize the necessity of defending the independence of Islamic lands, a principle deeply rooted in Islamic jurisprudence, particularly in discussions on jihad. This issue has garnered heightened attention in situations where the sovereignty of Muslim territories faces external threats. Islamic jurists have historically addressed such challenges through the issuance of treatises, statements, and jihadi fatwas. Seyyed Ali Tabatabaei, a prominent Islamic jurist, prioritized the preservation of religion and the independence of Islamic societies across social and political domains. This study aims to analyze Tabatabaei's political thought and strategies in confronting crises that endangered the autonomy of Iran and other Islamic nations under colonial pressures. Key crises included the rivalry among colonial powers for territorial expansion, Russian aggression against Iran, and the emergence of deviant religious sects supported by colonial forces, which threatened the unity and cohesion of Islamic societies. Using a descriptive-analytical approach based on library research, this paper examines the intellectual foundations of Seyyed Ali Tabatabaei's thought and his strategies for countering these crises. The findings underscore his emphasis on resistance and jihad as pivotal strategies to safeguard the independence and liberation of Islamic societies from colonial domination.</p>

Cite this article: Malekzadeh. M. (2024). Jihad and Resistance: The Strategy of Seyyed Ali Tabatabaei in Facing Colonialism. *Journal of Social Theories of Muslim Thinkers*, 14(4): 63 - 79. <https://doi.org/10.22059/jstmt.2024.376584.1708>



© The Author(s).

Publisher: University of Tehran Press.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22059/jstmt.2024.376584.1708>

1. Introduction

The life of Seyyed Ali Tabatabaei Haeri coincided with a period marked by the dominance of colonial powers and numerous crises in Islamic lands. During this era, the Russian colonial government in northern Iran posed significant threats to the political and cultural independence and security of the Iranian people. In response to these challenges, Seyyed Ali Tabatabaei emerged as a key figure in resisting colonial domination. This article investigates the crises faced during Tabatabaei's lifetime and explores his strategies for addressing these threats. The research hypothesizes that Tabatabaei adopted a strategy centered on resistance and jihad to safeguard the independence and cohesion of Islamic societies. His approach was rooted in his belief in the authority of the Supreme Leader during the occultation era. One of the primary objectives of this study is to introduce and highlight Tabatabaei's political and religious contributions, as well as his dedication to preserving the independence of Islamic communities. The central question driving this research is: What were the major crises during Tabatabaei's lifetime, and what strategies did he employ to confront them? Additionally, sub-questions are formulated to address the diverse nature of these crises across religious, political, and cultural domains. The answers to these questions form the foundation of this study, which aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of Tabatabaei's efforts in maintaining the sovereignty and unity of Islamic societies amidst colonial challenges.

2. Background of the Research

A review of the intellectual and practical contributions of Shiite scholars throughout the history of Islam and Iran demonstrates their consistent role as advocates for social justice, particularly in resisting tyranny and colonialism. A central concern of these scholars has been the preservation of national independence and the prevention of foreign interference in the internal affairs of Islamic nations. During the era of Seyyed Ali Tabatabaei, Iran faced significant challenges, including Russian military aggression and conspiracies by other colonial powers. In response, Islamic scholars, including Tabatabaei, issued jihad decrees to counter colonial aggression and reclaim territories occupied by enemy forces. Despite the historical significance of Tabatabaei's efforts, no independent study has yet been conducted to comprehensively examine his role in defending the independence of Islamic societies against colonial domination. This research fills that gap by investigating Tabatabaei's strategies and contributions in this context. By analyzing his intellectual and practical responses to these crises, this study aims to shed light on his pivotal role in safeguarding the sovereignty and cohesion of Islamic communities during a critical period in history.

3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, utilizing explanation, analysis, and description to explore the role of Seyyed Ali Tabatabaei in resisting colonialism and defending the independence of Islamic territories, grounded in his ideological principles. Data collection was conducted through library and documentary methods, drawing on historical texts from Tabatabaei's era as well as scholarly and historical analyses of his life and contributions. By critically examining these sources, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of Tabatabaei's strategies and ideological foundations in confronting colonial aggression and safeguarding the sovereignty of Islamic societies.

4. Findings

The theoretical foundations of Seyyed Ali Tabatabaei's political and resistance strategies against colonial domination can be analyzed through two key frameworks: the theory of Islamic resistance against arrogance and the theory of the political guardianship of the jurist (Wilayat al-Faqih). Tabatabaei employed strategies

of jihad and resistance to eliminate foreign domination over the structures of Islamic society and to safeguard the dignity and independence of the nation. Grounded in his belief in the political authority of the jurist during the occultation, he issued decrees for resistance and jihad specifically targeting Russian colonial aggression. An analysis of Tabatabaei's political thought and writings reveals that he viewed the authority of the Wali Faqih—as the deputy of the Infallible Imam during the occultation—as encompassing a broad scope. This expansive interpretation underpinned his actions and strategies for confronting crises, emphasizing the central role of religious leadership in preserving the sovereignty and cohesion of Islamic societies. By integrating ideological principles with practical measures, Tabatabaei's approach exemplifies a comprehensive framework for resisting colonial domination while maintaining Islamic values and independence.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Defending the territorial integrity and independence of Islamic lands against external threats is a fundamental principle in Islamic jurisprudence. Seyyed Ali Tabatabaei, renowned as the author of *Riyadh*, stands out as one of the most prominent scholars committed to resisting colonial domination and safeguarding the sovereignty of Islamic nations. His intellectual contributions must be contextualized within the socio-political developments of his era. During Tabatabaei's lifetime, Iran faced significant challenges, including widespread war, insecurity, and crises stemming from colonial aggression. Colonial powers sought to fragment the cohesion of Islamic societies, such as Iran, and impose political, economic, and cultural dependency.

In this context, defending Islam and liberating Islamic societies from colonial domination across intellectual, political, economic, cultural, and social dimensions became one of Tabatabaei's primary concerns. When Iran was targeted by colonial invasions and embroiled in conflict with Russia, Tabatabaei joined other scholars in issuing a fatwa calling for resistance against foreign invaders to preserve national independence. By examining Tabatabaei's scientific and practical approaches during the Iran-Russia wars, his intellectual foundations can be understood as rooted in the necessity of resistance to protect the political, security, and cultural independence of Islamic nations. Guided by Quranic commands to reject foreign domination over Islamic society's structures, Tabatabaei emphasized preserving the dignity and sovereignty of the Iranian people. His belief in the political guardianship of jurists during the occultation era provided the framework for issuing jihad orders against Russian colonial forces. This study highlights his pivotal role in defending Islamic values and independence during a critical period in history.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Ethical Considerations: Complied with.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declare no conflict of interest.

References

Holy Quran

Aghabozur Tehrani, Mohammad Mohsen (2009), *Tabaqat A'alam al-Shi'a: Al-Karam al-Barrah fi Qarn al-Thaleth al-Ashrah*, Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi.

Akhundi, Morteza Ahmad (2008), *Prince Dalgorki: History and Political Role of Baha'i Leaders*, Tehran: Dar al-Kitab al-Islamiya.

Al Tomeh, Salman Hadi (1963), *The Heritage of Karbala*, Najaf: Al-Alami Publishing House.

- Alikhani, Ali Akbar (2011), *Political Thought of Muslim Thinkers*, Tehran: Research Institute for Cultural and Social Studies.
- Al-Mahboub, Jafar bin Baqr (1986), *Madi Al-Najaf and Haderooha*, Beirut-Lebanon: Dar Al-Adwa.
- Amin Ameli, Seyyed Mohsen (1986), *Ayan al-Shi'a*, Beirut: Dar al-Taarif for publishing.
- Ashouri, Dariush (2014), *political encyclopedia; Dictionary of terms and political schools*, Tehran: Marwayd Publications.
- Brown, Edward (1975), *History of Iranian Literature*, translated by Ali Pasha Saleh and others, Tehran: Morwarid.
- Burrell, R. M. (1881-1965), *Iran Political Diaries*, Volume 14.
- Findley, Carter V. & Murray Rothney, John Alexander (1986) "Twentieth century world", 3rd edition, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Elgar, Hamed (2008), *Wahhabism*, translated by Ahmed Namee, Mashhad: Islamic Research Foundation.
- Fazil Siuri, Abu Abdullah Moqdad bin Abdullah (2007), *Nazd al-Qaid al-Fiqhiyyah Ala Madhhab al-Umamiya*, Qom, Marashi Najafi Library.
- Gardan, Fard (1983), *General Gardan's mission in Iran*, translated by Abbas Iqbal Ashtiani, Tehran: Gozaresh.
- Hosseini-Fosai, Hassan (1999), *Farsnameh Naseri*, Tehran: Amirkabir.
- Mosavi Khomeini, Ruhollah (1965), *Al-Rasael*, Qom, Ismailian Press Institute.
- Japlaghi Boroujerdi, Ali Asghar bin Mohammad Shafi' (1989), *Taraif Al-Maqal fi Mafarah Tabaq al-Rijal*, Qom: Mahmoud Rajae's Press.
- Khansari, Seyyed Mohammad Baqer (1971), *Ruzat al-Janaat fi Ahwal Ulama wa Al-Sadat*, Qom: Ismailian.
- Mahdavi, Mosleh al-Din (1989), *Bayan al-Mufakhar in the circumstances of Mohammad Baqer Hajjah al-Islam Shafti Bidabadi*, Qom: Dhkhaer Publishing.
- Mamqani, Abdullah (1931), *Tanghih al-Maqal*, Tehran: Jahan Publications.
- Mirzai Qomi, Abulqasem bin Mohammad Hassan (1992), *Jame Al-Shatat*, Researcher: Morteza Razavi, Tehran: Kayhan Publications.
- Modares Tabrizi, Mirza Mohammad Ali (1990), *Rehana Al-Adab*, Tehran: Khayyam Publications.
- Najafi, Mohammad Hassan (1988), *Javaheer al-Kalam fi Sharh Shar'e al-Islam*, Tehran: Abbas Qochani Press.
- Navaei, Abdul Hossein (1990), *Iran and the world from Qajar to the end of the Nasrid era*, Tehran: Homa publishing house.
- Qomi, Sheikh Abbas (No date), *Fawad al-Razwieh*, No place, No publisher.
- Rajabi Davani, Mohammad Hasan (1999), *Jihadist Letters and Fatwas*, Tehran: Ministry of Islamic Guidance.
- Rajabi Davani, Mohammad Hassan (2011), *Political and social correspondences and statements of Shia scholars of the Qajar period*, Tehran: Nei publication.
- Rajabi Devani, Ali (1983), *Agha Mohammad Baqir bin Mohammad Asmal Isfahani known as Vahid Behbahani*, Tehran: Amirkabir Publications.
- Rakabiyan, Rashid and Siadat, Mohammad Hassan (2019), "Theory of Velayat Faqih in the Political Thought of Ayatollah Seyed Ali Tabatabaei known as Saheb Riyad", *Islamic Government Journal*, Year 24, Number 3, Serial 93, pp. 173-146.
- Palmer, Robert Roswell. (1964) "A History of the Modern World", New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Sepehr, Mohammad Taqi bin Mohammad Ali (2015), *Naskh al-Tawarikh*, Tehran: Islamiya Publications.
- Sheikh Tusi, Muhammad bin Hassan (1987), *Kitab al-Khilaf*, Qom, Al-Nashar al-Islami Publishing House.
- Tabatabaei Karbalai, Ali bin Muhammad Ali (2003), *riyaz olmsael fi tahaqiq alahkam baldelael* (old print), Qom: Al-Al-Bayt Institute, Lahiya al-Tarath.
- Tankabani, Mohammad bin Suleiman (2004), *Qasses al-Ulama*, translated by Mohammad Reza Barzegar Khaleghi and Efat Karbasi, Tehran: Scientific and Cultural Publications.
- Toloui, Mahmoud (2006), *Comprehensive Political Dictionary*, Tehran: Alam Publications.
- Warei, Javad (2003), "Fiqh foundations of defense of Islamic lands", *Islamic Government Journal*, Year 8, No. 2, Series 28, pp. 71-42.