
THE MOSLEM WORLD: THEORETICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS

DMITRY MIKHEL. ALI SHARIATI'S PHILOSOPHY AND
THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION IN IRAN

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Abstract. The article deals with philosophical work of Ali Shariati, a prominent Iranian intellectual of the second half of the 20th century and one of the ideologists of the Islamic Revolution. Shariati gave Iranian Shi'ism a revolutionary red color, suggesting that the original Islam should be seen not only as a doctrine but also as a revolutionary practice. Shariati is represented as an original thinker whose mission was to avoid the extremes of liberal and communist worldviews. An important place in Shariati's philosophical work is occupied by questions about the impact of modernization processes on Iranian society and the specificity of Marxism.

Introduction

In 1979, the Islamic Revolution took place in Iran, where the main driving force was the Shi'ite clergy. Traditionally perceived as a conservative social force, the clergy was able to assume an active political position and lead the revolution in Iran, the fact that astonished other countries. Radicalization of the political position of the clergy served as a starting point in the recent history of political Islam, a significant phenomenon for the entire modern world. The emergence of political Islam in Iran was primarily due to the spiritual leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Ruhollah Musavi Khomeini, who proposed the doctrine of 'Islamic rule'. Along with Khomeini, there are other iconic figures in the history of Iran of the second half of the 20th century who greatly contributed to the emergence of political Islam. One of them, without a doubt, is Ali Shariati (1933-1977), an Iranian philosopher who organically combined Islamic ideas and left-wing political beliefs. Using the experience of the past, Shariati practically advocated the renewal of the ideals of the Islamic religion and proclaimed the need to update the Islamic doctrine in keeping with the times. Shariati expressed his philosophical credo in the original concept of 'Red Shi'ism'.

Iranian Context

The intellectual formation of Ali Shariati was influenced by the dramatic events of Iranian history in the middle of the 20th century. Starting in the 18th century, almost all Islamic countries were made colonies of the West to varying degrees. After the end of the First World War and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, there was not a single sovereign country in the Islamic world – even the Iranian empire was actually a colonial state.

The discovery of oil fields in Iran boosted the rapid development of the oil industry and promoted the entry of

Western oil corporations to Iran. Western oil producers unashamedly depleted the country's natural reserves, and were heavily involved in all governance-related matters. Western meddling in Iran was particularly intensified during the reign of the Shahs from the Pahlavi dynasty, who came to power in 1925. The modernization of Iranian society that followed was controversial and caused vast resistance from the majority of Iranians. In particular, Iranian intellectual elite, the clergy and millions of ordinary Muslims objected to the fact that rapid social and economic development was accompanied by planting of Western culture and materialistic worldview.

This was particularly intolerable for Iran as one of the most ancient civilizations in the world. For many centuries, Iran had successfully resisted the West, and Iranians could hardly forget that their forefathers always fought against Western peoples, such as Greeks, Macedonians and Romans. Traditionally, the pillar of Iran's greatness was its spiritual culture based on the Avesta tradition, which was later replaced by Shi'ite Islam. By the beginning of the 20th century, the virtual colonization of Iran by the West had completely suppressed Iranian spirituality. With the backing of Western patrons, the secular authorities of Iran eradicated all the dissenting voices in the country. Even the Islamic clergy of Iran, famous for their independence, were suppressed.

In the middle of the 20th century, civic activities in Iran were revitalized due to the developments associated with the end of the Second World War – the Iran crisis of 1946, the rise to power of the National Front Party (1951) and the following coup d'état (1953). After the British and Soviet troops withdrew from Iran, patriotic sentiments ran high among the Iranian intellectuals, who thought to take control of the country. The highest achievement of this civic activity was Dr. Mohammad Mosaddegh becoming the head of the government (1951–1953); he nationalized oil, the greatest asset of Iran, and expelled all Western experts and advisers.

In response, a group of military officers associated with the Shah, led by General Fazlollah Zahedi (1897–1963) and supported by British and American intelligence agencies, overthrew the government of Mosaddegh and restored Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (1919–1980) to the Shah's throne. It was by his hands that the country turned into a police state, and the nationalist forces close to Mosaddegh were defeated. In the economic sphere, American and British corporations regained control of everything and their representatives once again served as main advisers at the court of the Shah.

From Khorasan to Paris

The abovementioned events took place while Shariati was growing up and matured. His father, Mohammad-Taqi Shariati, was an Islamic scholar and head of the Centre for the Propagation of Islamic Truths (*Kanun-e Nashr-e Haqaeq-e Eslami*) in Khorasan. Shariati's family sympathized with the policy of Mosaddegh, so his fall from power was a tragedy for Shariati Sr. and his son.

Ali Shariati spent his childhood and youth in the village of Mazinan, near Sebzevar in Khorasan province; the Marxist-Leninist party of Iran (*Hezb-e Tude-ye Iran*) was founded there following the deployment of Soviet troops in 1941. In Khorasan, Marxist sentiments were strong even after the withdrawal of the Soviet troops; Shariati, along with the religious education in his father's house, absorbed socialist ideas that circulated widely among workers of Khorasan. In time, such dual intellectual influence eventually prompted Shariati to forge his own 'middle way' by imaginatively combining Islam and socialism.

In 1950, Shariati joined the Teacher's Training College in Mashhad, the main city in Khorasan and the second-most-populous city in Iran. After graduating (1952) he worked as a teacher in the village of Ahmedabad near Mashhad; three years later he joined the newly founded philological faculty of Ferdowsi University of Mashhad (1955) with the intention to

obtain a bachelor's degree in Arabic and French. At the university Shariati took great interest in politics and helped to found student political organizations. During his student years he was repeatedly arrested for his political views and started collaborating with local newspapers, publishing his own articles and translations [11, p. 49-57].

While preparing for admission to university, Shariati decided to make one of his father's ideas true and embarked to translate "Abu Dharr al-Ghifari" by Abdel Hamid Gouda al-Sahhar, an Egyptian writer, from Arabic into Farsi. He completed his translation in 1955; while working on the book, he took the liberty of editing the original text by giving it a new interpretation. Al-Sahhar portrayed the hero as a highwayman who pillaged merchant caravans near Mecca. When Abu Dharr (also spelled Abu Zarr) heard about the Prophet Muhammad, he converted to Islam and started preaching new religion among the Ghifar. He later joined the army of the Prophet and participated in numerous battles. After the death of the Prophet, Abu Dharr moved to Syria and led a pious life full of asceticism. Shariati was fascinated by the fate of this historical figure and injected his own traits into the character's image.¹ Thus, in his interpretation, Abu Dharr was the first representative of Islamic socialism. [11, c. 57-61] Later, Shariati used the same approach when interpreting the views of other figures in early Islamic history, including the Prophet Muhammad himself and members of his family.

In 1959, Shariati graduated from Mashhad University and chose to continue his education in France. At the Sorbonne, where he studied sociology and the history of religion, he became close to several major French thinkers of that time. He was deeply impressed by the 'new left' ideology, especially by the views of Frantz Fanon (1925-1961), who promoted the revolutionary cause for decolonization in the Third World, and Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), the founder of French existentialism.

While in France, Shariati plunged into local intellectual life and political struggles. He worked with Algerian revolutionaries

from the National Liberation Front, translated the works of Fanon and Sartre into Persian, participated in demonstrations in support of Patrice Lumumba (1925–1961), and was repeatedly arrested. Shariati also forged close relations with Iranian political exiles; together with Mehdi Bazargan (1907–1995),² he co-founded the Freedom Movement of Iran. In 1964, he completed his studies in Paris for the Degree of Sociology. While working on his thesis, he translated the book “Westoxification” (*Gharbzadagi*) by the Iranian émigré journalist Jalal Al-e-Ahmad (1923–1969) into Farsi; he subsequently published it in Iran.

The Issues of Modernization

After returning to Iran, Shariati was given the opportunity to teach at the university. His career as a university professor started in 1964 at his alma mater – Mashhad University – where he lectured on the history of Islam. In 1970, he was invited to teach at Tehran University. At the same time, in cooperation with Bazargan, Shariati founded the Hosainieh-e Ershad religious and cultural center,³ where he gave lectures on a wide range of philosophical, social and religious issues for students and also for general public. It was during these years that Shariati received unprecedented popularity among Iranian youth.

One of the key themes of Shariati’s lecture courses was the issue of modernizing Iranian society. While he did not consider himself a sharp opponent of modernization, Shariati believed that its main feature in Iran was the fact that it was implemented in a European manner, similar to Westernization. Having spent many years in the West, Shariati knew Western culture well and had a rather negative attitude to the influence of the West on Iran. His large audience unanimously supported his views. However, Shariati himself believed that Iranians in general were not yet sufficiently aware of the perniciousness of Westernization. He commented on this topic in a letter to his son (1972): “We are talking about a society half of whose members are asleep or have

been deluded, and the other half who are awake are in a state of flight. We want both to awaken the asleep, inducing them to stand up, and to have the fleeing escapes returned to Iran encouraging them to stay" [10, p. 13].

Shariati identified the White Revolution launched by the Shah in the 1960s not merely as modernization in the European manner, but also as "poisoning by the West" – westoxification. He learned the overall perception of the whole process from Al-e-Ahmad, whose book contains the following words: "We have been unable to preserve our own historico-cultural character in the face of the machine and its fateful onslaught. Rather, we have been routed. We have been unable to take a considered stand in the face of this contemporary monster. So long as we do not comprehend the real essence, basis, and philosophy of Western civilization, only aping the West outwardly and formally (by consuming its machines), we shall be like the ass going about in a lion's skin. We know what became of him... So long as we remain consumers, so long as we have not built the machine, we remain occidentotic. Our dilemma is that once we have built the machine, we will have become mechanotic, just like the West, crying out at the way technology and the machine have stampeded out of control" [7, p. 31].

Like Al-e-Ahmad, Shariati also tended to resort to a pathetic depiction of Westernization. In his short essay "Reflections of a Concerned Muslim: on the Plight of Oppressed Peoples" (1977) he wrote the following: "My friend, I live in a society where I face a system which controls half of the universe, maybe all of it. Mankind is being driven into a new stronghold of slavery. Although we are not in physical slavery, we are truly destined with a fate worse than yours! Our thoughts, hearts, and will powers are enslaved. In the name of sociology, education, art, sexual freedom, financial freedom, love of exploitation, and love of individuals, faith in goals, faith in humanitarian responsibilities and belief in one's own school of thought are entirely taken away from within our hearts! The system has

converted us into empty pots which accommodate whatever is poured inside them!" [14, p. 39–40].

Nevertheless, unlike Al-e-Ahmad, Shariati was not so inclined to dwell on the criticism of Westernization. A graduate of Mashhad University and the Sorbonne in Paris, he formulated for himself an alternative during his stay in France where he studied new left-wing writings and Marxist literature. In essence, he believed that the impending Iranian revolution was the alternative, which was supposed to liberate Iran both from the despotic Shah's rule and his policy of Westernization.

Question about Marxism

A high-quality Western education enabled Shariati to look at the current social, economic and political issues of Iran from a broad analytical perspective. Marxist theory was a particularly suitable methodological tool for that matter, allowing the situation in Iran to be interpreted with the use of such terms as 'class exploitation', 'political violence' and 'capitalist alienation'. However, while respecting Marxist theory, Shariati did not consider Marxism an effective means for solving Iranian issues. [8]

According to Shariati, it was mainly due to the fact that Marxism was a typical product of Western thinking and an example of yet another Western misconception. In his famous work on Marxism, Shariati wrote the following: "...Marxism itself is utterly a product of the history, social organization, and culture outlook of this same West", which he intends to deny [12, p. 49]. Marxism was a product of Western Modernism, which proclaimed the policy of abolition of religion, human individuality and spiritual values. In a sense, Marxism can even be viewed as a religion that "sees its task as the systematic eradication of all forms of religion" [12, p. 52].

Shariati did not reject some of the Marxist ideas, but generally regarded Marxism as a one-dimensional ideological system that neglects what the religious outlook can give. He fully

understood that Marxism does not recognize the role of an individual in history, while reducing man to his class affiliation and human life itself to production activity. Marxism reduces social well-being and even liberating from oppression to a materialist interpretation, without providing any other possibilities. "We see that socialism removes from all his limbs and branches expect one, but it so encourage that one to spread out that it outgrows root and trunk. Thus, it makes man one dimensional, however, lofty and sublime that one dimension may be" [12, p. 117].

According to Shariati, despite the fact that Marxism and communism that is based on it are efficient opposition to liberalism and capitalism, they are more intertwined than an inexperienced observer might think. Both these systems, "though they differ in outward configuration, regard man as an economic animal." They compete with each other only to find out which of the two will provide more successfully for the needs of this animal. Relying on the progress of machine production, both capitalism and communism promise man only material abundance, which results in the decline and disappearance of traditional moral values. All the dominant ideologies generated by the modern Western world view man in isolation from his divine or spiritual nature. Unlike in Islam, they do not consider man as a descendant of Adam, but always as an animal – a product of biological, historical, social or instrumental development. The modern Western world refuses to see the divine element in man. Now "humanity is a species in decline" [12, p. 32-48].

The Median School Philosophy

Shariati criticized Iranian modernization in the form of Westernization along with Marxism from an original philosophical position, which he first formulated in November 1954. In preparation for entering Mashhad University, Shariati

published a series of articles in the Khorasan newspaper, entitled "The Median School of Islam" (*Maktab-e Vaseteḥ-e Eslām*). The author argued that if one looked closely at the world map, they could clearly see that Islamic countries – Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia and the countries of North Africa – were located between the capitalist world of the West and the communist world of the East. This geographical location is not an accident and impacts all aspects of Islamic life. Philosophically, the Islamic world is halfway between materialism and idealism; sociologically, it is between capitalism and communism; and politically, it finds itself caught between the Western and Eastern blocs. In general, according to Shariati, the Islamic world holds a 'middle position' and the school of thought is called 'Median school' [11, p. 61–62].

Shariati fully absorbed the idea of the Islamic 'Median school', which apparently guided his way of thinking all his life. While criticizing the Shah's policy of modernizing Iran, Shariati did not deny the value of modernization as such, but viewed Westernization of Iranian society as its main danger, resulting in the "poisoning by the West" and loss of its own spiritual foundations. When he criticized Marxism, he recognized the value of the left-wing socialist methodology, but suggested that Marxism in general should be considered an unsuitable system of thought for Iranian society. Tentatively devising his own method, Shariati recognized himself as a representative of the Islamic Median school. A logical decision for him was to turn to Islam. True to his own original principle, Shariati tried to find his own vision of Islam, the one in the middle between Islam of inhuman oppression and Islam of submission.

As stated above, Shariati thought of such a vision of Islam in his youth, when he portrayed the former pagan and highwayman Abu Zarr from the left-wing point of view; Abu Zarr became a Muslim and a faithful warrior of the Prophet, using his weapon against the Meccan tribal nobility. In his "Lessons on Islam" (*Darsha-ye Islāmshenasi*), Shariati explained his

understanding of Islam as follows: "It is necessary to explain what we mean by Islam. By it we mean the Islam of Abu Zarr; not that of the caliphs. The Islam of justice and proper leadership; not that of the rulers, the aristocracy and the upper class. The Islam of freedom, progress and consciousness; not that of slavery, captivity and passivity. The Islam of the mojahed; not that of the clergy. The Islam of virtue, personal responsibility and protest; not that of (religious) dissimulation, (clerical) intercession and (divine) intervention. The Islam of struggle for faith, society, and scientific knowledge; not that of surrender, dogmatism and uncritical imitation (*taqlid*) of the clergy" [6, p. 112].

Shariati's vision of Islam was far from how Islam was seen not only in the West, but also in Iran. The philosopher stated that originally Islam was a truly revolutionary political force aimed at protecting major social ideals: justice, human dignity and freedom. That was what Islam was in the beginning, Islam that was given to the world by the Prophet Muhammad, his son-in-law Imam Ali and his other family members. Revolutionizing ideas about the original Islam, Shariati expressed the idea that in modern times Islam could and should be charged with revolutionary energy. According to Shariati, what liberalism and Marxism were incapable to achieve, will be fulfilled by Islam becoming the revolutionary banner of the future struggle for social ideals. "Islam will play a major role in this new life and movement... This future, which begins with the discarding of capitalism and Marxism, is neither predestined nor prefabricated... There is no doubt that Islam will have an appropriate role in its construction, when it has freed itself from the effects of centuries of stagnation, superstition, and contamination, and is put forth as a living ideology... That is the task of the true intellectuals of Islam. Only in this way Islam – after a renaissance of belief and an emergence from isolation and reaction – be able to take part in the current war of beliefs and, in particular, to command the center and serve as an example to contemporary thought, where the new human spirit is seeking

the means to begin a new world and a new humanity... This is no extravagant proposal; it is a duty" [12, p. 95–96].

Red Shi'ism

Being a Muslim, Shariati always remained an Iranian and Shi'ite. Therefore, his appeal to Islam was an appeal to Shi'ism, which traditionally believes that the Muslim community should be led not by the elected caliphs, but by the direct descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, namely Ali ibn Abi Talib – the cousin, son-in-law and companion of the Prophet – and his children from the Prophet's daughter Fatima. In this Shi'ite coordinate system, Shariati cultivated his most significant philosophical concept of Red Shi'ism. For him, the way the Prophet Muhammad, his family and their closest supporters lived, believed, thought, suffered and fought for freedom and justice was a paragon of righteous Islamic life, as well as the key to solving all the modern problems of Iranian society.

According to Shariati, the Shi'ism that everyone has known since the days of the Safavid dynasty has become stilted and socially powerless orthodoxy that is good only for mourning the dead and sick and ensure the observance of insignificant rituals; he called it Shi'ism of mourning – Black Shi'ism – that is not capable of raising the banner of struggle for social ideals. This Shi'ism definition, in his opinion, was never the only form of Shi'ism, since it was preceded and may be soon replaced by another form of Shi'ism – Red Shi'ism – which is a true form of Shi'ism that goes back to the Prophet himself and his descendants. That is Shi'ism of martyrdom and struggle.

In his essay on Red and Black Shi'ism, Shariati says the following: "Islam is a religion which makes its appearance in the history of mankind with the 'no' of Mohammad (PBUH), the heir of Abraham, the manifestation of the religion of the Unity of God and the oneness of mankind, a 'no' which beings with the cry of Unity, a cry which Islam reinitiated when confronted by

aristocracy and compromise. Shi'ism is the Islam which distinguishes itself and determines its direction in the history of Islam with the 'no' of the great Ali (as), the heir of Mohammad and the manifestation of the Islam of justice and Truth, a 'no' which he gives to the council for the election of the caliphate in answer to Abdul Rahman, who was the manifestation of Islamic aristocracy and compromise. This 'no', up until pre-Safavid times, is recognized to be part of the Shi'ite movement in the history of Islam, an indicator of the social and political role of a group who are the followers of Ali, known for their attachment to the kindness of the family of the Prophet. It is a party based upon the Quran and the Traditions... The history of Islam follows a strange path; a path in which hoodlums and ruffians from the Arab, Persian, Turk, Tartar and Mongol dynasties all enjoy the right of the leadership of the Moslem community and the caliphate of the Prophet of Islam, to the exclusion of the family of the Prophet and the rightful Imams of Islam... Shi'ites do not accept the path chosen by history. They negate the leadership which ruled over history and deceived the majority of the people through its succession to the Prophet, and then, supposed support of Islam and fight against paganism. Shi'ites turn their backs on the opulent mosques and magnificent palaces of the caliphs of Islam and turn to the lonely, mud house of Fatima. Shi'ites, who represent the oppressed, justice-seeking class in the caliphate system, find, in this house, whatever and whoever they have been seeking" [13].

All his life, Shariati's attention was focused on the historical representatives of Red Shi'ism. As mentioned above, he started with Abu Dharr, but later his gallery of images of Shi'ite fighters for freedom and justice expanded considerably. One of the most striking and truly marvelous is the image of Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad. Analyzing the meager information available to her biographers, Shariati presents Fatima as the ideal of a woman and a Muslim, which is, in his opinion, more appealing than either Europeanized Iranians or oppressed

women from patriarchal families; moreover, he presents her as a spiritual and political leader, whose fate was inextricably linked with the fate of her great father. In his book about Fatima, Shariati repeatedly mentions the nickname given to her by her contemporaries – ‘the mother of her father’ (*Umm Abiha*) – highlighting the fact that Fatima became the support of the Messenger of God in fulfilling the great mission for which he was chosen. The excitement that Shariati experienced while working on the book about Fatima is especially obvious on the last pages of the book.

His writes the following: “Fatima appeared as a halo around the faces of all of the oppressed who later became the multitudes of Islam. All of the sufferers, all of those whose rights had been destroyed, all who had been deceived, all took the name of Fatima as their emblem. The memory of Fatima grew with the love and wonderful faith of the men and women, who throughout the history of Islam, fought for freedom and justice. Throughout the centuries they were punished under the merciless and bloody lash of the caliphates... This is why in the history of all Muslim nations and among the deprived masses of the Islamic community, Fatima has been the source of inspiration for those who desire their rights, for those who seek justice, for those who resist oppression, cruelty, crime and discrimination. It is most difficult to speak about the personality of Fatima. Fatima was the ideal that Islam wanted a woman to be. The form of her face was fashioned by the Prophet himself. He melted her and made her pure in the fires of difficulties, poverty, revolution, deep understanding and the wonder of humanity” [5, p. 159].

Shariati and the Islamic Revolution

Shariati died almost two years prior to the Islamic Revolution. However, it is hard to imagine the very possibility of this historic event without him giving lectures to numerous audiences and without his polemical essays that emanated the

potent energy of revolutionary Islam. It is difficult to imagine the Islamic Revolution without Shariati's portraits that crowds of students held high above their heads as they walked with the flow of other Iranians, carrying portraits of Ayatollah Khomeini, the descendant of the Prophet. It is hard to imagine the days of the revolution without inscriptions such as "Glory to Dr. Ali Shariati, who lost his life for the just cause!" appearing on buildings in Iran! [2, p. 227]. But it is even harder to imagine the Islamic revolution without a revolution in Islam itself – without the Shi'ism of mourning and submission becoming the Shi'ism of martyrdom and political struggle. In this respect, it cannot be denied that Shariati personally contributed a great deal to such a transformation.

It is known that before the revolution, some books by Shariati were subject to confiscation, and those SAVAK caught with such books in their homes were thrown in jail and tortured.⁴ This should not be surprising, since the Shariati's books advocated the idea that from the very beginning of Islam, Shi'ites has been obliged to stand against unjust and arbitrary authorities and be revolutionaries, the Prophet and his family members used to be revolutionaries.

Though it is easy to evaluate Shariati's contribution to revolutionizing of Islam and to the possibility of the revolution itself, it is far more difficult to establish why after the revolution his name gradually disappeared from the political discourse in Iran.

In such cases, the first argument that is most commonly given is that Shariati frequently criticized the Shi'ite clergy, appealing in his writings not to Muslim scholars but to the living spirit of Islam. Moreover, it should be mentioned that Shariati was not an expert on Islamic studies and, therefore, injected a lot of subjective and philosophical interpretations into Islamic thought [3]. It should be also noted that some followers of Shariati subsequently were at odds with Khomeini after he came to power and the Khomeini leadership of Iran; therefore, if

Shariati himself were alive, it is anybody's guess as to what his relations with the Ayatollah regime would be [8, p. 39].

It is important to note, though, that Shariati indeed was rather harsh and often ready to criticize the clergy. However, he also had constructive suggestions to the ulama (*ālim*), which in many respects echo the ideas of Khomeini. "More important than anything is the great mission of the *ālim*, who according to the tenets and principles of the great school entrusted to him and according to the needs... of the time in which he lives... must stretch out his hand to the principles... and extend them so that religion does not remain in the old, conditional, past framework which is long past..." [10, p. 18] For comparison, Khomeini wrote the following: "Only the clergy vociferously takes a stand against oppression and oppressor, against injustice and the one who does it... We are not exclusively occupied by sermons and prayers... Our job is to preach and instruct you, the people" [4, p. 73].

There seems to be a reason for the fact that Shariati's name is rarely mentioned in Iranian official circles these days. This is due to the fact that he is much more frequently referred to in circles that make up internal opposition to the Iranian leadership. Even more often it is heard in the discourse of those experts in Iranian culture who work outside the Islamic Republic. In Western universities, Shariati's writings are widely studied, and his works are being actively translated into European and other languages. Apparently, in the personality and philosophy of Shariati, some experts see a missed opportunity for Iran to become a more liberal country than it is today [1, p. 102]. However, criticism against Iran for the lack of freedoms is ideological in nature. In short, Shariati's legacy has become a matter of judgment tightly entwined with politics and value preferences.

One might also assume that as Iranian society progresses and the Islamic Republic of Iran joins the international processes more fully, Shariati's legacy will once again be actively discussed by Iranian scientists and political leaders. The revival of interest

in Shariati's work in Iran may also be conditioned on a change in political relations between Iran and the US, the lifting of western sanctions against Iran, and a general change in attitude of the West to independent Iran.

Conclusion

The work of Ali Shariati is yet to be thoughtfully analyzed by Russian-speaking philosophers. He was not only an ardent fighter against Western imperialism and colonialism, but also a gifted political philosopher who managed to create an incredible synthesis of Islamic doctrine and Western left-wing theories, and especially Marxism, which Shariati regarded as yet another Western delusion. Shariati gave Iranian Shi'ism a revolutionary red color by suggesting that the original Islam should be viewed not only as a doctrine, but also as a revolutionary praxis. The favorite heroes of his Islamic researches – the Prophet Muhammad, Ali, Fatima and Abu Dharr – appear in Shariati's writings not merely as sacred figures of Shi'ite history, but also as true fighters for freedom and justice, who set an example for their contemporaries of how to live, believe, love and fight for highest ideals. Shariati was calling on his contemporaries to learn their Red Shi'ism by touching the hearts of student audiences in Mashhad, Tehran and other places. Shariati's lectures and published works turned out to be just as important in awakening Islamic political consciousness in Iran as was the preaching of the Shi'ite clergy to the rest of Iranian society.

Notes

1. Later, some researchers noted that the personality of Shariati himself combined the traits of Karl Marx and Abu Dharr [9, c. 2].
2. Mehdi Bazargan (1907–1995) was a prominent Iranian liberal intellectual; Deputy Minister of Education in Mosaddegh's government; Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, Tehran University; one of the leaders of the anti-Shah opposition; and first Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

- He resigned as the head of the provisional revolutionary government of Iran after the US embassy in Tehran was seized by radical revolutionaries. One of the most influential opponents of Imam Khomeini, Bazargan stayed in good terms with Shariati for many years.
3. According to Ervand Abrahamian, Shariati received a permanent place in the Hosseinih Ershad in 1969 and remained there until 1972, when the religious and cultural center was shut down at the request of the Shah's special service SAVAK. It should be noticed that the Hosseinih Ershad was considered as a source of revolutionary ideas not only by the Shah's regime, but also by the traditional Muslim clergy, who saw it as 'den of infidels' since Shariati in his lectures relied on Western methodology, primarily Marxist sociology. [6, c. 108–109]
 4. As evidenced by a Russian eyewitness of the Islamic Revolution, those who read Shariati's book about Fatima during the Shah's regime were arrested and tortured [2, p. 187].

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