

MODERATION, UNITY, AND TOLERANCE: THE REPRESENTATION OF ISLAM IN THE DISCOURSE OF “ALRAID”

The problem of the internal variety of Islam has been at the center of scholarly analysis for the past two centuries. In the absence of a single institution, which would regulate the *regime of truth* for all Muslims, the possibility of an Islamic orthodoxy appears to be rather vague and, as it was noted by A. Knysh [Knysh 1993], mostly depends on the political forces that support a particular trend of Islamic thought. In this context, the situation of institutional pluralism in Ukrainian Muslim communities comes as a logical continuation of the general historical tendencies in various parts of the world with a substantial Muslim population.

It must be noted however that Islamic institutions do not often readily reveal their specific religious views. Instead, they strive to represent themselves as part of “mainstream Islam” focusing on a few ideas that are shared by the vast majority. One reason for this has to do with the fact that revealing a specific theological agenda and putting it into the forefront can make an institution more vulnerable to the criticism from other similar institutions that are engaged in the competition for religious authority. On the other hand, the preaching of Islam in the Ukrainian situation requires relying on the most basic ideas which do not presuppose a deep knowledge or preliminary training in religious subjects.

However, a careful analysis of the literature and media resources published by various Islamic institutions can give a broader perspective on their theological standing and thus allows shedding more light on those differences and internal conflicts that regularly appear between them. In its turn, this study aims to trace the most significant aspects of the representation of Islam in the discourse of the All-Ukrainian Association of Social Organizations “Alraid” in comparative perspective to the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Ukraine (in Ukrainian transliteration “DUMU”) led by Shaikh Ahmad Tamim.

The argument between these institutions stems from the fact that they represent two different structural types: while DUMU was created as a center of religious authority *per se* (so called *muftiyyat*), “Alraid” has been formed as a social organization for supporting Arab students. Yet, at the current stage this difference appears to be rather superficial and reflecting different strategies of Islamic *da‘wa* in Ukraine. Moreover, to legitimize itself as a center of religious authority “Alraid” has created its own spiritual administration “Umma”. Even though it is not formally associated with “Alraid”, there are good reasons to assume a very close relationship between the two.

The major media source of “Alraid” is the paper “Arraid” (“Аррайд”) which is published since 1997 and includes a wide range of materials on the life of Muslims in Ukraine and abroad (a significant place is devoted to the Palestine problem). For this study, I will use a group of articles published between 2005 and 2014 which touch upon the most important questions of Islamic religious teaching and the situation in Islamic *umma*.

Among such questions most widely circulated are:

- 1) moderation of Islam, its adherence to the “middle path”;
- 2) the necessity to maintain the unity of Muslims;
- 3) the understanding of tolerance;
- 4) Islam as a universal and comprehensive religious teaching.

Moderation of Islam. Even though “Alraid” as a social organization does not pretend to have the status of a religious authority center (as *muftiyyat* or *spiritual administration*), it nonetheless somehow localizes itself in the spectrum of institutionalized and uninstitutionalized Islamic movements. In this respect, the most recurrent ideological message of “Alraid” can be reduced to postulation of *moderation* of Islam as its defining paradigmatic feature and the most adequate way of its representation:

“Our Association follows the course of moderation, representing moderate Islam. This was built in into it (Alraid. – *D. Sh.*) from the beginnings as a principle of work. We stick to the moderate approach in everything: in planning, in work, in attitudes to people” [Mareyei 2012, 6].

It must be noted, however, that a special topicality in the publications of “Alraid” this issue received only from 2011. Since that time it became an inseparable part of the discourse of the representatives of this institution and was continuously raised in the articles as well as in the interviews of different religious leaders. In the publications of 2012 (№ 151 (March 2012) and further) there was a shift to the term “*(al-)wasatiyya*” which is used as an Arabic equivalent for moderation.

In the texts of Seyran Arifov, who has acted as the major “voice” of “Alraid”, *wasatiyya* is viewed as an ideological platform for the overall development of Islam in Ukraine which can help in “incorporating both modernity and the principle of a constant renewal without breaking up with the roots and preserving the light of our spiritual world and values” [Arifov 2012, 1]. He also writes:

“[Wasatiyya] offers a balance which would allow Muslims of Ukraine finding their place in the multiethnic Ukrainian society. What is even more important, it also could provide the perspective and direction of further development” [Arifov 2012, 1].

In other words, Arifov considers *wasatiyya* as the only way to integrate Muslims in the Ukrainian society without relinquishing their religious identity:

“Wasatiyya should be declared as a priority for Muslims’ development. This must be done by both common Muslims and their political and spiritual leaders” [Arifov 2012, 1].

Yet, it must be noted that *wasatiyya* designates not just an abstract principle or concept, but also a contemporary school of Islamic thought, associated primarily with the activity of the “global mufti” Yusuf al-Qradawi [Graf 2009]. Thus, the appearance of the term and the constant attention to it may be regarded a formal positioning of “Alraid” in the global network of Islamic movements.

Concrete support for this idea can be found in the establishment of official relations between “Alraid” and the center “Wasatiyya” from Kuwait whose activities revolve around the global propaganda of “moderate Islam” on the international level [Seytametov 2012, 6–7]. In the issues 151 and 152 of the paper “Alraid” there are two interviews with the director of this center which explore the basic principles of *wasatiyya*.

The unity of *umma*. One of the most persistent ideological messages which are constantly transmitted in “Alraid” is the call for the unity of Islamic *umma*. In this respect, “Alraid” demonstrates an *inclusive strategy* for the development of Muslim community which constitutes an attempt to draw in the circle of “Islamic orthodoxy” as many organizations, groups and movements as possible. To put it differently, this strategy presupposes recognition of a great internal pluralism of Islamic community without violation of the unity of Islam and Islamic movement in general. This message without any doubt has a special significance in Ukraine where relatively small Muslim community is divided among several centers of religious authority which are constantly engaged in polemical confrontation with each other.

In the numerous articles of S. Arifov, who acts as the spokesman of “Alraid” in these questions, this task of the unity promotion is approached with certain discursive strategies which aim to eliminate internal contradictions about as many dividing questions as

possible. These controversial questions concern the issues of beliefs, practices and other aspects of religious doctrine.

The most common strategy employed by Arifov is constructing a certain hierarchy of religious knowledge which would allow Muslims to set priorities in the problems that they discuss [Arifov 2012a, 7]. This hierarchy is built by dividing the whole body of religious teaching into the issues of “primary significance” and the issues of “secondary significance”. While the first category consists of the basic doctrines of Islam that provoke no contradictions among Muslims, the second category, according to Arifov’s view, involves a body of questions that due to various reasons cannot be resolved in a final and unchallengeable way:

“[Secondary questions] – are those in which a shared opinion is impossible to be achieved. This is determined by the very nature of proof in this area, as well as by the specifics of human thinking generally” [Arifov 2009, 5].

In other words, leaving a narrow circle of basic Islamic doctrines intact, this strategy of dealing with religious knowledge aims to legitimately marginalize the majority of contradictions through designating them as the issues “of secondary importance”:

“Secondary questions are infinite and will never be resolved in a final way. The obsession with them at the expense of the key questions will inevitably lead to a deadlock. Those secondary questions are the most common reason for insoluble discussions and disagreements. In the same way, details and additional issues connected to the main questions very often appear to be debatable issues which if taken too seriously lead to the discord. But the fact is that it is almost impossible to overcome those contradictions about the secondary questions” [Arifov 2007, 4].

As it follows from the excerpts above, S. Arifov considers “secondary questions” to be debatable by nature and thus having no unequivocal answer. He also points out that the differences about them are not just permissible, but inevitable and inescapable [Arifov 2009b, 7]. Among other things, he argues, this is directly determined by polyvalence of Arabic words of which the Quran comprises [Arifov 2009b, 7].

Thus, Arifov comes to the conclusion that the very basic sources of Islam by their nature contain vague and ambiguous places which legitimize differences:

“If Allah wanted Muslims to be totally united in their views, He would have sent the Quran with unequivocal and definite answers to absolutely every question of the lives of an individual, family, society and state. However, this did not happen. The texts of the Quran and Sunna are not always clear and unambiguous” [Arifov 2009b, 7].

As a result, Arifov argues that in the case of secondary questions there can be innumerable points of view which may hold some degree of truth. Yet, it is up to every Muslim to choose the view he or she considers to be best [Arifov 2009a, 4]. At the same time, such pluralism of views and ultimate undecidability of secondary questions render a too strict and categorical judgment of opponents absolutely inappropriate [Arifov 2009a, 4]. In this vein, Arifov calls to avoid indiscriminate application of *takfir*:

“It is absolutely unacceptable when Muslims who committed a small or relative *shirk* become the object of unsubstantiated accusations in unbelief and even called unbelievers. At the same time, it is unacceptable to say that people who have some traits of hypocrites will stay in hell forever. This is a dangerous approach that ruins the unity of Islamic *umma*” [Arifov 2009c, 4–5].

Thus, in Arifov’s view, avoiding quarrels around secondary questions is what can bring the unity of Islamic *umma*, not total uniformity of opinions. Consequently, abandoning debates about “secondary questions” appears to be a necessary sacrifice on the way to the solidarity of Muslims around the world. It also might be noted that the obsession with “secondary questions” is attributed by Arifov to such deviation as unjustified and unnecessary “*complication of religion*”. Such a complication, in his opinion, is used by

separate Islamic institutions and religious leaders as a means of realization of their power ambitions, struggle for spreading their influence among the believers [Arifov 2007, 4].

However, what needs to be mentioned is that Arifov usually avoids specifying which exactly issues he considers to be “secondary”. Some idea about that can be derived from his other statements:

“Differences in some issues of practice or doctrines linked to Allah’s attributes, disputes about the methods of the revival of Islam or creation of Islamic state often end with accusations about not following the Quran and Sunna. Needless to say, those accusations are groundless” [Arifov 2008b, 5].

Another example of “secondary issues” can be found in the same article:

“Scholars have debated about the attributes of Allah Almighty and his actions. They also argued with each other about whether or not Adam, Khidr and Lukman belonged to the prophets. However, no one was accusing his opponent of unbelief or delusion as it is done today by those who declare their strictest following the Quran and Sunna” [Arifov 2008b, 5].

In addition to that, in the list of “natural and legitimate differences” Arifov includes the divergences which stem from the norms of various schools of Islamic law (*mazhab*) [Arifov 2007a, 6].

It is quite possible that this strategy of inclusivity has its basis in the ideas of the main *wasatiyya* ideologist Y. al-Qaradawi. For instance, in one of his pamphlets, he argues that *wasatiyya* among other things includes “belief in the eternal existence of the united Muslim community (*umma*) and the belief about unity and brotherhood in faith among its members regardless of the variability of its schools and mazhabs” [Al-Qaradawi 2011, 60]. Al-Qaradawi also argues that *wasatiyya* presupposes “recognition of all religious groups and movements as belonging to the same community of believers if they pray to the *qibla* and believe in the Holy Quran and Sunna” [Al-Qaradawi 2011, 60].

Elaborating on another principle of *wasatiyya*, al-Qaradawi also writes about the necessity of the good attitude to everyone who “declared two shahadas, pray to the *qibla* and does not say anything that opposes this. The basic principle here is to be loyal to a Muslim as long as possible and avoid accusing him or her of hypocrisy (*tafsiq*) or unbelief (*takfir*), especially in what concerns metaphorical interpretations (*ta’wil*)” [Al-Qaradawi 2011, 60].

In addition, this strategy of inclusivity bears similarity to the principle, offered by an Egyptian theologian and jurist Rashid Rida (d. 1935) which renders as follows:

“We cooperate in what we agree on, and forgive each other for that in which we disagree” (*nata’awanu ma’a ba’dina fi ma-ttafaqna fih wa yu’ziru ba’duna ba’dan fima-htalafna alayhi*) [Ridah n.d., XXXII, 284–293].

This principle was later picked up by the founder of the “Muslim Brothers” Hasan al-Banna (d. 1949) and made one of the mottos of this movement in its struggle to organize the widest Islamic opposition to the secular political regimes and western ideological systems.

Despite the fierce criticism of this catchphrase from the side of conservative Muslim theologians, this idea was nonetheless adopted by al-Qaradawi and incorporated into his teaching about *wasatiyya*. He argues that a certain degree of cooperation for the realization of common goals is possible even with those Islamic movements and individuals who are suspected of falling into “innovation” (*bid’a*) or “none-belief” (*kufir*) [Al-Qaradawi 2014].

However, this position of al-Qaradawi is based on an elaborate conceptualization of both concepts (*bid’a* and *kufir*) and what is more important, relativisation of their meaning. For instance, al-Qaradawi insists that *bid’a* as well as *kufir* have several degrees of severity depending on how profound the violation of the sharia was. In other words, any cooperation is possible only with those who have committed a “small shirk” or introduced a minor innovation (*bid’a*).

Similar ideas are transmitted and continuously repeated in many publications of “Arraid”¹. This may be considered as a manifestation of the “Alraid”’s desire to adopt an

ideological schema which would be precluding formation of a “black-white” worldview paradigm, offering instead a regime of a wide internal tolerance and the pluralism.

Islam as a comprehensive doctrine. Yet another aspect of the influence of Islamic revivalist thought in the discourse of “Arraid” is continuous representation of Islam as a single true solution for all social, economic and political problems of contemporary societies [Arifov 2007b, 3]. For instance, the author of the article “The strategy of national revival” argues that all ideological systems that currently exist are not capable of solving humanity’s most basic problems because they are designed to deal with separate deficiencies:

“No secular philosophy or idea invented by humans through their sufferings can grant the humanity a way to the fully-fledged and comprehensive improvement. This is why when we talk about the revival of a nation our opinion differs from those views which are random, temporal, partial, or have only a cosmetic character” [Arifov 2007b, 3].

On the contrary to that, for a true national revival, he states, “there is a need to choose a comprehensive and universal strategy of reform for curing the current damaging conditions” [Arifov 2007b, 3]. Yet, Arifov argues that the search for such a true solution is consciously impeded and sabotaged by the contemporary elites [Arifov 2007b, 3].

It is important to note though that in S. Arifov’s opinion the ultimate reason for all contemporary global problems lies in the separation of faith in God from the morals and other spheres of human activity [Arifov 2007b, 3]. In other words, the matter is about secularization processes both on social-structural and individual level. At the same time, Arifov is careful to stress that the return of the social significance of *any* religion will not fix things, because “erroneous and distorted” religious teachings cannot be the basis of a fully-fledged reform [Arifov 2007b, 3].

Thus, this discursive strategy is clearly intended to make the reader realize that only Islam – and no other religion or ideology – is a valid way for the reform of society. At the same time, it pushes the reader to belief that in order to be successful this Islamic solution should also be implemented to the fullest, not as a partial remedy for certain aspects.

Religious authorities. The question of ideological and theological stance of any Islamic institution is closely connected to the clarification of the circle of personalities which play the role of recognized religious authorities. Special attention in this respect should be paid to the references to those scholars and theologians who have raised some controversy or dispute inside the Muslim discourse.

For instance, in many articles of the paper “Arraid” there are numerous references on the ideas and views of Taqi al-Din Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) who is seen as a fierce proponent of fighting *taqlid* and praising the value of *ijtihad*.

In addition to Ibn Taymiyya, among the authoritative figures that are mentioned in the articles of “Arraid” one can encounter the names of Izz Abdusalam, Ibn Daqiq, Ibn Hajri, Ibn Nujaym and Ibn Abidin [Arifov 2007, 4].

It is also worth mentioning that in some articles there are references to the representatives of Islamic revivalist thought, such as S. Qutb, H. al-Banna, and Y. al-Qaradawi [Arifov 2008c, 5]. At the same time, due to their position about the “closing of the doors of *ijtihad*” such scholars as Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111) and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d. 1210) are mentioned with great reservations [Arifov 2007, 4].

The problem of tolerance. Of special interest for the purpose of this study are the Islamic views on religious tolerance advanced in the publications of the “Arraid” paper. In this context, taking to the account specifics of religious discourse it seems suitable to apply some elements of rhetoric analysis².

For instance, S. Arifov opens one of his articles on tolerance by casting doubt of the validity of this very term. He states that the term is very debatable and everyone invests it with his or her own meaning. In other words, Arifov relativizes tolerance introducing it as a blanket concept which can be filled with content that suites someone’s purposes. It might be noted that such an approach might be employed here as a certain rhetorical

move which is intended to make the reader feel more skeptical about the very idea of tolerance as a widely accepted and nonnegotiable value of the modern societies. A little bit further this argument about relativity of the concept is supplemented by another discursive move which redirects the discussion to the sphere of definitions:

“Reviewing the question of tolerance, I want to stress that it is not entirely clear, because everyone speaks about tolerance, but there is no generally-accepted definition of this value” [Arifov 2008, 4].

The reason for the application of this approach can be deduced from the further explanations of the author. One cannot help but notice that Arifov tries to switch the focus of discussion from abstract speculations about tolerance to its implementation in the real life situations. It might seem that his key intention is to *limit* the scope of tolerance through diminishing its significance in the hierarchy system of human values:

“All human values and principles are structured in the order which is based on priority. Also, values and principles have mutual relationship which determines the fact that they cannot exist one without the other. I think that the question of tolerant attitude of one group of people to another cannot be raised if among them there is no such a paramount and significant value as justice” [Arifov 2008, 4].

In the light of this citation, tolerance appears to be conditional value which is subjugated, or dependent on another virtue – *justice*. From a purely discursive point of view, this statement might lead to two slightly different conclusions:

- a) Tolerance is *not possible* where there is no justice (statement of fact, natural order of things);
- b) Tolerance is *not obligatory* whenever there is no justice (practical recommendation).

In other words, if understood in the second way, the necessity of tolerance is dependent on the subjective perception of presence or lack of justice made by each individual in specific social circumstances. However, here S. Arifov fails to acknowledge that justice as well as tolerance is also an abstract concept which can be interpreted and understood very differently in different cultural milieu.

In general, his approach can be considered another rhetorical move. Using a string of rational arguments, the author of this article shift the focus of attention of discussion from the “debatable concept of tolerance” (which supposedly cannot serve as a steady basis for building a hierarchy of meaning) to the concept of justice which is very well developed in Islam and even considered to be one of its key messages along with monotheism:

“Islam has built its theory of tolerance on the firm ground of justice for all without differences” [Arifov 2008, 4].

Elaborating on the Islamic doctrine of tolerance further, S. Arifov introduces yet another limit for it which belongs to the sphere of moral-religious criteria:

“Tolerance in Islam does not mean lack of belief in anything as some ideologists of western tolerance say. Tolerance in Islam does not mean connivance to sin, immorality or insult of religious feelings” [Arifov 2008, 4].

Correspondingly, as it follows, tolerance to various social phenomena (and, thus, the freedom of speech and action of an individual) ends where the sphere of sin begins – a complex of religious restrictions dictated by sacred texts and religious specialists. Among such sins that cannot be tolerated by Islam Arifov names “drinking alcohol by a Muslim or adultery, drug addiction or homosexual relations” [Arifov 2008, 4].

However, he also argues that the key factor for establishing the boundaries of tolerance is not a religious norm *per se*, but the damaging effects of some actions for the community:

«It goes without saying that these phenomena hold a threat to personality, family, society and state. For this reason, Islam does not accept here the position of “tolerant silence”» [Arifov 2008, 4].

And vice versa: “Islam recognizes the right of the individual to choose and think freely as long as this constitutes no threat to religion, society, or state” [Arifov 2008, 4].

It is rather clear that in this and other similar paradigms (which to a certain degree were also adopted by western societies as well) the concept of “sin” becomes a very powerful factor of censoring and controlling individual behavior of a society members. Moreover, as historical experience demonstrates, any manifestation of free thinking can be in the end of the day condemned and prohibited if relevant authorities find it to be a threat to the state or religion.

In the same way, Arifov deals with the issue of religious tolerance and the right of individuals to freely change their religious affiliation:

“But if the betrayal of one’s religion, people or state posits a threat it should be punished. On the other hand, if there is no threat, the apostate is left without punishment” [Arifov 2008, 4].

This point of view is not in any way a new one. It is deeply rooted in the ideas of contemporary Muslim ideologists which tend to state that any threat to Islam (be it real or potential, or imaginary) cannot be tolerated. For instance, such an approach to religious tolerance was taken by the famous moderate Muslim theologian Y. al-Qaradawi in many of his works³.

It is also important to note that in the quotation above “betrayal of religion” is put on the same level with high treason or betrayal of one’s nation: in this case religion comes not as part of the private sphere of every individual, but as an issue of societal significance. In this respect, it is also remains unclear who and how will define the difference between “betrayal of religion” and “change of religion”, or, in other words, between the threat to the state/religion or the lack thereof.

The question of tolerance to other religions in the discourse of S. Arifov can also shed more light on a number of ideological concepts that are transmitted in the paper “Arraid”. For instance, Arifov argues:

“Tolerance to believers of other religions does not mean recognition of these religions as truthful or *equal* (italics is mine. – D. Sh.) to Islam. However, tolerant attitude and respect of individual choice are recognized by Islam and required for every Muslim” [Arifov 2008, 4].

This and other similar expressions which underscore the dominant status of Islam and its supremacy over other religions are clearly intended to preserve the hierarchy of meanings in the minds of contemporary Muslims who often bound to live in societies where all religious teachings are pronounced equal in their rights and responsibilities and what is more important in their truthfulness (or, on the contrary, untruthfulness). To put it differently, the statement of the total supremacy of Islam in relation to other religious teachings and its special status as the only true religion is intended to preserve the highest level of loyalty to Islam in the pluralistic situation of the contemporary religious markets.

On the other hand, this statement of *inequality* of religions gives the impression that in the case of Islam’s attitude to other religions one can speak more about *condescension* rather than tolerance, because it is the former concept which implies relations of agents with higher and lower statuses. This approach in general corresponds well to the historic system of religious relations during the Classical period of Islam when the circle of tolerance included “People of the Scripture” and excluded polytheists.

The support for this idea can be found in many statements from the articles in “Arraid”. For example, speaking about other monotheistic religions S. Arifov asserts that in the verse al-Baqara, 285 “it was spoken not about religious tolerance *per se*, but about condescension. Allah can have only one true religion. Thus, all religions cannot be equal in any case” [Arifov 2008a, 4]. He also writes:

“The Lord orders Muslims to demonstrate condescension to the unbelievers as having the same rights as other people. However, at the same time Islam imposes the obligation to struggle with their unbelief and delusions” [Arifov 2008a, 4].

It is fairly obvious that when a religious group pretends to possess the absolute truth, the recognition of other religions as equals appears to be really problematic. This is especially true when the dominance of the “only true religion” is supported by the social and political capital of the state. In the context of equality one can also find interesting a different quotation of S. Arifov:

“From numerous religions only one can be true. Thus, the view that all religions are different paths to God is no more than an attempt to void the current contradictions among religions or cancel the conflict altogether. Yet, conflicts happen not among religions as such, but between the political forces that profess those religions” [Arifov 2008a, 4].

It is clear that the expression “from all religions there can be only one true” is a rhetorical statement (discursive move) which sets a certain starting point of the discourse about this topic, an axiom which will serve as lenses for making sense and understanding of all other statements and ideas. In other words, it is as unsubstantiated as the opposite statement (for example, “all religions are true”).

Following this idea the author opposes any attempts to find a secular formula for religious tolerance which in one of its possible forms can be limited to this: the current struggle and difference amongst religions can be stopped by bracketing the very idea of “truthfulness” or “falseness” of any religion. This formula would not satisfy Muslim ideologists because if it is accepted Islam loses its major ideological power (pretense to the absolute and exclusive possession of the truth) which feeds its sense of supremacy above all other religions. In other words, if the absolute truth is recognized as none-existent or unattainable, then the claims at its maintaining are meaningless.

At the same time, Arifov denies any conflict between religions as such arguing that the clashes between them are provoked by political forces and separate individuals belonging to this or that religion [Arifov 2008a, 4]. Yet, it should be noted that religious disputes must be resolved in a peaceful way without resorting to force or physical elimination of the representatives of other religions [Arifov 2008a, 4].

As a result of the analysis of this problem Arifov comes to a general formula of Islamic view of religious tolerance:

“The Quran confirms the fact of the coexistence of different civilizations, religions, nations and cultures and does not call to destroy them. Islam demands to treat them with patience, strive for dialogue and mutual enrichment. Yet, it reminds that there is only one true religion, and all Muslims should try to spread it with peaceful means in the whole world” [Arifov 2008a, 4].

However, in the light of the previously reviewed aspects of the problem it might be assumed that this statement may contain two contradicting ideas. On the one hand, it postulates natural pluralism of the forms and expressions of human culture. Yet, on the other hand, it preaches that this pluralism should be overcome and eliminated (in a gradual and peaceful way) by the “one true religion”. One may also mention that despite lengthy discussion of this subject Arifov does not pay any attention to the attitude of contemporary Islam to atheists and polytheists, who under some interpretations of Islamic law may still face physical elimination.

Islamic institutions and their contradictions. Looking at the big picture, one can see how some of these basic ideas in the discourse of “Alraid” may come into conflict with the ideological messages of another major Islamic institution of Ukraine – DUMU⁴.

For instance, the basic stumbling block on the way to the dialogue and mutual understanding would be determining the circle of important and secondary questions. In this respect, what constitutes a significant issue for one religious group can be regarded as an insignificant detail by another. The case in point here is the issue of Allah’s attributes (*sifat*) which according to the DUMU paradigm constitutes the cornerstone of all Muslim life and consciousness. Moreover, in its preaching, DUMU gives priority to a set of specific theological questions the resolution of which amounts to some kind of a “credo”, or

a set of absolutely necessary beliefs⁵. At the same time, in its publication “Alraid” not just tries to fully abstain from such discussions – it also tries to represent these issues as “unnecessary complication” and marginal to the main message of Islam.

This situation demonstrates the inherent contradiction of the strategies of these Islamic institutions in their attempts to gain influence among Muslims of Ukraine. Following its inclusive strategy, “Alraid” is willing to give up on the theological discussions about “secondary issues” and completely focus on *da‘wa*. DUMU in its turn puts these theological questions in the forefront of its preaching thoroughly regulating *regime of the truth* and the “true understanding of Islam”. In other words, DUMU obviously adopts an *exclusive strategy* of building the institution, putting all those who are not completely loyal to their teaching beyond what they imagine to be the circle of Islamic orthodoxy.

At some level one can assume that the whole conception of “secondary questions” as well as many other topics that regularly appear in the paper “Alraid” comes as a veiled respond to the aggressive attempts of DUMU to impose a regime of a strict doctrinal orthodoxy in Ukraine⁶. This “regime” based on the special attention to theological details which amount to an ideological system using which DUMU is trying to monopolize religious authority among Muslims⁷.

However, the problem of the hierarchy of knowledge is not the only one that reveals the contradictions between these two Islamic institutions. A good illustration for this is the issue of religious figures recognized as authoritative. For DUMU, it is absolutely unacceptable to refer to or follow the ideas of such representatives of Islamic thought as Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1327) or S. Qutb (d. 1966) whose names periodically appear in the publications of “Alraid”. These and many other figures of Islamic traditionalism as well as the representatives of Islamic Revival are designated in the discourse of DUMU as extremists or those who have lost the right path and lapsed into some form of *kufir*. In the same way, the ideologists of DUMU condemn the famous Muslim theologian Yusuf al-Qaradawi who has laid the foundation for the *wasatiyya* movement.

This fairly accounts for the long history of their intense struggle and competition which has been continuing for the past decade and a half.

Concluding this brief overview of the most salient aspects of “Alraid”’s discourse, one can state that its general orientation largely fits the positions of liberal ideologists of the Islamic Revival of the 20th century who represented Islam as a vibrant alternative to such global ideologies as communism and capitalism. They also encouraged the processes of uniting Muslims all over the world regardless of their cultural and theological differences in order to achieve the common goal. Thus, even though the discourse of “Alraid” is in no way an original one, the analysis of such publications gives the researcher an idea of what kind of information is transmitted to the Muslims of Ukraine.

¹ See the articles on *tawassul*, *takfir*, etc. (“Alraid”, № 145, 147).

² See an attempt of application of the rhetoric analysis to the ideas of the ideologists of *wasatiyya*: Hoigilt J. Rhetoric and Ideology in Egypt’s Wasatiyya Movement // Arabica. – 2010. – Vol. 57. – P. 251–266.

³ See a detailed analysis of this problem in the views of Y. al-Qaradawi by G. Kramer: Kramer G. Drawing Boundaries: Yusuf al-Qaradawi on Apostasy // Speaking for Islam: religious authorities in Muslim societies. – Leiden: Brill, 2006. – P. 181–217.

⁴ The main media source for the DUMU is the paper “Minaret”. In contrast to “Alraid”, this paper is almost completely devoid of the materials, which would discuss topical issues of political or social life. It is mainly focused on the religious, ethical or cultural materials such as general articles about various countries of Islamic world. Instead, the understanding of DUMU’s ideology can be found in the numerous brochures published by the publishing house “Al-Irshad”. The most important of them are “Knowledge about God” (“Znaniye o Boge”), “Firmness in beliefs” (“Tverdost’ v ubezhdeniyakh”) and “The creed of Muslims” (“Veroubezhdeniye musul’man”).

For instance, this last brochure is devoted to the analysis of 51 religious questions which DUMU considers absolutely vital for the understanding of Islamic religious teaching. These questions follow one another without an apparent logic or structure and deal with unity of Allah and the correct approach to his attributes, specifics of the prophets in Islam and legitimacy of some religious practices associated with Sufism. It must be noted that these set of issues in more or less the same form appears in many other brochures and publication. Thus, they can be validly considered to represent the core of DUMU's ideology which can be summarized in the following set of major points.

⁵ See about this: [Shestopalets 2012, 116–125].

⁶ In general, the authors of articles in the paper "Arraid" are careful not to specify individuals or organizations which impede the unity of the Muslim community. One of the rare exceptions is mentioning of the destructive activity of *al-ahbash* in the Crimea (see: "Arraid", № 8 (155), August 2012). Apparently, this was a reference to the propaganda of the new center of religious authority "DCMU" (Spiritual Center of Muslims of the Crimea) created in 2010 as a rival alternative to the major Crimean Tatar institution "DUMK" (Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Crimea).

⁷ It can be assumed that building of the system of a strict orthodoxy on the basis of a number of theological questions which are continuously reproduced in the discourse is the practical strategy of DUMU for building a stable institution. As it can be assumed, a stricter regime of truth or orthodoxy can attract more *devout* followers or what is even more important help keep the existing members of organization from falling out.

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