Research Article

TERRORIST PROPAGANDA IN THE ALBANIAN LANGUAGE ON YOUTUBE: CHANGES IN PATTERNS AND NARRATIVES 2013-2018

History, Sociology, & Albanian Studies

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Abstract

The new and fast-developing Internet-based social networking environment has become particularly attractive to terrorists. Social networking sites provide a cheaper, better and easier way to spread terrorist content online and enable terrorists to address their target public directly and in real-time if necessary. In the period 2012-2013, ISIL and other terrorist organizations have had remarkable success in convincing a relatively large number of Albanians, over 100 individuals from Albania and over 300 others from neighboring Kosovo (and several hundred from other Balkan countries), to join its fighting ranks and territories in Syria and Iraq. YouTube and Facebook have been the leading online platforms where terrorist narratives in Albanian were disseminated in search of potential recruits and continued radicalization. In a research conducted in 2013 (Zoto, 2015), I provided a simple analysis method on social media, a contained sample and relevant data for measuring propaganda success factors of terrorist propaganda in the Albanian Language on YouTube. The sample was researched again in early 2018. New data were collected to explore and observe the YouTube-based terrorist propaganda developments over the concept of jihad in terms of content, characteristics of message providers and receptiveness by the target audience in 2018, but also the change in the patterns by comparing new data with the data collected from the 2013 research. The findings from this research are presented in this article. Furthermore, this article described counter-terrorist and counter-radicalization initiatives and developments in Albanian society in 2013-2018.

Terrorism and Online Radicalization in Albania

The terrorist threat has been present in Albania since the mid-90s when foreign Islamist extremists plotted an attack against the US Embassy in Tirana. Fortunately, Albanian security forces foiled the attack. The foreign extremists, connected with an Egyptian jihadist terrorist group, were expelled from the country while one of them remained killed during the police raid. This event raised the Albanian government's awareness of the threat posed by many foreigners present in the country since the fall of communism in the early 90s. They came to Albania through humanitarian NGOs, which helped poor Albanian families through various means, including paid scholarships in Middle Eastern and Asian Islamic countries. Simultaneously, the foreign workers preached a different form of Islam from what the Albanian religious tradition recognized and followed. It was far more radical and extremist, often inspiring to *takfirism* and *selafism*, which immediately caused tension within the Albanian Muslim community. However, a small part of the Albanian Muslims started to follow the foreigners' religious path and practice a more rigid form of the religion, which began to be also professed by Middle Eastern graduated Albanians who returned to the country after terminating their studies. The divide between traditional practitioners of Islam and the Albanian fundamentalists was also enabled by many mosques that were not recognized by the Albanian Muslims Community, the official organization of the Muslims in

Albania. The situation precipitated in 2012-2013 when a large number of Albanian, nearly 130, travelled from Albania to war-torn Syria, and most of them joined notorious terrorist organizations operating in the field, such as the Jabhat al Nusra (an Al-Qaeda proxy running in Syria) and the notorious ISIL. The Albanian Government reacted by criminalizing participation in foreign conflicts and prosecuting a group of prominent individuals engaged in preaching radicalism and helping Albanian radicals travel and join terrorist organizations in Syria and Iraq. Through the publicization of their case in the media, it became soon very evident that the Internet played an essential role in the radicalization of Albanian Muslims and convincing them to take part in atrocities of the conflict in Syria and Iraq.

One of the individuals going through the path of radicalization and violence was Ervin Hasanaj, who was reportedly (Bogdani, 2015, d) executed by his peers in Syria since he was "deluded by the jihad" and the individuals associated with him. Hasanaj, who moved to Syria in 2012, had also brought his wife and two children with him. He was radicalized through contacts with an unknown religious NGO – run by a few Arabs, which provided food and small amounts of money to families in need, including the Hasanaj's. Authorities have found out that Ervin had strong connections with a group of self-declared imams affiliated with ISIS, which had enabled the travel of several Albanians to join the fight with terrorist organizations in Syria, including Ervin.

This group of preachers and supporters was arrested in 2014. They were subsequently sentenced to prison in 2015 after been proven guilty on terrorism charges. (Bogdani, 2015, a,b) The group preached participation in the armed conflict in Syria in unregistered mosques in the suburb of Tirana, in the village Dragostunje of Librazhd, in Leshnice of Pogradec, and Cerrik of Elbasan. Other members operated and provided support from Turkey and other neighbouring countries as well. Altogether they had recruited and convinced themselves to travel to Syria to join ISIS and Jabhat al Nusra of more than 70 Albanians. According to Government and journalist sources, more than 100 Albanian citizens have travelled to Syria and Iraq. Women and children make roughly half of this number, while the others are fighters. (Shtuni, 2016) Out of the latter, 18 are believed to have been killed and 12 wounded in the fighting. (Bogdani, 2015, c)The men's radicalization occurred through continuous preaching in their mosques (which were unregistered with the Albanian Muslims Community organization and operating out of its control) and intense digital communication and propaganda sharing through social media. As the investigation conducted by the prosecutors found, the recruited individuals kept communicating through Internet applications with the "imams" even after moving to Syria. Simultaneously, a few footage videos and photos of them have also appeared on social media. According to the Albanian Government (ibid.) more than 40 individuals have returned from the conflict before the law adjustments penalizing the participation in foreign conflicts were made in 2014, and nearly half of them represent a threat for future violent actions. Some of the early returnees kept frequenting the unregistered mosques while also avoiding contacts with the journalists. The exact number of

Albanians continuing to live in Syria and those who have returned since 2016 is not publicly known.

However, the Muslim communities, radicalized or not, have been since early 2010, constantly a target and subject to online propaganda suggesting to embrace radical viewpoints and participate in the violent struggle against surrounding non-believers (Rice, 2016). Facebook and YouTube are the leading platforms of terrorists promoting their narratives and looking for potential recruits, as found by a research centre in Kosovo (Džidić et al., 2017). Most popular online platforms in Albania have been used by terrorists to recruit people and to promote a different, more radical and extremist, interpretation of Islam. Through years, presumably considerable amounts of money are spent on maintaining hundreds of websites and paying persons to write, especially to translate into Albanian and spread among Albanians religious schools and doctrines far from their Hanafi tradition (more spiritual and less catechist). Many self-declared imams have used their online platforms to confuse people and recruit as many people as possible to be sent to the war in Syria. Since the Albanian Language is an official language in Kosovo and a secondary language in North Macedonia, it is often tricky locating the online message distributors' geographical position. However, the online content aims to attract and target an Albanian-speaking audience by mixing religious messages with terrorist, ideological propaganda. (Mejdini et al., 2017)

Despite the early encounter of radicalizing materials on the Internet to aim the Albanian public's incitation toward the violent jihad, the Albanian Government has not yet implemented any significant project toward countering this specific phenomenon but instead has been depending on the initiatives and projects developed by International and local NGOs. In the National Strategy for Combating Violent Extremism (Albania Council of Ministers, 2015), which has been drafted by the Government and approved in the Parliament since 2015, some measures refer to the propaganda threats. Hence there are no actions taken toward assessing online propaganda or monitoring online radicalization efforts of terrorist groups. From the non-government bodies side, there have been various reactions, going from newspaper articles to individual measures of famous imams, who have tackled the radicalization phenomenon by discussing openly on the Internet with their subscribed public and releasing messages against terrorist calls. A similar initiative has also been embraced by all Albanian religious communities, not only by the Albanian Muslim Community and its imams (Medini et al., 2017). Since mid-2014 there are no public reports on Albanian foreign fighters joining terrorist groups operating in Syria or elsewhere. The phenomenon is generally accepted to have been ceased. However, it is needed to assess the effect of government and other non-government organizations' counter-radicalization actions. Furthermore, it is necessary to evaluate and analyze the terrorist propaganda efforts on the Internet and related developments. The research questions that are relevant to this case and that can be answered through comparing data collected in 2013 and 2018 are as follows:

What are the core topics of the radical discourse addressing the Albanian population? What are the patterns of the speech in 2013 and 2018?

What is the acceptance and receptiveness level of the radical messages by the target audience in 2018? How has that changed compared to 2013?

(Re-)Approaching the Research

The research model of online terrorist propaganda I developed in 2013 (Zoto, 2013, 2015) allows the qualitative and quantitative research on the terrorists' use of YouTube for propaganda purposes by exploiting the Albanian Language's singularity.[1] Although the study was focused on identifying, testing and validating factors of performance in terrorist propaganda on the Internet, the methodology of research, and the data retrieved from the research in November 2013, can be fully used for further study and comparison with the dataset obtained through the same methodin January 2018. Similar to the collection process in 2013, only videos published by individuals and groups of individuals on YouTube will be collected and examined, while videos posted by Albanian official Media Channels, which also use YouTube to report news and video chronicles, will be excluded. Non-terrorist videos featuring the theme of jihad, as an Islamic religious concept, will not be part of the detailed examination, and we will not collect specific data regarding their characteristics. Our focus will be only on videos containing the keyword "xhihad" in their web spaces, so others will not be at our guide even if they may fall into the category of terrorist videos.

Furthermore, one should acknowledge that this research is limited to a particular subsection of the videos' YouTube repertory. Terrorist propaganda is forwarded through various communication channels, including interpersonal communication, inter-group communication, and even mass-media communication. Despite being a tool of choice for terrorists in communicating their propagandistic messages, the Internet is only one of the other existing tools. Furthermore, YouTube is only one of the Internet platforms which terrorists use for propaganda. However, I have chosen the research sample focusing on qualitative assessment factors, such as the popularity of YouTube in Albania, the centrality of jihad in the terrorist propaganda, and the moderated Muslim communities' efforts in Albania promoting jihad as a peaceful concept.

Comparing datasets retrieved in 2013 and 2018: What has happened to the terrorist propaganda aiming at the Albanian audience?

The data collection process ended on January 28, 2018[2]. The process included an exhaustive collection of all data related to the search outcome through YouTube's motor search application when using the keyword "*xhihad*", which is the Albanian translation for jihad. This search showed initially 5200 results. Compared to the research results of 2013 when a similar keyword search resulted in 4600 results, now we have a difference of 600, which shows the

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[1] The Albanian language is a unique language that is spoken almost only by the Albanian population in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia and Montenegro, or by Albanian populations living in other countries.

[2] The collected data from this research can be provided under request by writing to the author Edval Zoto, contactable at: edval.zoto@yahoo.com

number of times the word is mentioned throughout YouTube. For careful consideration of it, it shows the sum of the number of times the word "xhihad" is found written in YouTube video-related contents, so either in video titles, within the descriptions section, or even comments. In other words, it shows that the specific term "xhihad" has been used more in the particular time when the research occurred in 2018 than in the respective time in 2013. It is hard to conclude with this figure only since even a prolific discussion where "xhihad" is often repeated by a few users in the comments section of a single video can significantly influence the count.

Table 1 – Main figures from 2013 and 2018 datasets

2013 Research	2018 Research
Social media used: YouTube	Social media used: YouTube
Keyword used: "xhihad"	Keyword used: "xhihad" (jihad in Albanian)
Time restraints: Feb. 2007- Nov. 2013	Time restraints: Feb. 2007- Jan. 2018
Date of research: 22 Nov 2013	Date of research: 28 Jan 2018
Raw results (times the keyword is mentioned): 4600	Raw results (times the keyword is mentioned): 5200
Number of videos: 230 videos	Number of videos: 600 videos
Terrorism propaganda videos identified: 84 videos	Terrorism propaganda videos identified: **34**, out of which: **11 videos were new**, or not present online during the 2013 research. **23 videos belonged to those which were already identified from the 2013 research**, but were still present online and, therefore, part of the dataset collected in January 2018.
Percentage of jihadist videos out of total: 36%	Percentage of jihadist videos out of total: 5%

In quantifying more representative propaganda or communication effort, a more accurate figure is by identifying the number of videos published through YouTube containing the word "xhihad" (independently if it is mentioned once or more times). As the research showed, in 2018, I found 600 videos more than 230 videos found in 2013. This was an approximation of a 260% increase. This figure indicates that the topic of "jihad" has received a lot of attention within the Albanian YouTube users' community. However, it is essential to note that not all these videos fall into the category of terrorist propaganda. As shown by the figures below, most of these videos relate to jihad as a religious act of personal and spiritual improvement in line with Islamic faith principles, not as a call to violence or justify terrorist action.

After analyzing the 600 videos identified, only 34 of them were identified as terrorist propaganda videos. In 2013 there were identified 84 terrorist propaganda videos out of 230 videos resulting after the research. What does this mean, in a more general reader-friendly version: if you were an Albanian searching for "xhihad" on YouTube, in November 2013, there were 36% chances that you encountered terrorist propaganda videos, while in January 2018, there were only 5% of chances. A meaningful difference! But what else the analysis of datasets retrieved in these two moments show? Here are the main findings:

The 2018 research results show an increased awareness of religious communities and the Albanian public over jihad, as a peaceful concept. The higher number of videos available on YouTube featuring jihad increased to 600 in 2018, from 230 in 2013. Besides, the ratio between videos featuring jihad as a positive religious concept against the videos that feature it abusively as a concept for inciting violence to serve terrorist goals has decreased. In 2013, 84 out

of 230 videos were terrorist propaganda videos, fixing the ratio to 36%. In 2018 only 34 videos out of 600 were falling in the terrorist propaganda category, which means a percentage of just 5%.

Through the research, it could be easily noticed that most of the videos of a non-terrorist nature. These videos are published by well-known Albanian imams from Albania, Kosovo, and Macedonia who explain through YouTube the peaceful meaning of jihad and suggest fellow Muslims refrain from violent and radical interpretations that lead them to violence and terrorism. Throughout the Balkans, the Albanian Muslim communities and organizations have been officially engaging against the radicalization that impacted the societies in the period 2012-2013. These communities have increased communication efforts with their religious followers and the wider public, even though using popular social media platforms, such as YouTube. (Medini et al., 2017 & Medini, Džidić and Zivanovic, 2017)

In the timeframe 2013-2018, the Albanian public has actively reacted against terrorist propaganda on YouTube - In researching the web links of the videos from the 2013 collection, we noticed that only 23 were still available online. YouTube also showed that 14 of those not present online were removed. They were breaching YouTube's Community Terms of Reference because they showed graphic content, violent Language etc. Presumably, members from the Albanian YouTube user's community have reported these videos and used YouTube mechanisms to report them and have them taken out.

Albanian terrorism propagandists have abandoned the "virtual battlefield" – The other missing 47 videos, previously identified by the 2013 research, were either voluntarily removed or deleted by their publishers, or the publishers themselves have abandoned YouTube. Furthermore, from the new research of January 2018, we have noticed that there were only 11 newly uploaded videos added somewhere between November 2013 and January 2019. However, most of those videos show footage related to the not very recent event and poor quality. Some have been uploaded by channel owners even earlier than 2013, but most probably have been in hidden status during the research in 2013 and made available to the public sometime after 2013. So basically, in November 2013, anyone searching for "xhihad" on YouTube would have found 84 terrorist propaganda videos, while in January 2018, only 34 were available, and out of those 23 were at approximately 4 years old.

The current terrorist propaganda discourse is focused on the traditional themes of jihad as an inciting call concept, and the Syrian war theme is almost forgotten. The research discovered that the current terrorist discourse focuses almost solely on the theme of jihadism as a call to war/violence. Differently from 2013, the current discourse is less populated in themes. The sudden decline of the number of videos promoting or calling to Albanians' participation in the Syrian war in the ranks of terrorist organizations is to be noticed. Out of 6 videos identified from the 2018 research related to the Syrian war theme, only 1 of them was published in 2013-2018. While the percentage of videos focusing on the jihad as a call to war theme has increased to 62%

of the total videos in 2018, compared to only 46% in 2013, it is also noticed that there are no videos left in 2018 promoting or pledging allegiance to jihadist leaders. The owners have removed most of these videos identified in 2013 and the videos falling into the Syrian war category. These actions may suggest that the former publishers may have chosen to be careful and protect themselves from Law enforcement retaliation. (See Table 2 for more details)

Table 2 – Terrorist propaganda by videos and themes of discourse in 2018 vs. 2013

Year of research	Description of datasets	War in Iraq (2005) Afg. / Arab. Peninsula	War in Syria (2012-2018)	Hate speech	West vs. Islam	Jihad as a call to war	Jihadist leaders
2013	Removed by YouTube	4	3	0	1	5	1
	Removed by Owner	3	15	0	1	20	8
	Rem. online in 2018	3	5	0	2	13	0
	Total as of 2013	10	23	0	4	38	9
	Rate to Total (84) in 2013	12%	27%	0%	5%	46%	10%
2018	Inherited from 2013	3	5	0	2	13	0
	New	2	1	0	0	8	0
	Total as of 2018	5	6	0	2	21	0
	Rate to Total (34) in 2018	15%	17%	0%	6%	62%	0%

Radical YouTubers show less demographic and online interaction details in their Web spaces – According to the 2018 research, the publishers show fewer details than what was available in 2013. This may be interpreted as a sort of increased caution toward releasing information that may lead to publishers' identification and their interaction with others. In the videos identified in the 2018 research, it is noticed that the YouTube channel owners (publishers) have disabled comments, disabled the 'share' option, and they have removed all demographic information, such as location or age, from their videos, and channel spaces. Of course, not all the information was available even in 2013, but in 2018 there is even less information made available.

Plenty of Wahhabi and Salafi videos, but only a few inciting violence/terrorism - Through the research, we identified a lot of Wahhabi-inspired channels, such as *<irfan3942>*, and a lot of Salafi-inspired media, such as *<SqarimeSelefije>* (which back in 2013 used to be named *<UihapsSelefi>*), *<selefi88>* and *<PerlatMuslimane>*. Still, only in few cases, their videos could be categorized as terrorist propaganda. Most of the videos in these channels were logically radical and fundamentalist but hard to categorize as terrorist propaganda since there were no explicit calls to violence, any signs showing terrorist signatures, or promoting any terrorist organization or individual. The presence of these videos and channels shows that while Wahhabist and Salafist viewpoints also compose the Albanian Islamic religious discourse on the Internet, not necessarily these viewpoints incite violence or terrorism.

Fewer videos to watch and less interest from the viewers to watch the existing videos - The "viewing rate" (the average number of views per day for each video) of the group of videos that were identified by the research in 2013) is much higher than the viewing rate of the group of videos from the 2018 research. (Videos appearing from November 23, 2013, to January 28, 2018)[3]. The 2013 average viewing rate is 21.25 views/day/video, while the 2018 average viewing rate is 1.66 views/day/video. It was also calculated the average viewing rate of the videos remnant online from the 2013 research, from their upload and publication to the second research date in 2018. The same videos for the period until 2013 had a rate of 3.08 views/day/video, while for the period 2013-2018, their rate decreased to 1.27 views/day/video. These results show that until 2013 YouTube users had paid much more attention to the identified videos than in the later period, 2013-2018. Furthermore, the 11 videos that had appeared online after 2013 did not attract as much attention as the first batch of videos.

Not only fewer videos and fewer views, but also poor edits - The 34 videos found online in 2018 have on average a smaller value in terms of audiovisual and editing quality than the ones found in 2013. Furthermore, the 11 videos that have appeared online after 2013 perform even worse in these terms. One of the 2013 research findings was that poor quality in terms of audiovisuals effects and editing were correlated with poor performance in terms of quantity of views and remains valuable.

In terms of branding, there are no differences between the two groups of videos since almost all videos of 2018 are branded by well-known Albanian radical media organizations, such as *<forum-islamik.com>*, *<selefus-salih.net>*, *<Teuhid Channel>*, *<albselefet.com>*, *<perlatmuslimane.com>*, *<BesArt El-Mekki>*, etc.

Fewer videos inciting terrorism explicitly, but existing radical channels have multiplied their subscriptions rates. Since 2013, the performance in terms of views, viewing rates, and audiovisual quality has generally decreased for the videos. We have noticed that the subscribing rates of the existing channels have increased. It looks like radical Albanian-speaking YouTubers have joined around the remaining tracks as time passed. The channel owners from the other side have also responded to this unusual attraction by adding more videos to the "appetite" of this audience. However, it is essential to know that these channels' video repertory is mainly made up of non-terrorist videos. Nevertheless, a few terrorist videos in these channels and the large audience at their disposal represent a risk for the potential use of these channels to spread radical and extremist viewpoints. See Table 3 for more details on the above observation.

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[3] YouTube shows date of publication for each video posted in the platform.

Table 3 – Subscribers and video-posting rates in 2013 and 2018

SUBJECT	2013 RESEARCH		2018 RESEARCH	
	Avg. subscription rates (Subscriptions/Channel)	Avg. video-posting rates (Videos/Channel)	Avg. subscription rates (Subscriptions/Channel)	Avg. video-posting rates (Videos/Channel)
All subjects of 1st research (2013) 84 videos from 61 channels	317	259	-	-
Subjects from 1st research (2013) available online as of 2nd research (2018) 23 videos from 21 channels	185	119	502	123
New subjects identified from 2nd research (2018) 11 videos from 7 channels	-	-	1295	608
All subjects available online during the 2nd research (2018) 34 videos from 28 channels	-	-	701	245

Top 5 most popular videos in 2013 and in 2018

Table 4 – Top 5 videos with more views

Ranking	TOP-5 VIDEOS WITH MORE VIEWS							
	2013 Research				2018 Research			
	Channel	Video title	No. views	Theme	Channel	Video title	No. views	Theme
1	Vay nah	Albanian Mujahideen In Syria	41622	War in Syria	QOPAHGT	ilahi	24669	Tribute to Jihad
2	Muxhahidii	Ushtaret e Allahut 1/2 [www.Forum-islamik.com]	39386	Tribute to Jihad	JIHAD ALBANIA	Me-Ket video Do shohesh se Xhihadi osht nSIRI!!	16982	War in Syria
3	albmusl1m	SIRI – Muxhahidat Shqiptar kerkojne SIRIN e lire dhe zbatimin e sheriatit	29069	War in Syria	mujkosova	Muxhahida - Lufto per Allah --	14560	Tribute to Jihad
4	QOPAHGT	ilahi	23759	Tribute to Jihad	Hoxhaim	Thirrje me frymen e fundit Palestina-pjesa 1	10806	West vs. Islam
5	HD Origjinal	Kosovari bene thirrje per Xhihad ne Siri ال جهاد	14974	War in Syria	fejaislame100	Jakup Hasipi-Xhihadi lufta ne rrugen e Allahut	6669	Tribute to Jihad

As shown in Table 4, the top performers list of 2018 changes a lot from the list of 2013. In 2013 the videos with the most views featured more in themes related to the ongoing conflict in Syria and less on others. In 2018, the themes were related to the concept of jihad and calling to the active participation of the Albanian Muslims in the jihadist cause. Furthermore, as it was noted earlier, the number of views of the top videos from 2013 is much higher than those of 2018, almost double.

Table 5 – Top 5 videos with more views/day

| Ranking | TOP 5 VIDEOS WITH MORE VIEWS/DAY | | | | | | | |
| | 2013 Research | | | | 2018 Research | | | |
	Channel	Video title	No. views/day	Theme	Channel	Video title	No. views/day	Theme
1	HD Origjinal	Kosovari bene thirrje per Xhihad ne Siri جهاد ال	374.35	War in Syria	JIHAD ALBANIA	Me-Ket video Do shohesh se Xhihadi osht nSIRI!!	10.38	War in Syria
2	albmusl1m	SIRI – Muxhahidat Shqiptar kerkojne SIRIN e lire dhe zbatimin e sheriatit	367.96	War in Syria	Xhevdet Bajrami	Xhihadi fjalet ne kuran	8.05	Tribute to Jihad
3	Muslim Center	Muslim Center – Një shqiptar në Siri: Ejani e luftoni për Xhihad - Albanian Mujahideen	219.71	War in Syria	QOPAHGT	ilahi	6.15	Tribute to Jihad
4	Vay nah	Albanian Mujahideen in Syria	166.49	War in Syria	mujkosova	Muxhahida - Lufto per Allah --	4.38	Tribute to Jihad
5	Ebu Ruvejda	Plaku nga Shqipëria-thirrje për Xhihad	147.15	War in Syria	fejaislame100	Jakup Hasipi-Xhihadilufta ne rrugen e Allahut	4.04	Tribute to Jihad

Table 5 reflects the top-performing videos in terms of the number of views per day. The performance (no. views/day) of the group of videos from the 2013 research is higher than those of the group of videos from the 2018 research. This means that YouTube users have been more attentive to the videos published before 2013 compared to the group of videos posted in the 2013-2018 period. What could be noted by observing the characteristics of the two groups of videos was that the batch of videos from 2013 also performed very high in terms of exploiting audiovisual elements, while the videos from 2018 were of more inferior quality. Probably this has made them even less preferred in confront to others.

Drawing conclusions and usefulness of this research approach

The relatively small sample used for collecting and analyzing data related to terrorist propaganda on YouTube does not allow for drawing major quantitative-based conclusions; however, it will enable quantitative-supported interpretations of the change of patterns over time of terrorist propaganda activities in the Albanian Language on YouTube. I researched in 2018 following a similar research methodology and framework explained and described earlier in 2013. (Zoto, 2013 & Zoto, 2015).

This paradigm suggests that it is possible to conduct tailored research of online terrorist propaganda by exploiting certain characteristic elements of that environment/society. Furthermore, tailored research under this paradigm can also enable law enforcement with limited resources to effectively counteract the terrorist use of the Internet. In this case, the [Albanian] language and a relevant keyword [xhihad] are used for this purpose. Although the sample is small and relatively contained, it was possible to observe patterns and characteristics of terrorist discourse and propaganda targeting the Albanian public through YouTube. Also, the quantitative-based findings from this research match very well, even with qualitative results related to developments and events in the field of counterterrorism activities in Albania and in general.

Terrorist activities and radicalization efforts are not native but inducted by external and foreign actors in the early years of the Albanian transition and promoted and supported by selected individuals, usually with easily detectable links to the earlier ones. Albanian religious tradition and the history of interreligious co-existence through centuries are far from anything deemed radical or extremist. In contrast, any religious group, Muslim or others do not face any particular grievance that may lead to discontent or tension within the relevant communities. Lack of proper education and general religious ignorance is a common trait of identified Albanian foreign fighters in the Syrian conflict. These conditions have led them to be easily influenced by mass-media platforms, including Internet social media, which a few local terrorist recruiters had successfully exploited. A swift change in legislation in Albania, which penalized participation in foreign conflicts, following an increase in the public discourse over the issue of radicalization, and the later adoption of a national strategy for countering violent extremism, made cease any inflow of foreign fighters toward Syria/Iraq since early 2014. News coming from those war fronts of Albanian citizens being killed and the detainment of several recruiters in Albania have contributed to raising the public's awareness of the problem.

Most importantly, increased involvement and the responsible reaction of religious communities and civil society actors, especially of the Albanian Muslim Community, have further contributed in having less radicalized communities even in remote and selected hot-spot areas. These developments can also be noticed by observing this research's findings, which show significant shrinkage of the terrorism-related metrics. From 2013, a year which can be considered the apex of terrorist activities involving Albanians, to early 2018, the terrorist propaganda on YouTube has dropped significantly. Most importantly, this was due to a dominance of videos (messages) explaining jihad correctly, produced and uploaded either by ordinary users or Albanian imams addressing their communities in the region. Many terrorist propaganda videos were taken out by publishers themselves, while regular users took down some others. Compared to pre-2013, Syria-related topics were not anymore the most popular. The terrorist propaganda videos published during the period 2013-2018 were softer than the earlier published ones. The new ones focus on terrorist "traditional themes" rather than providing updated content.

Stronger laws and law enforcement actions against terrorist may have convinced Albanian radical publishers in YouTube to hide as much as possible their identities or any identifying traits. In 2018, there was significantly less identifiable information available on the publisher's pages. And definitely, terrorist propaganda videos seem to have been less "attractive" to the broader public in 2013-2018. This can be noticed by low performing viewing rates, poor audiovisual quality, etc.

However, terrorist and radical propaganda on YouTube targeting Albanians has not vanished. There are still a lot of channels, videos and users that make use of them. The remaining videos and media have jumped up to their subscriptions rates, and it looks like remnant radicals have joined around them, giving them a larger audience than previously. It would be interesting to follow the activity and new uploads of these channels or the discussions in the comment sections of some of the videos identified in the research. Maybe, this may help to understand early future terrorist propaganda campaigns traits, themes, narratives used and subjects of interest.

This research tries to show the opportunity created by using creative ways in dealing with information management in an interactive Internet environment. It shows that it is possible to obtain relevant information on current and future terrorist propaganda characteristics, narratives, and subjects that the arterrorist uses Language and incredibly esoteric languages can help law enforcement much more than they may help terrorist propagandists. Creative ways that do not necessitate expensive equipment or software can help small agencies and law enforcement organizations improve intelligence collection and analysis activities. Simultaneously, it also allows for preparing counter-strategies and combating terrorist narratives since in the early stages of their development.

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