



THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE SPREAD OF EXTREME TERRORISM IN KOSOVO THE LEGAL AND CRIMINAL VIEW OF THESE CRIMES

Original scientific paper

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ABSTRACT

Terrorism is not a new concept, but it gained prominence when many extreme occurrences occurred, prompting a more in-depth investigation of the subject. Following the Pan Am flight bombing, for example, terrorism horrified the United States government and the entire world's population. This research aims to investigate, using secondary data, how social media was used in Kosovo to spread propaganda for radical terrorism and to analyse the provisions of the Kosovo Criminal Code that were broken by this propaganda. The current study relies on desk research with secondary data analysis, namely the content analysis of reports, articles, and news, and interpretive analysis of the Criminal Code of Kosovo. According to the study, propaganda for the spread of extremism and radicalism was used in Kosovo by showing videos on Facebook and YouTube channels, typically with religious messages about the duty to God for helping brothers and sisters in Syria and, to a lesser extent, by showing videos of Kosovo terrorists directly committing terrorist acts in Syria. In addition, the analysis discovers that propaganda led to violations of paragraphs a, b, and c of Article 139 of the Kosovo Criminal Code.

Keywords: *Jihad, Kosovo, propaganda, social media, violent extremism*

INTRODUCTION

The topic of terrorism is not new, but it began to draw more attention when several extreme incidents appeared, and this led to a deeper examination of the subject. Although some occurrences have been more deadly, such as the 1983 bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut (with 241 fatalities) or the December 1988 bombing of Pan-Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland (with 278 fatalities), none have had the same impact as the Murrah Building bombing (Cameron, 2000, 165). The events of the Persian Gulf War, which took place in 1991 under the

presidency of Iraq's Saddam Hussein (Gulf War ground offensive begins, 2010), and the Al-Qaeda-led 9/11 attacks, which resulted in 25,000 people being hurt and over 3,000 deaths, were another incident that terrified many (Hashim, 2014, 7). Unfortunately, these incidents did not signal the cessation of terrorist operations. Another global phenomenon that has emerged in recent years is the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Although this group first gained notoriety in 2014, it was founded in 2000 (Zeri Amerikes, 2014). The Islamic State (IS), led by Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, declared itself a self-declared caliphate following the major successes of the Islamist terrorist organization ISIS

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in the summer of 2014 (Hashim, 2014, 7). Several terrorist acts by ISIS have been perpetrated in Europe, including one in Vienna, Austria. Kujtim Fejzulaj, an ethnic Albanian who was born in North Macedonia, committed the attack, which left four people dead and only a few more injured. He was ultimately assassinated by the Austrian police. Later, ISIS took (Bennhold et al., 2020). According to the 2019 EUROPOL Report on the Situation and Trend of Terrorism (TE-SAT), there were 1,004 people detained in 19 EU member states on suspicion of crimes related to terrorism, with Belgium, France, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom reporting the highest numbers. In addition, 10 people were killed and 27 others were injured in EU terrorist attacks (European Police, 2020). In the meanwhile, there is a wealth of information about the condition of terrorism in Kosovo. The Kosovo case is cited in a report on terrorism that the U.S. Department of State released in 2020 (U.S. Department of State). Although the other organizers received fewer terms than the chief organizer (whose identity is not stated in the paper), these punishments are still significant in the battle against terrorism. In the meantime, the Special Prosecutor's Office in Kosovo indicted four returnees in November of the same year on charges of participating in terrorism. Fortunately, there were no known terrorist attacks that year. Using these and other instances, the paper highlights Kosovo as a country that is successfully combating terrorism while adhering to US directives (Avdimetaj & Coleman, 2020). To minimize the threat that might threaten the respective country at any time, various states have compiled data manuals and information on what terrorism is and the tactics that terrorists employ. These states also conduct ongoing investigations and work nonstop to reduce the threat as much as possible. But is this even conceivable today, given all the ways that people might join terrorist organizations? (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2012). Additionally, even terrorists are aware of the techniques used by the authorities to find them. Cyberspace is one place where terrorists feel secure. However, just how may terrorism and its deeds be connected via the Internet? Terrorism has been identified as a reality, but what steps do they take to interact with one another, grow their influence, and spread misinformation? This essay will concentrate on the use of social media by terrorists to attract new members, the activities of terrorists online, and the function of imams in Kosovo. Since 1980, the Internet has undergone a revolution (UNODC, 2012), however, there is a wealth of knowledge on the connection between the Internet and terrorism. and has been extensively explored. The strange

thing about the Internet is how quickly it can spread knowledge to millions of people (Telegrafi, 2016a). This presents terrorists with a perfect opportunity, particularly in terms of recruiting new members and earning money. The Internet provides the chance to utilize it anonymously, without restrictions, swiftly and efficiently across international borders, and with a nearly infinite audience.

METHODOLOGY

The current study used desk research, which entails the examination of data from available sources such as government statistics, online publications, and the research of other researchers. The use of existing data to obtain answers to research questions that differ from those addressed in the original study is known as secondary analysis of qualitative data. A range of research approaches were used to construct this study. The major scientific procedures used in this study are analysis and synthesis, which will be very useful for analyzing the theoretical views of worldwide and local writers (Curri, 2022, p. 386). A qualitative research technique was used to handle this research paper, which included "conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspective on the idea of how social media has influenced the spread of terrorism" (Berg, 2009). According to Dzogovic (2021), unlike quantitative methods, qualitative methods help us to understand certain phenomena exclusively in individual cases or smaller groups (Dzogovic, 2021, p. 105). The same author confirms that what distinguishes content analysis from other methods is that the researcher discovers what is not visible, looking for deeper meanings and implications. Therefore, this approach includes different contexts – power relations, psychoanalysis, economic, cultural, and other patterns (Dzogovic, 2021, p. 117). Collecting primary data through personal interviews, focus group discussions, and the manual distribution of printed surveys, frequently comes at a significant monetary cost and takes a long time. Due to COVID-19 constraints in Kosovo prisons, the current study was unable to employ interviews and focus groups as a source of primary data with radicalized individuals and instead relied on desk research. Desk research employing secondary data can provide significant illumination and answers to current problems under inquiry, just as primary data from typical data-gathering equipment might. Furthermore, the secondary data gathered from desk research is subjected to content analysis (Macnamara, 2018), and document interpretation analysis (Bowen, 2009). To fulfill the second

study's objectives, the current study employs content analysis for research publications, online reports, web articles, and other documentary evidence, as well as interpretive document analysis. Many experts examining the development of extreme terrorism and social media relied on desk research. The current study examines the content of numerous experts' publications on the development of radicalism through social media in Kosovo, as well as pieces published in notable news outlets in Kosovo such as Telegrafi, Gazeta Impakt, and Balkan Insight.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

Following a review of the literature, the current study formulates the following research question: RQ1: How did radical terrorist propaganda take place in Kosovo, and which provisions of the Kosovo Criminal Code were violated? The following are the study's objectives:

1. To investigate, using secondary data, how extreme terrorist propaganda was spread in Kosovo via social media.
2. To examine the articles of the Kosovo Criminal Code that were infringed by such promotion.

HYPOTHESIS

Application of quality methods in investigating and prosecuting crimes related to terrorism, by specialists in this field reduces the frequency of terrorism-related offenses, as defined by the Criminal Code of the Republic of Kosovo. The current study uses content analysis to objectively assess the messages included in various works and reports of secondary data using specified guidelines (Berg, 2009). The fundamental unit of text that may be classified into a specific category is the unit of analysis in content analysis. The unit of analysis should be selected to correspond to the nature of the research issue. The texts cited in articles, reports, and news that show how extreme terrorist propaganda was spread on social media should be the unit of study. In January of this year, the population of Kosovo was 1.93 million, with 56.9% of the population using social media, and Facebook reached 910,000 people. The majority of users (61%) are men. The Instagram audience is seven hundred fifty thousand people, with men accounting for 58.1% of the total (Kemp, 2021). Any misinformation that spreads through social media is extremely likely to reach a big audience in Kosovo. Radical imams and terrorist networks mostly use Facebook, Skype, and YouTube, the most popular social media platforms

among Kosovars when the article was published (Çela, 2018). According to, radicalization and misinformation were spread via Facebook, Skype, and YouTube (Çela, 2018). The unit of analysis is the propaganda spread via Facebook and YouTube. To understand the role of social media in spreading terrorism, we interviewed a Kosovo police expert, Mr. Sc. B. Krasniqi, who provided us with a clear picture of how terrorist groups use social media to spread their ideologies. According to Mr. Krasniqi, social media are the ones that are unedited and can express their entire opinion without fear of someone editing or reformulating the idea of a terrorist, while demonstrating it a specific example Mr. Krasniqi claims "The planned terrorist attack on the Pentagon, and more precisely the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, is a horrific example. The items were not picked at random. View aims to send a political message while also instilling terror in the public" (B. Krasniqi, personal communication, 2022). To strengthen our conviction that social media has been the main cause of encouraging young people to join terrorist groups such as ISIS and Al-Nusra, as evidenced by an interview with a former ISIS fighter conducted by journalist Ylli Rakipi for the newspaper Info Arkiva, while The ex-ISIS fighter says the internet was the main reason he was inspired after footage of children and local Syrians pleading for help was shared, begging everyone to join ISIS forces to protect the land of Sham (Info Arkiva, 2020). We will look at six categories that coexist and impact each other to understand how social networks are utilized to attract young people, key events, the influence of imams in Kosovo, and the recruiting process in general (Gazeta Impakt, 2018). The first category is propaganda, which encompasses recruiting, radicalizing, and inciting terrorism, followed by finance, planning, and execution, including covert communications and open-source material, and lastly cyber-attack (UNODC, 2012). These categories are discussed first for Kosovo, and subsequently, statistics are presented globally. To that aim, the unit of analysis is propaganda's intention, which is the recruiting, financing, planning, and preparation of subjects for cyber-attacks. Propaganda, which is directly related to the recruitment of thousands of young people in the world, is also present in Kosovo. Lyra Çela, in 2018 wrote about channels that promoted Jihad, such as "Al-Muwahhidun Albanian", "Sword of the Most Merciful", "Balkan Shahids", and "Have patience my soul", among others. The "Call to Tawhid" site was used to release content about "holy war", and to denounce democracy

(Telegrafi, 2016 b). All of these channels have been deactivated for breaking YouTube Community Rules. In this sense, the authors of the current study believe that propaganda occurred via distinct YouTube Channels that disseminated videos mostly about the holy war and the destruction of democracy. According to the news outlet Insajderi 2019, instructions, audio, information, and videos were marketed online. All of the web resources explain in detail how individuals may join the common cause with terrorists, which is Jihad. Some documents were released on a YouTube channel, which mostly reported on posts by Kosovo extremist Lavdrim Muhaxheri. Lavdrim Muhaxheri's tweets featured recordings of him protesting the rejection to build a mosque and attempting to attract others by implying that the authorities were anti-religion. Following that, recordings of terrorist Lavdrim Muhaxheri joining ISIS and executing terrorist activities were released on Google and YouTube (Televizioni Klan Kosova, 2017). Based on the content analysis, the authors of this paper conclude that propaganda in Kosovo took place primarily through Google and YouTube channels, first with the message of calling on people to help with the construction of a mosque as a cause, and later, when ISIS emerged, through direct videos showing the commission of terrorist acts by Kosovo recruits in ISIS. In her book *Mass-Mediated Terrorism*, the author (Nacos, 2016), takes an in-depth look at how terrorists use mass media to get attention, disseminate dread and worry among the victims of this type of violence, and threaten more assaults. Because of the conventional news media's hunger for dramatic, exciting, and tragic tales, terrorist incidents and threats have always received excessive publicity. Today, however, social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube enable terrorists to interact directly with large audiences all over the world, distributing misinformation, radicalizing and recruiting followers, and supplying know-how to "lone wolves." Governments in democracies, on the other hand, use mass media to rally popular support for anti-terrorism measures (Nacos, 2016). Dr. Arben Qirezi in the analysis done for UNDP-Kosovo describes the radicalization of young people influenced by radical local imams and NGOs that use social media to reach out to disillusioned youth (Qirezi, 2017, 11) extremist beliefs have been pushed in Kosovo using social media, particularly during the Syrian crisis. According to the same research, according to a Free Radio Liberty broadcast, the radicalization of youngsters originated from imams and NGOs

utilizing social media to reach impoverished and vulnerable young people. Based on the content analysis of this secondary documentary evidence, it is possible to establish that social media pushed extremist beliefs to vulnerable and underprivileged youngsters (Telegrafi, 2017a). The current white power movement has evolved into a worldwide, transnational phenomenon. Daniel Byman's comprehensive, authoritative study chronicles important periods in the formation of the white power movement in the United States and throughout the world, then delves into its various elements today. Byman debunks various illusions regarding white power terrorism and shows hazardous gaps in the present policy, drawing on a wide range of sources. White nationalist terrorism has been consigned as a secondary worry in the United States and Europe for over two decades, even though it was metastasizing. This negligence has resulted in horrifying acts of violence ranging from New Zealand to Norway to South Carolina, eroding trust in Western democratic institutions. Because white supremacists' frustrations reflect mainstream discussions and their violence frequently exacerbates division, their political influence can be disproportionately large even if the corpse count is modest. As Byman emphasizes, they are not a staid organization attempting to turn back the clock, but rather a dynamic movement drawing on ideas from throughout the world and utilizing cutting-edge technology, particularly social media. White power terrorists, on the other hand, have several flaws. They are split, have inadequate leadership, and frequently attract the inept and criminal, as well as the dangerous and delusory. The threat can be decreased if governments respond decisively and handle white-power terrorism with the same intensity that they regard Islamic attacks. This will necessitate tough law enforcement, international intelligence collaboration, technology company crackdowns, and other drastic measures. Spreading Hate will be required reading for anybody concerned about this increasingly networked movement, which threatens to grow more violent in the coming years. It considers legislative options as well as summarizes a great corpus of scientific material (Byman, 2022). Based on what has been stated above and a review of the literature on the subject, we have confirmed our hypotheses that Kosovo lacks a quality expert who would investigate every activity of terrorist groups in mass media or social media in spreading their ideologies, such as recruiting young people, as well as the effective implementation of the investigation due to a lack

of a sufficient staff of experts who will control the activities of terrorist groups (Telegrafi, 2017 b). To serve as a motivational element for recruitment, social media was used to graphically convey the conflicts in Syria to individuals living outside the war zone, particularly in Kosovo. Videos of suffering Sunni brothers in Syria were presented in this case to serve as a motivational and recruitment message. In this regard, based on the content analysis of the documentary evidence, it is possible to conclude that the recruiting message was the suffering of Sunni brothers in Syria, rather than the acts of violence depicted in films. Videos were uploaded on YouTube to highlight the threats and calls to action, as well as to express gratitude to Allah for the chance to protect the honor of Muslim females and Muslim children in Syria. According to the content analysis, the YouTube channel was utilized as a marketing medium to recruit and disseminate radicalism with the religious theme of preserving the honor of Muslim females and children in Syria. The theme of safeguarding the honor of Muslim women and children as a vulnerable group was exploited in this respect. In conclusion, based on the achievement of the first study's aim, the authors of the current study believe that the propagation of radical terrorism in Kosovo is mostly carried out through videos on Facebook and YouTube. The major theme utilized for recruiting was the obligation to Allah to preserve the honor of Muslim brothers and sisters in Syria. To a lesser extent, the message of displaying terrorist atrocities as propaganda movies was employed on various occasions. The suffering of brothers and sisters in Syria, as well as the need to serve God's cause and wage the Holy War, were primarily exploited as inspiring propaganda messages. Finally, propaganda was mostly used for direct recruiting and less for terrorist finance (International Monetary Fund. Monetary and Capital Markets Department, 2019). To achieve the second study aim, the current study used interpretive document analysis of the Kosovo Criminal Code to investigate the legal provisions of the Kosovo Criminal Code that were violated by propaganda in social media used to disseminate radicalism (IMF, 2019). According to the interpretation of the Kosovo Criminal Code, Article 139 of the Kosovo Criminal Code was primarily breached in the dissemination of radicalism via social media advertising. Article 139 makes recruitment for terrorism a criminal violation punishable by 5 to 15 years in prison. On the spectrum of all forms of terrorist actions, recruitment to conduct terrorist activities is a specific type of activity. The word

recruiting shall mean the following activities in the context of the above-mentioned incrimination:

- calling or encouraging another person to join a terrorist group;
- when someone is called to participate in the commission of a terrorist act;
- when someone is called to participate in the activities of a terrorist group;
- when someone is called to provide funds or material resources for the commission of terrorist acts or other terrorist activities (Saliu, 2014, 234).

The perpetrator of this conduct might be anybody who encourages others to participate in terrorist actions, such as the collecting of finances or other things. This conduct is only performed with a direct purpose (Morina & Arifi, 2019). In response to the second part of the study question, it may be inferred that Article 139, namely paragraphs a, b, and c, was violated. In response to the research question, the current study finds that propaganda for the propagation of radicalism mostly occurred through videos on Facebook and YouTube channels, primarily with the theme of protecting the honor of Muslim brothers and sisters in Syria. Furthermore, by utilizing such films, the recruiters violated Article 139 paragraphs a, b, and c of the Kosovo Criminal Code by committing the criminal offense of recruiting individuals to join the terrorist organization or calling others to do the terrorist act. Following that, the discussion section analyses the findings, compares them to prior studies' findings, explores the significance of the findings for research and practice, and considers the limitations of each study result independently. The current study discovers that propaganda for the spread of extremism and radicalism took place in Kosovo through videos on Facebook and YouTube channels, most of which contained religious messages about the duty to God to help brothers and sisters in Syria, and, to a lesser extent, showed videos of Kosovo terrorists directly committing terrorist acts in Syria. According to Daly & Gerwehr (2006), recruiting occurs via indoctrination with a particularly crafted message, which in the case of Kosovo was the message of assisting Brothers and Sisters in Syria (Daly & Gerwehr, 2006), on the other hand, claims that propaganda is mostly spread through Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, which in the case of Kosovo was primarily Facebook and YouTube. For that reason, in the case of Kosovo, Twitter was not the preferred vehicle for spreading radicalism via social media. To this end, the recruitment goes beyond receiving terrorist messages, through indoctrination of the recruited person by message, whereby the recruited person becomes a member

of the organization by receiving a preliminary assessment from the recruiter that he is mature and ready to join the terrorist group (Daly & Gerwehr, 2006). Finally, the message employed for ISIS recruiting and propaganda was the responsibility of Jihad, which in the instance of Kosovo was the duty to Allah to wage Jihad to support the brothers and sisters in Syria, videos were the most often used propaganda tactics, which is also true in Kosovo. In terms of the criminal crimes perpetrated by propaganda actions, the current study reveals that urging individuals to perform acts or join terrorist groups was the most common violation in Kosovo (Criminal Law of the Republic of Kosovo, 2019). The current study suggests that policymakers devise strategies for collaborating with social media corporations to limit how communications are transmitted and messages propagate to individuals for indoctrination. In the case of Kosovo, a dedicated human intelligence unit inside the Kosovo Police can be developed to follow social media, and YouTube channels, and build algorithms and codes in Albanian that track certain keywords to prevent the spread of radicalism and extremism via social media.

CONCLUSIONS

The section that follows provides an overview of the study's findings. It highlights the limitations of the study. This part also includes the study's suggestions and future directions, which may be utilized to strengthen the battle against radicalism and extremism in Kosovo. The study's goal was to assess, using secondary data, how propaganda for radical terrorism took place in Kosovo through the use of social media, as well as to analyze the provisions of Kosovo's Criminal Code that were infringed by such propaganda. The study relied on desk research and secondary data analysis, such as papers, reports, and news items regarding the development of radicalism and social media in Kosovo. The secondary data is also used in the study to analyze the articles of the Kosovo Criminal Code. The Kosovo Criminal Code was cited as documentary evidence in this case. To address the study's major research question, the current study employs content analysis and interpretive document analysis to fulfill two study objectives. Finally, the study discovers that propaganda for the spread of extremism and radicalism took place in Kosovo through videos on Facebook and YouTube channels, in most cases with religious messages of the duty to God to help brothers and sisters in Syria, and to a lesser extent showing

videos of direct commission of terrorist acts by Kosovo terrorists in Syria. Furthermore, the survey discovers that urging individuals to perform actions or join terrorist organizations were the most common violations committed in Kosovo, especially in paragraphs a, b, and c of Article 139 of the Kosovo Criminal Code. Paragraph d of Article 139, which requires someone to contribute cash or material resources for the conduct of terrorist crimes or other terrorist operations, was violated less frequently than paragraphs a, b, and c. Government institutions must eradicate the conditions that lead to anybody being involved in terrorist actions. Issuance of current laws that allow for new scenarios, i.e., new techniques employed by terrorists to achieve their aims, as well as their application in practice, non-application of practices of copying laws of other states and attempts to apply them in another state would result in failure. Laws such as the Criminal Code, the Law on Money Laundering and Combating Terrorist Financing, and the Law on Citizens' Obligation to Join Foreign Wars should be harmonized with other laws such as the Law on Pesticide or Gas Control, the Law on Education, the Law on Customs, Police, and Security Services, the Law on International Legal Cooperation, and many others. As a result, the rules should be mutually supporting rather than conflicting, as this would be abused by terrorist groups. Professional training of law enforcement personnel in the fight against terrorism, i.e. the necessity for specialized, trained, and well-equipped institutions, cannot be expected to result in actual achievement in this regard. Cooperation between the Police, Army, Secret Services, Prosecution, Courts, Customs, other state agencies, various Ministries, and so on should be strong in order to appropriately distinguish their duties, tasks, and responsibilities. Cooperation at the local and regional levels, given that terrorist groups may carry out illegal activities in one state and hide in another, then cooperation with international security institutions and organizations such as NATO, INTERPOL, and others, but also with organizations such as OSCE, EU, EC, UN, UNHCR, and others. Designing a clear, appropriate plan can lead to success in this task, which is expected to be the most significant security challenge for any country in the future decades. The current study's shortcoming is that it may have employed the qualitative research approach using semi-structured interviews with returning terrorists in Kosovo to investigate the types of propaganda and messages that were important in their recruiting.

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