modus | insight

KorRex

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Summary

| The English-language Salafi and Islamist channel types that can be identified on YouTube cover a significantly broader spectrum than the channel types in the German-language fringes of religious extremism (FRE).

| A large number of structural parallels can be drawn between the content strategies of the German-language and English-language channel types.

| Certain channels that are particularly popular among German-speaking users copy their videos directly from the leading English-language channels, at least in part. Two of the Top 3 channels in the FRE copy 17.5% or 5% respectively of their videos directly from English-language sources (exclusively „epic" or „anonymous narrator" channel types).

| All of the channel types in the German-language FRE that were previously identified within the framework of the ABAT project correlate to popular English-language channel types. Other English-language channel types offering specialist content are absent from the German-language YouTube landscape (with the exception of individual videos). Overall and as expected, the English-language content posted on YouTube is much more diverse in terms of channel types, combinations and specialisations.

| The English-language YouTube landscape is dominated by the channel types „preacher channel", „preacher portal", „anonymous narrator" and „mirror channel"; combinations of these types can often also be identified. Combinations of the content strategies adopted by different channel types are extremely successful, for example „preacher portal" combined with „anonymous narrator".

| Most of the Top 25 channels in the German-language FRE are influenced by popular English-language and Arabic-language channels belonging to the core of the network analysis carried out within the framework of the project „Correlations between the English-language and German-language fringes of religious extremism on YouTube and implications for the prevention of radicalisation" (Kor-Rex). In the vast majority of cases, however, they do not directly recommend these channels or their popular preachers.

| Certain German-language channels refrain from providing recommendations or deliberately fail to cite the original sources of their content, making it clear that they wish to position themselves as independent voices.

| German-language programme channels appear to provide informative insights into the broad range of interests held by users, as well as offering valuable pointers to smaller and less popular channels across the Salafi and Islamist spectrum that post content in many different languages.

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| Introduction and description of the problem

The Internet has opened up revolutionary opportunities for people all over the world to connect with others who share the most diverse interests imaginable; do you have a weakness for motorcycles from the 1920s? Are you searching for the largest jigsaw puzzle in the world? Or would you like to swap collectable pictures of trains or aeroplanes? Regardless of your chosen field of interest, the Internet makes it possible to link up with like-minded people in forums and on social media platforms, wherever in the world they happen to live. In addition, algorithms and recommendations increase the likelihood that users will be guided repeatedly to new topics and information which overlap with their own interests but of which they previously had no knowledge. As the pace of digitalisation picks up, this phenomenon is becoming more and more relevant; for example, a study by *Deutsches Institut für Vertrauen und Sicherheit im Internet* states that all young people in Germany between the ages of 14 and 24 now use the Internet, and that around 96% of them have a smartphone[1].

Although the Internet provides access to positive and interactive opportunities in terms of global interconnectedness and the dissemination of information, the drawbacks are also becoming increasingly apparent; content is disseminated without any editorial checks and balances, trust in the established media is declining, and extremists and demagogues are enjoying ever greater popularity. The YouTube platform appears to play a central role in this respect; according to the "JMI Studie 2019", it ranks first (63%) on the list of the most popular websites for young people, outstripping the platforms in second and third place by far (WhatsApp at 36% and Instagram at 35%). Facebook (4%) lags even behind Wikipedia (5%) on this list[2].

1 Deutsches Institut für Vertrauen und Sicherheit im Internet (2018). „DIVSI U25-Studie. Euphorie war gestern - Die ‚Generation Internet' zwischen Glück und Abhängigkeit." Hamburg. p. 12. Available at: https://www.divsi.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/DIVSI-U25-Studie-euphorie.pdf.

2 Medienpädagogischer Forschungsbund Südwest (2019). „JIM-Studie 2019. Jugend, Information, Medien – Basisuntersuchung zum Medienumgang 12-19-Jähriger." p. 27. Available at: https://www.mpfs.de/fileadmin/files/Studien/JIM/2019/JIM_2019.pdf.

This was one of the reasons why we analysed the German-speaking protagonists uploading primarily Islam-related video content to the YouTube platform within the framework of the ABAT project in 2019. The initial findings were alarming; the majority of channel owners focusing solely on the topic of Islam were found to constitute a quasi-homogeneous bubble on the platform, referred to in the project as the "fringes of religious extremism (FRE)"[3]. This bubble consists primarily of a mixture of Salafi, Islamist and hybrid-content discourses[4].

International connections with English-language channels and similarities with these channels in terms of content were repeatedly noticed within the bubble. The first samples revealed that German-language channels appear to copy content frequently from English-language channels, after a certain time lag. This gave rise to the idea of capturing data about English-language channels producing content on the same topics, which could subsequently serve as a pool of information on the content-related and formal evolution of channels in the German-language bubble. If this hypothesis were to be confirmed more generally, monitoring of the relevant English-language channels might provide individuals involved in prevention efforts in Germany with enormous advantages when creating alternative and counter-narratives in terms of both their content and the speed with which they could be posted. As part of the KorRex project, the English-language channels were therefore recorded, analysed and compared against the German-language channels within the bubble of the FRE on a multidimensional basis.

As a first step, the most important English-language channels were identified using two differentiated approaches. As a second step, network graphs of the English-language YouTubers were created as a basis for comparisons and the identification of additional channels. As the next step, the English-language and German-language videos were explored and evaluated on the basis of criteria such as content strategy, assignment to a typology, mutual influence at transnational level and direct copying. The initial implications for individuals involved in preventive efforts were then defined.

Technical definitions

| Seed channels
A "seed channel" is the channel on YouTube selected by the project team as a starting point for the research. Seed channels are selected on the basis of the specific focus of research, e.g. topic, popularity (number of clicks or subscriptions) or age.

| Script
A "script" is a short sequence of commands executed by a computer program.

| Scraping
"Scraping" involves automated scripts (created using the programming language Python in this instance) that download the latest relevant information from the YouTube platform on a daily basis and store it in a database. Queries can then be used to search through and process the information in a targeted manner.

| Transcript
The YouTube platform automatically creates a transcript of the spoken content of each video. Unless the transcripts have been hidden manually by the video creators, they can be downloaded using an automated scraping procedure.

| TF-IDF
TF-IDF (term frequency – inverse document frequency) is a method for investigating and representing the relevance of the terms that appear in the individual documents within a collection of documentation. In the case at hand, the scraped German-language and English-language transcripts were translated, juxtaposed and compared for this purpose.

| Working hypothesis

The transnational flow of information, and the status of non-jihadist videos posted online as a source of inspiration for speakers of different languages, are topics that have not been sufficiently investigated to date[5]. Based on the outcomes of the ABAT study, the KorRex project took this as its starting point and investigated potential correlations between the German-language and English-language YouTube landscapes. In order to obtain a sufficiently broad basis for evaluation, a database built for the purposes of the ABAT project was used; among other things, this database contains continuously scraped video links, video descriptions and transcripts as well as quantitative data[6].

Based on the findings that have emerged to date from the ABAT project, the central working hypothesis of the KorRex project was as follows:

> *A correlation (as yet undefined) can be identified between English-language and German-language channels. Certain formats and content that can be observed on English-language channels can also be observed on German-speaking channels* **after a time lag**.

Even before the project was launched, it had become clear that German-speaking channel owners sometimes sought inspiration from English-language channels, but that they frequently customised the content produced by these channels by adapting the formats and topics to their own agendas, and aligning them with the specific demands of the German-speaking target groups and the German-speaking Muslim community. The purported correlations between English-language and German-language channels could accordingly be expected to be present in very different variants and to differing extents. In so far as possible within the framework of this exploratory study, other factors that might determine whether a channel sought inspiration from English-language channels were therefore also taken into account: for example, it was entirely possible that universal features of the shared ideologies, a similar education or widely successful media strategies implemented by both English-language and German-language channels might account for the similarities, and that adequate evidence of correlations would not be found.

5 Whereas a number of studies on the transnational influences of Salafism and jihadism on German-speaking countries have been published over the past few years, no comparative study dedicated to the FRE has yet appeared. Cf. Lutterjohann, Nina and Andreas Zick (2018), "Konflikte statt Ideologie? Transnationale Einflüsse auf den islamistischen Extremismus mit einem Fokus auf Zentalasien: Mögliche Parallelen in derRadikalisierung von jungen Menschen in westlichen und (mittel)östlichen Kulturen." CoRE research report, University of Bielefeld. Available at: https://www.bicc.de/fileadmin/Dateien/Publications/CoRE_Publications/CoRE_Bericht_2_Zick__Lutterjohann_Konflikte_statt_Ideologie.pdf. As well as Lohlker, Rüdiger, El Hadad, Amr, Holtermann, Philipp and Nico Prucha (2016), "Transnationale Aspekte von Salafismus und Dschihadismus." HSFK Report 5/2016, Leibnitz-Institut Hessische Stiftung für Friedens- und Konfliktforschung, Frankfurt am Main. Available at: https://salafismus.hsfk.de/fileadmin/HSFK/hsfk_publikationen/report_052016.pdf. Aand El Difraoui, Asiem (2012), "jihad.de – Jihadistische Online-Propaganda: Empfehlungen für Gegenmaßnahmen in Deutschland." Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Berlin. Available at: https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/studien/2012_S05_dfr.pdf.

6 "Scraping" involves automated scripts (created using the programming language Python in this instance) that download the latest relevant information from the YouTube platform on a daily basis and store it in a database. Queries can then be used to search through and process the information in a targeted manner.

1 | Summary of the German-language fringes of extremism on YouTube

The fringes of religious extremism on YouTube were investigated within the framework of the ABAT project in 2019. The central outcomes of this study are as follows:

1   The owners of the YouTube channels that were analysed deploy a broad range of formats, styles and content. They evolve at a very rapid pace, and are extremely willing to adapt their media strategies to suit users' preferences.

2   *Viewers* appear to be interested primarily in the topic of Islam and the associated questions of the "right" way to believe and the "right" way to live. On the basis of a network analysis using indicators of user behaviour[7], viewers do not appear to attach any great importance to ideological differences, rivalries or distinctions between channel owners.

3   The variety of formats responds to the diverse needs and preferences of an audience that is not restricted simply to teenagers, but which also includes young adults and families.

4   The styles, layouts and formats of the German-language FRE, as well as the topics covered and the other channels recommended, indicate that owners often gain inspiration and ideas for content from other English-language and/or Arabic-language channels. Close ties apparently exist with the network of Wahhabi scholars in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, and with Islamist and Salafi movements in Turkey as well as the United Kingdom and English-speaking countries, and inspiration is drawn from all of these sources.

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7 Network analysis is an empirical methodology that can be used to investigate the mutual relationships between different protagonists. In the case at hand, it describes the relationships between the different channels on the basis of subscriber counts.

YouTube channels in the fringes of extremism (last updated 19 January 2020)

Ranking	Channel	Number of subscribers on 19 October 2020
1	Botschaft des Islam	182.000
2	Machts Klick?	130.000
3	Lorans Yusuf	80.700
4	PierreVogelDE	39.700
5	Iman TV	45.800
6	Generation Islam	42.100
7	Hindenburgstrasse	66.300
8	Der Islam verbindet	34.400
9	Pierre Vogel Abu Hamza Official Page	53.100
10	STAR☾MOON Islam	33.300
11	Fitrah Dawah	35.100
12	Young Muslim	32.700
13	Wissen für alle (Scheich Abdellatif)	24.600
14	Habibiflo Dawah Produktion	21.100
15	Abu Mikail Islamstudent	20.800
16	Abul Baraa Tube	31.700
17	Realität Islam	13.100
18	Marcel Krass	12.700
19	HAQQ Analytics	10.600
20	Stimme der Gelehrten	9.710
21	Die einzige Wahrheit	8.520
22	EZE Einladung zum Erfolg CH	10.400
23	FlaggeDerSunna	8.990
24	Deutschsprachige Muslimische Gemeinschaft e. V.	20.600
25	Luqman – Kraftvolle Ermahnungen	7.530

Based on a recent sample of the ranking list, only the top third remains relatively constant at present. The bottom two thirds are characterised by the repeated appearance of new channels that push out the old ones. Continuous monitoring is necessary to keep the overview up-to-date at all times.

Legend
Hybrid mission channels
Salafi channels
Islamist channels (Hizb ut-Tahrir)
Salafi mirror channels/preacher portals

2 | Methodology

Within the framework of the KorRex exploratory study, a mixed-method approach comprising both quantitative and qualitative methods was used to obtain the widest possible range of findings.

A specially developed deductive code system was used for analytical purposes. This code system was used not only for analysing the respective channels, but also for performing a comparative qualitative analysis of the content of the German-language video channels that were identified. The English-language channels recommended by German-language channels were also recorded.

A comparable database for English-language channels was built within the framework of the KorRex project, using the following tried-and-tested quantitative and qualitative procedures:

| Quantitative procedures

As a starting point for the quantitative analysis, the researchers carried out a manual search using two differentiated approaches:

1 An unstructured search utilising the snowball effect; starting with the best-known English-speaking YouTubers, the "Up next" algorithm function was used to carry out research on YouTube. This methodology proved successful during the previous ABAT project, since the "Up next" videos recommended by YouTube generally displayed further content from the fringes of extremism. A computer-aided experiment was carried out during the ABAT project for the purpose of verifying this finding, which is also corroborated by the current state of research[8]. The outcomes and the most important parameters of the channels were recorded in an initial list of seed channels[9].

2 The English-language channels identified as part of the ABAT project using a German-language network graph were also recorded in the new KorRex database. They can be regarded as initial evidence of links between the German-language and English-language channels.

3 A current ranking list of the Top 25 English-language channels was created on this basis, and these were used as seed channels for the network graphs.

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8 For example Reed, Alastair, Whittaker, Joe, Votta, Fabio and Seán Looney (2019). "Radical Filter Bubbles. Social Media Personalisation Algorithms and Extremist Content." Royal United Service Institute for Defence and Security Studies, London. Available at: https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/20190726_grntt_paper_08_0.pdf.

9 A "seed channel" is the channel on YouTube selected by the project team as a starting point for the research. Seed channels are selected on the basis of the specific focus of research, e.g. topic, popularity (number of clicks or subscriptions) or age.

4   Two network graphs of English-language channels were then produced on the basis of the channels identified in this manner. This approach was chosen with a view to mapping the links of the German-language channels based on the English-language channels recommended and the overlap between users of German-language channels and of English-language channels.

5   The same data parameters as for the ABAT database were subsequently scraped for the English-language channels. A TF-IDF analysis was then carried out for the purpose of analysing "direct copies"[10]. The German-language transcripts that had already been scraped and stored last year were translated into English using a machine translation tool. The level of similarity was rated on a scale between zero and one. Videos without a transcript function were ignored. It was anticipated that certain videos would be thematically similar without unambiguously confirming the correlations between the German-language and English-language versions, since the channel owners could fundamentally only choose from a relatively limited list of themes. It followed that the TF-IDF methodology could not be used to determine conclusively whether the German-language YouTubers were inspired by their English-language counterparts, or whether they drew on the same topics in principle as a result of their religious training or world view. A key stage in the comparison therefore involved documenting the respective time stamps as a basis for demonstrating that the topics and formats used as a source of inspiration appeared in German-language videos after a time lag compared to the English-language videos. This also made it possible to compare the data sets produced within the framework of the ABAT and KorRex projects.

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10 TF-IDF (term frequency – inverse document frequency) is a method for investigating and representing the relevance of the terms that appear in the individual documents within a collection of documents. In the case at hand, the scraped German-language and English-language transcripts were translated, juxtaposed and compared for this purpose.

6 Since the number of English-language channels recorded within the framework of the project was significantly higher than the number of German-language channels, a range of different strategies were deployed. The steps below were followed in order to find English-language channels, identify correlations with German-language channels and (where applicable) highlight influences on German-language channels:

| an analytical comparison between the most popular German-language and English-language channels,
| an analysis of English-language channels recommended by German-language channels (using the "Channels" section on the homepage of the relevant YouTube channel),
| qualitative analysis of the database of English-language channels with a view to identifying prominent campaigns and current topics also covered by the German-language channels as a basis for verifying reverse correlations in the opposite direction (for example a key word search for "jinn" followed by a review of the respective arguments, graphic design, time stamp, format etc.),
| extensive conventional research into the Top 25 channels in the German-language FRE with a view to identifying mirrored English-language videos, references to English-speaking YouTubers, websites, events etc.

| Qualitative procedures

A distinction was made between the content-related level and the formal level for qualitative methodological purposes. In terms of content, the deductive code system developed within the framework of the ABAT project was used as a shared basis for comparative analysis of the English-language and German-language videos, and further modified over the course of the project. This approach ensured that topic-based and trend-based developments at channel level could be systematically observed on a comparative basis, and made it possible to identify the degree of correlation in terms of content and any channel-specific variants on the basis of the qualitative comparison. This made it possible to carry out parallel investigations into the development of English-language and German-language content over the course of the project and to analyse potential spread and adoption of topics on an exploratory basis. At structural level, the channel types, formats, range of topics and prominent campaigns identified within the framework of the ABAT project were compared against the pool of data obtained for English-language content within the framework of the KorRex project.

Methodological package
The methodological package developed within the framework of the KorRex project should be understood as an initial and exploratory multi-method approach that can be used in the future not only to compare German-language and English-language channels, but also to explore other fields of action and topics, for example right-wing populist or right-wing extremist channels on YouTube.

3 | Networks of channels

The network graph from the ABAT exploratory study

Figure 1: The network of the German-speaking
fringes of religious extremism on YouTube[11]

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11 For a zoomable version of the graph, cf.: https://modus-zad.de/blog/die-blase-der-peripherie/; for more information on the project, cf. Baaken, Till, Hartwig, Friedhelm and Matthias Meyer (2020). "Fringes of Religious Extremism on YouTube." modus – Centre for Applied Research on Deradicalisation, Berlin. Available at: https://modus-zad.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/modus_insight_ABAT_eng_2020.pdf.

The channels that appear in the ABAT database dominate the Islam-related content available in German-speaking countries. Further network analyses also reveal that the channels form a separate bubble on YouTube, clearly visible on the diagram as the red and yellow area at the bottom left. The channels form a filter bubble containing not only polarised channels which disseminate ever more extremist content, but also gateway channels such as "Machts Klick?" or "Botschaft des Islam", which route users into the bubble yet which also lie outside its centre and exhibit many links with channels dealing with more general topics.

Users within this bubble do not seem to make any distinction between Salafi, Islamist and conservative channels. Instead, they randomly click on and "like" any videos provided that they relate in general terms to the topic of Islam. Since they select videos with little differentiation or reflection, they can also easily be influenced by YouTubers within the network. In addition, the YouTube algorithm promotes this self-contained flood of homogeneous information by delivering videos that originate almost exclusively from the bubble, guiding users to content that is ever more extreme and extremist. Individuals searching for information about Islam can therefore quickly find themselves in a microcosm or echo chamber. They may get there by asking simple "how to" questions ("How do I pray correctly?"), questions about international affairs ("Christchurch attack") or questions seeking information ("What is a hijab?").

The English-speaking channels

Protagonist level

Figure 2: The network graph
at the protagonist level
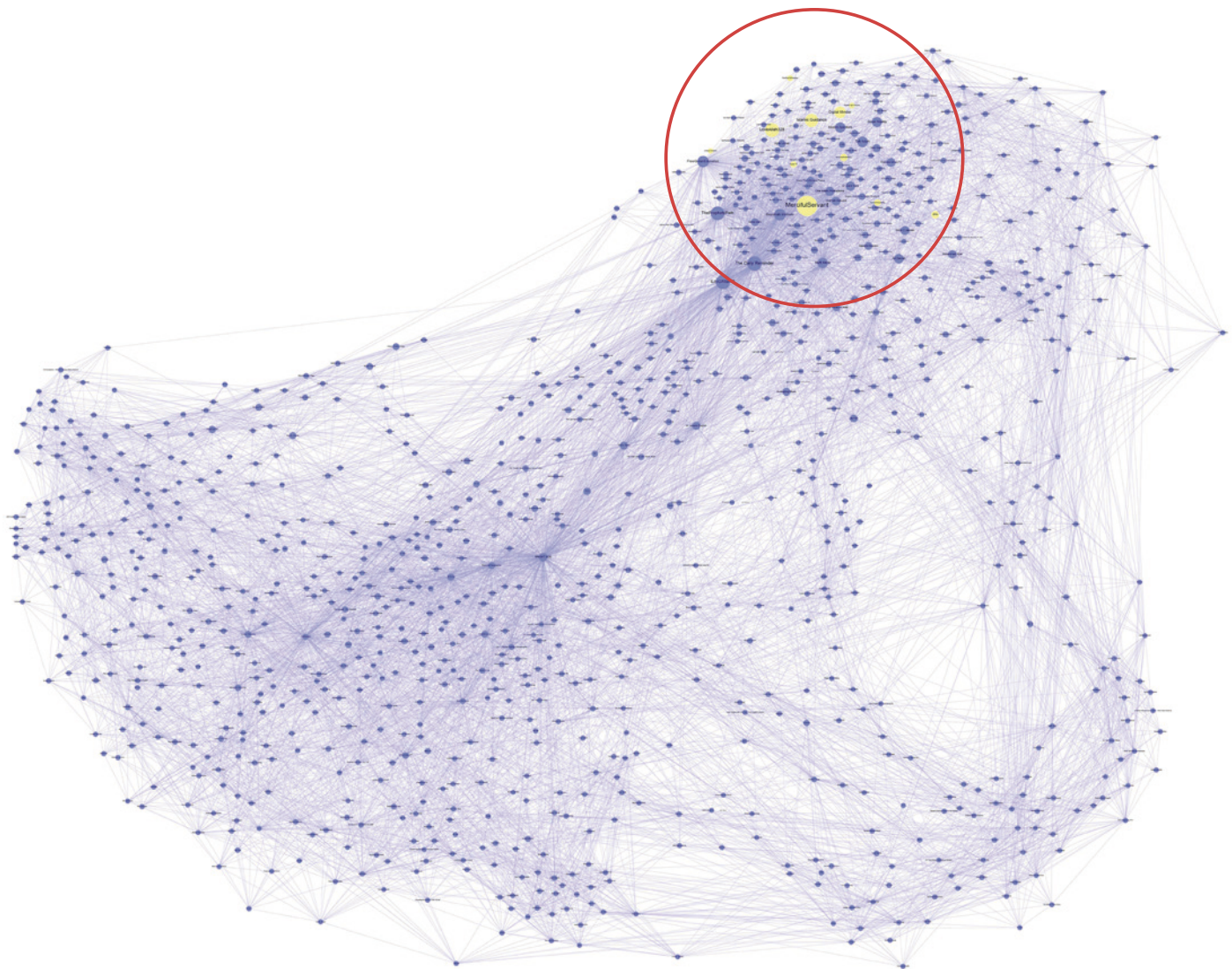
At the protagonist level, all of the channel recommendations made by the 220 channels in the FRE were downloaded using a script. The English-speaking channels were then identified using speech recognition software. Owners of YouTube channels can specify a country or a country code, but many do not make use of this non-mandatory option. The language was therefore used as the deciding criterion for selecting the channels. This preliminary work resulted in the following list:

Channel name	Language	Specified country	Number of recommendations	Subscriber count (May 2020)
MercifulServant	en	GB	9	3,220,000
Digital Mimbar	en	ZERO	7	735,000
OneWayToParadise	en	ZERO	6	37,700
LoveAllah328	en	US	5	977,000
iERA	en	GB	5	107,000
Al-Quran Al-Karim	en	ZERO	5	85,900
INVITATION TO GOD'S LAST MESSAGE TO MANKIND	en	ZERO	5	35,400
Islamic Guidance	en	GB	4	786,000
assimalhakeem	en	ZERO	4	236,000
mohammadzafar	en	CA	4	221,000
Huda TV	en	ZERO	4	173,000
Hanafi Fiqh Channel	en	ZERO	4	81,500
ahlulsunnahwaljammah	en	GB	4	15,800
Al Kawthar Academy	en	GB	4	12,700
Dr Zakir Naik	en	MY	3	1,780,000

Table 1: The 15 seed channels for channels in the English-speaking YouTube scene recommended by channels in the FRE. This list appears to corroborate the starting hypothesis of the KorRex exploratory study, at least in so far as the English-language channels are recommended by the German-language FRE.

During the further course of the project, these seed channels were used to create the network graph referred to above. The graph is based on a total of 15,794 channels and their subscribers, and shows 1,049 channels. The seed channels appear in yellow on the graph, but a number of these channels were omitted. Although these channels meet the criteria for a seed channel, they were deemed irrelevant with reference to their low level of popularity in the international community, based on the methodological logic used as a basis for this project.

The follower map is significantly more informative and qualitatively better. The greater the number of (large) seed channels that are included in the map, the more detailed the connections. Nevertheless, a bubble can also be identified at the protagonist level, albeit one that is less prominent than the one in the German-language FRE. The largest channels are "MercifulServant", "Bayyinah Institute", "The ProphetsPath", "The Daily Reminder", "iLovUAllah™", "LoveAllah328", "Islamic Guidance" and "Digital Mimbar"; almost half of these channels had previously been identified as seed channels.

| Follower level

Figure 3: A cluster of channels can easily be identified on the network graph at the follower level.
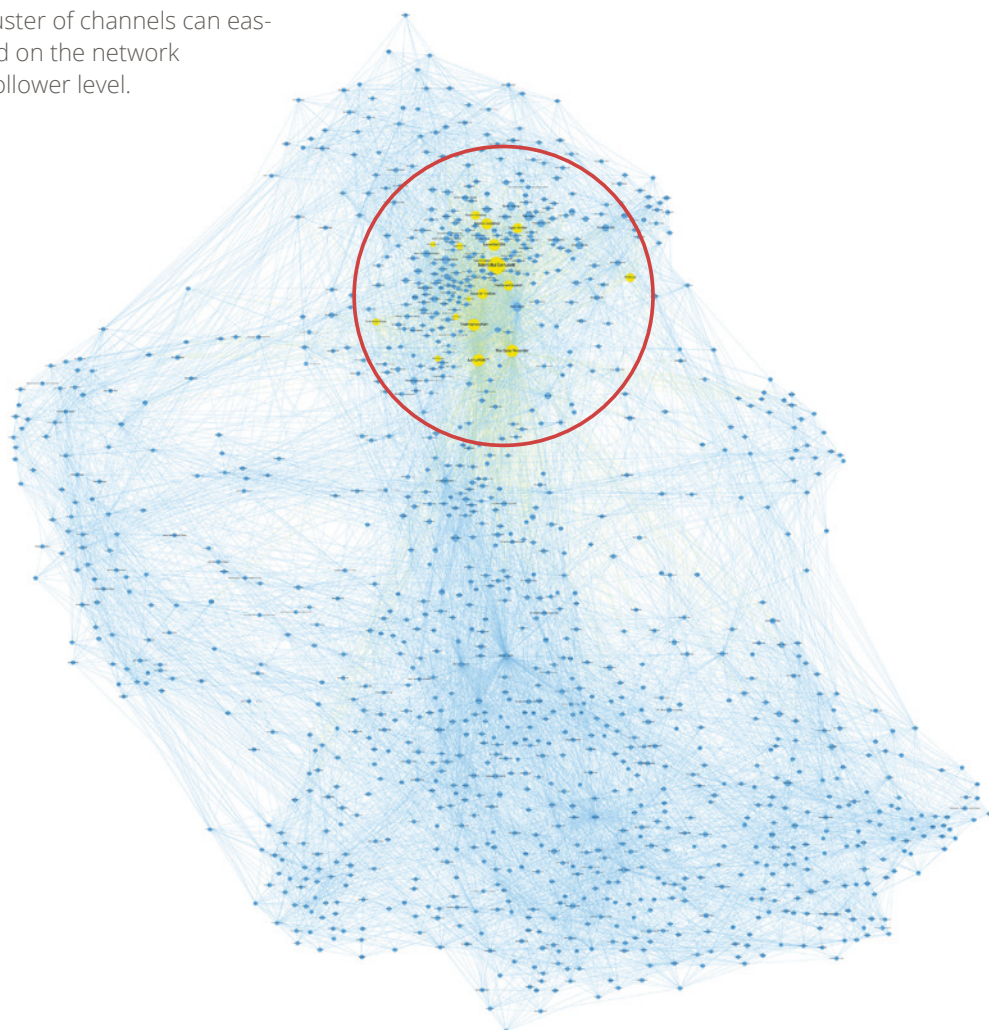
The second approach is based on the ABAT network graph. All the major English-language channels subscribed to by the users in the bubble were identified on the graph.
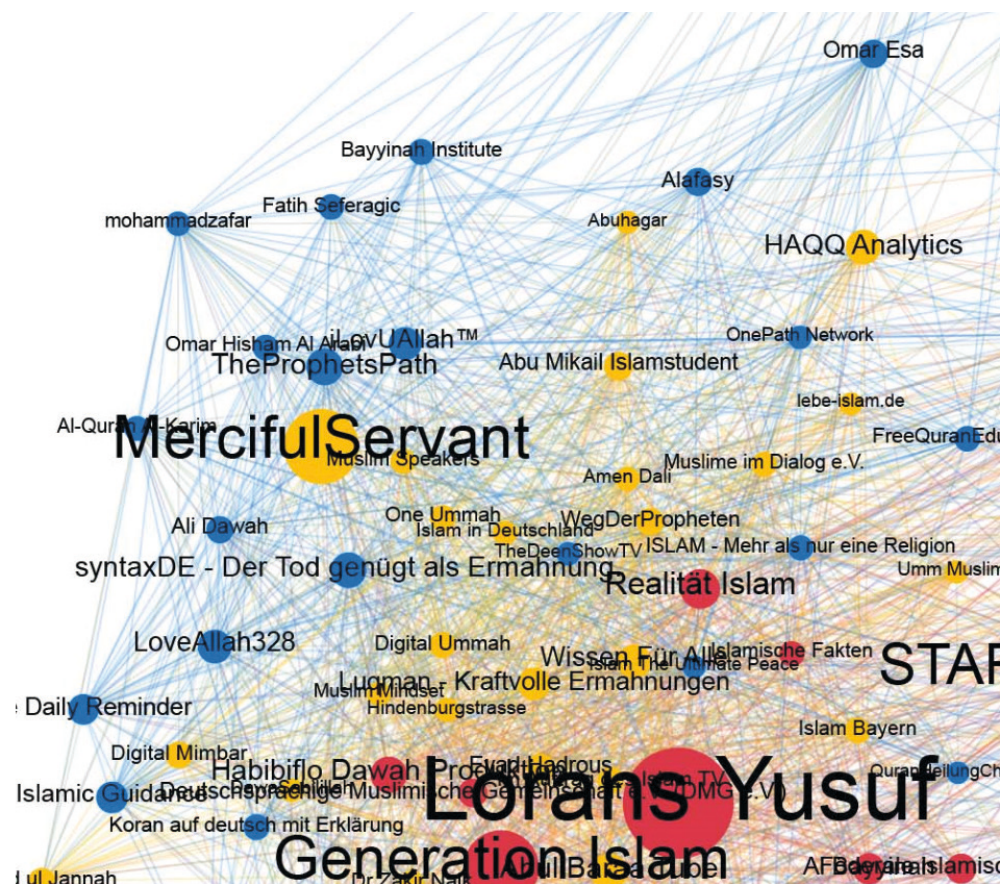

Figure 4: The top left of the German-language bubble contains the most popular English-language channels that form the focus of the investigation, based on the subscribers within the German-language fringes of extremism.

The channels in the list below were therefore selected as seed channels for the network graph at follower level.

Channel name	Language	Subscriber count (last updated May 2020)
Merciful Servant	ENG	3,190,000
iLovUAllah™	ENG	1,270,000
The Prophets Path	ENG	1,210,000
LoveAllah328	ENG	975,000
The Daily Reminder	ENG	975,000
Bayyinah Institute	ENG	866,000
Muslim Speakers	ENG	785,000
Islamic Guidance	ENG	780,000
FreeQuaranEducation	ENG	755,000
Digital Mimbar	ENG	728,000
Fatih Seferagic	ENG	541,000
Omar Hisham Al Arabi	Arabic/ENG	507,000
Ali Dawah	ENG	399,000
Omar Esa	ENG	363,000
Digital Ummah	ENG	306,000
OnePath Network	ENG	301,000
mohammadzafar	ENG	218,000
Al-Quaran Al-Karim	Arabic with English subtitles	84,100

Tabelle 2: Seed channels at follower level

A total of 17,768 channels were identified, which – together with their subscriber counts – form the basis for the graph. The network graph shows 1,156 channels.

The graph once again displays a cluster, albeit not as clearly defined as the cluster for German-language channels. This illustrates the point that the group of English-speaking users is larger and significantly more heterogeneous than the group of German-speaking users. The cluster cannot therefore be captured with the same level of precision. To put it a different way, the network of relationships is more complex. Two thematic areas stand out in particular:

1 A striking proportion of both German-language[12] and English-language channels are characterised by their thematic focus on Arabic, Turkish and traditional Muslim cooking tutorials and cooking shows (centre left on the graph). These channels form a separate cluster of their own, and there are significantly more of them compared to the ABAT network graph[13].

2 Once again, news portals and news and documentary channels function as a connecting node to the cluster that has been identified ("DW Documentary", "VICE News", "BBC News" and "Geography Now").

Yet compared to the ABAT network graph, it is not as easy to detect any evidence of segregation on the basis of traditional role models, for example gender-specific target groups within the graph[14]. Instead, it appears that the arrangement is influenced by more diverse mechanisms of action; in particular, use of the *Gephi ForceAtlas2* algorithm means that the graph tends to be sorted on the basis of cultural or geographical origin.

In the following step, these initial findings served as a basis for further highlighting of the network graphs in colour according to the channels' country of origin.

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12 Cf. Baaken, Till, Hartwig, Friedhelm and Matthias Meyer (2020). "Fringes of Religious Extremism on YouTube." modus – Centre for Applied Research on Deradicalisation, Berlin. Available at: https://modus-zad.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/modus_insight_ABAT_eng_2020.pdf.

13 For the ABAT network graph, cf.: https://modus-zad.de/blog/die-blase-der-peripherie/.

14 Cf. Baaken, Till, Hartwig, Friedhelm and Matthias Meyer (2020). "Fringes of Religious Extremism on YouTube." modus – Centre for Applied Research on Deradicalisation, Berlin.

Geographical distribution of channels

An assessment of the network graphs on the basis of geographical regions gave rise to further findings. The following questions were investigated in this context. Which countries or continents are home to the largest and most influential channels? Which countries are particularly close to or distant from these countries or continents in terms of common subscribers?

The English-language network graphs

Legend:
- United States of America (36,7%)
- United Kingdom (13,92%)
- India (4,77%)
- Canada (4,67%)
- Pakistan (2,67%)
- Australia (2,1%)
- Saudi Arabia (1,05%)
- United Arab Emirates (0,95%)
- Germany (0,86%)
- Other (7,62%)
- Undefined (24,69%)

Figure 5: At protagonist level, the use of colour highlighting on the basis of specified country code clearly reveals that geographical proximity can also be identified on the Internet by examining shared channel subscriptions.
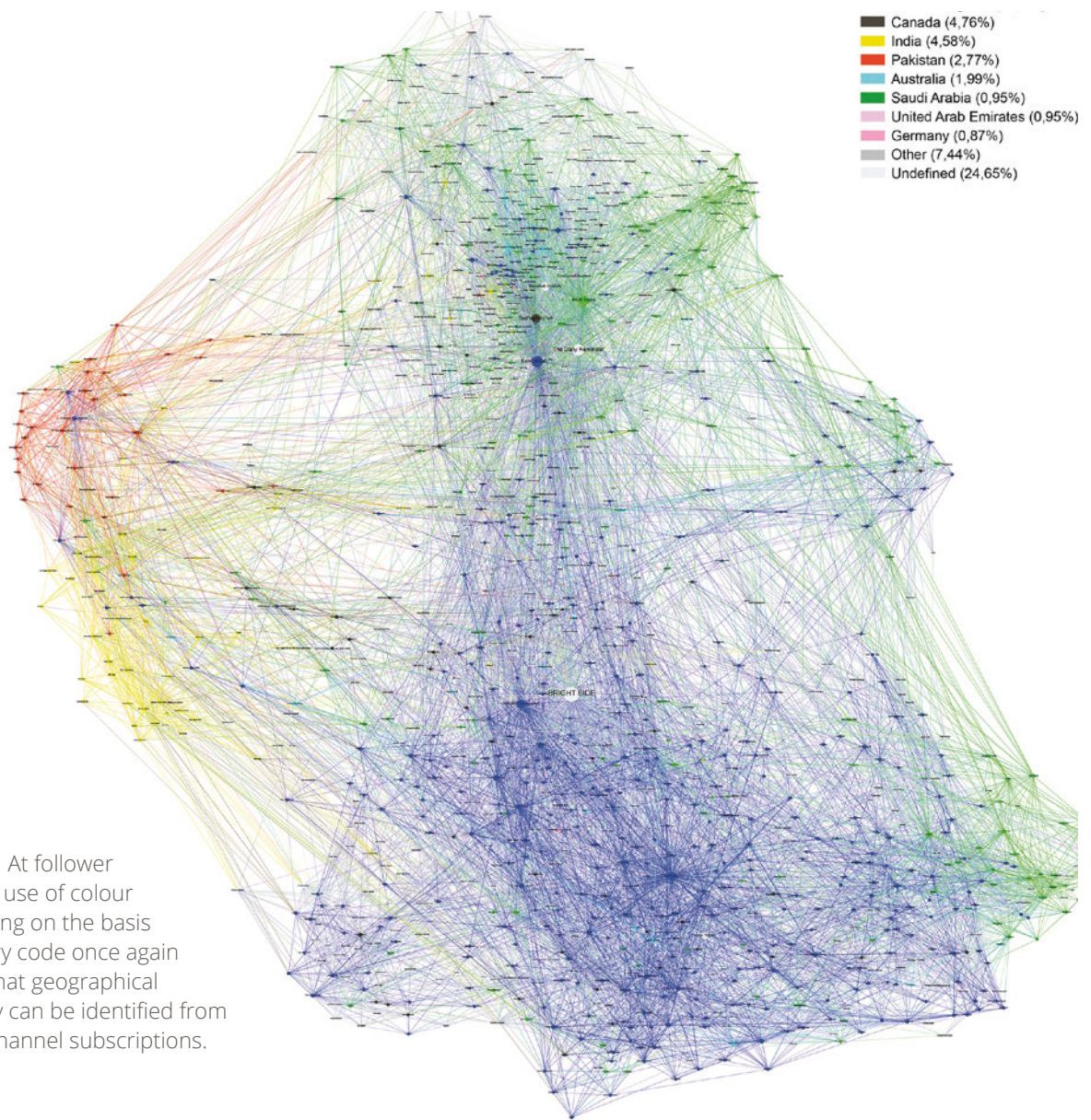
Figure 6: At follower level, the use of colour highlighting on the basis of country code once again reveals that geographical proximity can be identified from shared channel subscriptions.

The addition of colour highlighting to the network graphs on the basis of country code means that various clusters are apparent at first glance. The largest area (in blue) contains USA-based channels; the blue and green links on the left-hand and lower section of the network graphs (Figures 5 and 6) represent the mainstream Internet. This includes channels such as "PewDiePie" (Gamer), "TheRichest" (documentaries about rich people), "Marvelentertainment" (entertainment) and "Bright Side" (a knowledge channel). A closer examination reveals a number of other countries in the blue area, which is not unusual for the mainstream. The Indian and Pakistani clusters in yellow and red can be seen on the lower right and left of Figures 5 and 6; most

of these bear no relation to Islam, and consist of news broadcasters, cooking channels and humorous channels. A greater proportion of channels delivering Islamic content can be found among the Pakistani channels, however; they have titles such as "Islamic Teacher Official", "Darsequran.com", "Islam Call" and "MessageTV".

On both graphs, the large Islamic cluster is located towards the top, and is populated by a mixture of channels based in the UK, channels based in the USA, channels of uncertain origin (i.e. which do not specify a country code) and other channels; quantitatively speaking, the UK-based channels appear to dominate.

4 | The KorRex channel list – a transnational FRE of Salafism

| Genesis and structure of the KorRex channel list

A significant expansion in the number of channels analysed within the framework of the KorRex project was necessary in order to describe accurately the influence exerted by English-language channels over German-language channels. This decision was a consequence not only of the comparatively large data quantities that had to be handled within the framework of the KorRex project, but also of the fact that channels in the German-language FRE recommend not only the most popular English-language YouTube channels with high subscriber counts, but in many cases also channels with very low subscriber counts – sometimes in the hundreds. The expansion of the list of channels to include the Top 55 instead of the Top 25 was therefore a sensible and feasible decision with a view to describing the notable characteristics of the pool of data with an adequate level of precision. Subscriber counts therefore extend from over three million subscribers for the most popular channels down to a lower limit of 100,000 subscribers, which falls within the range of the highest subscriber counts for the Top 25 channels in the German-language FRE.

| Characteristics of the KorRex list

The selection of 55 YouTube channels includes primarily English-language channels, but also a number of major channels posting content in other languages, in particular Arabic, since these channels frequently play a very influential role. In terms of content, however, these channels specialise in Qur'an recitations, nasheed and sermons. The majority of these channels (of the "preacher portal" and "mirror channel" type) host preachers and reciters from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states[15]. The research carried out within the framework of the project also revealed a number of popular channels disseminating content in Urdu or Indonesian. In accordance with the project specifications, these were not included in the table (with a very few exceptions).

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[15] Chapters 6 and 7 contain descriptions of the YouTube channel types identified in the FRE.

A geographic cluster with four regions can be identified in the Top 55 KorRex table;

English-speaking countries		Europe without UK (English-speaking)		Middle East		South and South-East Asia	
UK	12	Netherlands	1	Saudi Arabia	2	Indonesia	3
USA	7	Germany	1	Kuwait	2	India	2
Australia	4	Belgium	1	Egypt	1	Pakistan	2
Canada	2	Sweden	1	Iraq	1	Malaysia	2
South Africa	1			UAE	1		
				Turkey	1		
Total channels:	**26**		**4**		**8**		**9**

Table 3: Geographical clusters in four regions

Eight channels do not provide any details about the country in which they are based. These channels can however be assigned to different countries on the basis of their layout and content and the people appearing in the videos; four to English-speaking countries, two to the Middle East and two to South and South-East Asia. If the four channels from European countries are included, the KorRex FRE consists primarily of channels originating from Western-influenced countries.

The transnational KorRex FRE differs from the German-speaking FRE in that the former exhibits a greater diversity of channel types and combinations of these types. An approximate breakdown can be seen in the following table:

Channel type:	Channels
Mirror channel	24
Preacher portal	17
Preacher channel	10
Magazine channel	9
Anonymous narrator	9
Recitations, Qur'an, Hadith	6
Interpreter channel, nasheed, Qur'an	4
TV channel	4
Street dawah	2
Animations	2

Table 4: Number of channel types in the KorRex FRE

In many cases, preacher portals and preacher channels are simultaneously mirror channels. Generally speaking, the KorRex FRE is dominated by combinations of the channel types that appear individually in the list.

It differs from the German-speaking FRE in terms of the large number of channels of the "mirror channel" or "preacher portal" type. By way of contrast, the German-speaking FRE tends to be characterised by preacher channels where certain individuals present and dominate the content.

Two women have managed to build YouTube channels with subscriber numbers that are high enough to be included in the KorRex FRE: the preacher Yasmin Mogahed and Maryam Masud, who gained fame when she was still a child, mainly by reciting passages from the Qur'an. It continues to be the case that no prominent women can be identified in the German-speaking FRE.

One other category of content is also absent from the Top 25 channels in the German-speaking FRE, namely channels that only post videos of a Qur'an reciter or nasheed interpreter. Channels of this kind are present in the KorRex FRE, however; their presenters are genuine international "stars", and they boast very high subscriber and view counts. What is more, their recitations and nasheed interpretations are often mirrored and used as an acoustic backdrop for many other videos.

The KorRex list was investigated on the basis of binding structural criteria such as protagonists, videos or mutual channel recommendations, and this investigation revealed a dominant cluster around certain major preachers within the Salafi community; this closely networked and self-referential cluster is shown in light blue (dominant preachers) and dark blue (channels). The majority of these channels are based in heavily Western-influenced countries, and frequently copy and mirror content.

The South African channel "Muslim Central", which operates within the sphere of influence of Mufti Menk, provides a good and comprehensive overview of preachers in this cluster. The preacher portals "Digital Mimbar" and "One Islam Productions" are also a good source of information on the most prominent protagonists within this cluster. These major preachers include the following, most of whom are also represented in the KorRex list or in the KorRex database with their own channels: Dr Zakir Naik, Mufti Menk, Nouman Ali Khan, Dr Bilal Philips, Shaykh Assim Al Hakeem, Abdur Raheem Green, Shaykh Muidh Bukhary, Dr Yasir Qadhi, Ammar al Shukry, Muhammad Hijab, Hamza Tzortzis, Mohamed Hoblos and Yusuf Estes (non-exhaustive list).

The KorRex list includes a cluster of channels with a transnational reach that are heavily influenced by the basic tenets of Salafism, and in the broader sense by the main teachings of fundamentalist Sunni Islam. As a result, all the outcomes of the KorRex study point to the existence of another enormous filter bubble within which Salafi preachers and channels are the sole purveyors of information about Islam on YouTube, even at global level. Based on the above, it is highly likely that the close links between the respective channels and the trend for self-referential mutual recommendations have contributed in a significant manner to the creation of this homogeneous filter bubble, as is the case for the core Salafi cluster around the preachers Pierre Vogel, Marcel Krass and Abul Baraa in the German-language FRE.

Certain questions – such as the homogeneity of this cluster at the level of content or theology, or the different Salafi currents that are ultimately represented on the KorRex list – can only be answered on the basis of further research into the predominant narratives and discourses. It is highly likely that a differentiated analysis would provide a more detailed understanding of the different currents and current trends within Salafism.

A comparison against channel recommendations from the database of German-language channels produced within the framework of the ABAT monitoring project revealed that almost all of the channels that link to each other in the transnational KorRex FRE (shown in blue) are also recommended by German-language channels from the ABAT database (shown in green). What is more, many of the channels in the KorRex FRE that are recommended by German-language channels operate on a stand-alone basis, without links to channels. The transnational FRE therefore appears to exert an extremely significant influence over German-speaking viewers with the relevant linguistic skills and interests.

There is one clear caveat, however; in comparison to the other channels in the ABAT database and the Top 55 channels in the following KorRex list, the Top 25 channels in the German-language FRE are extremely restrained in their use of channel recommendations. Although they use videos from preachers on the KorRex list and in some cases translate them directly into German, it is very rare for them to recommend channels that are included in the following KorRex list. What this essentially means is that the Top 25 German-language channels in the FRE fail to disclose the extremely extensive, innovative and diverse spectrum of information available from transnational channels, even though these channels are undoubtedly familiar to their German-speaking viewers (see the list provided below, which was produced on the basis of research carried out within the framework of the project).

Transnational KorRex list for 2020

Channels identified in the German-speaking FRE:
Identified on the basis of mirrored videos, playlists, references to preachers
Identified on the basis of channel recommendations from FRE pro- gramme channels and channels in the ABAT database

Salafi cluster within the transnational KorRex FRE
Linked via direct channel recommendations within the transnational FRE
Linked via mirrored videos, preacher involvement, joint events

	Channel (last updated November 2020)	Subscriptions	Country	Channel type
1	Merciful Servant	3,390,000	UK	Anonymous narrator mirror channel
2	Dr Zakir Naik	2,150,000	Malaysia	Preacher channel
3	Raad M. al Kurdi (Arabic)	1,800,000	Iraq	Recitations
4	One Ummah (Arabic)	1,730,000	NL	Preacher portal, mirror channel
5	Muzammil Hasballah	1,600,000	Indonesia	Preacher channel
6	AWAZ (Arabic)	1,570,000	UAE	Preacher portal
7	iLovUAllah™	1,490,000	USA	Anonymous narrator Preacher channel, mirror channel
8	Know Islam (Arabic)	1,470,000	Kuwait	TV channel, magazine, mirror channel
9	Saad Al Qureshi (Arabic)	1,440,000		Recitations, dua
10	Mufti Menk	1,280,000	UK	Preacher channel
11	TheProphetsPath	1,250,000	Canada	Anonymous narrator Mirror channel, preacher portal
12	Fahad Alkandari (Arabic)	1,240,000	Kuwait	Preacher channel
13	Tadabbur Daily (Arabic/ Indonesian)	1,110,000	Indonesia	Mirror channel
14	The Daily Reminder TDR	1,090,000		Anonymous narrator Mirror channel, magazine channel, preacher portal
15	Maryam Masud	1,080,000	USA	Recitations, children, young people
16	Bayyinah Institute	1,020,000	USA	Preacher channel, preacher portal
17	FreeQuranEducation	1,200,000	Indonesia	Animations, preacher portal
18	LoveAllah328	1,000,000	USA	Anonymous narrator

	Channel (last updated November 2020)	Subscriptions	Country	Channel type
19	Dr Israr Ahmad Official	998,000	Pakistan	Preacher channel
20	Haramain TV (Arabic)	934,000	Saudi Arabia	Preacher
21	One Islam Productions	853,000	Australia	Anonymous narrator Mirror channel, preacher portal, children
22	Islamic Guidance	828,000	UK	Anonymous narrator preacher portal, mirror channel
23	Muslim Speakers	811,000	Sweden	Preacher portal, mirror channel
24	Digital Mimbar	772,000		Predigerportal
25	Talk Islam	767,000	Australia	Journalkanal
26	TheFinalRevelation	765,000	Pakistan	Recitations, mirror channel, programme channel
27	Islam, The Light of The Heart	748,000	UK	Street dawah, Speakers' Corner, mirror channel
28	Fatih Seferagic	641,000	USA	Recitations
29	Omar Hisham Al Arabi	637,000		Recitations
30	Ya Allah forgive Us	571,000	India	Anonymous narrator
31	Qur'an Weekly	547,000		Preacher portal, mirror channel
32	Stories of the Prophets – Qur'an Stories	431,000	India	Animations
33	One Path Network	430,000	Australia	Mirror channel, magazine channel
34	Omar Esa	414,000	UK	Oeuvre, interpreter, nasheed
35	Islam The Ultimate Peace	407,000	Malaysia	Mirror channel, preacher portal
36	Ali Dawah	378,000	UK	TV channel, self-production, mirror channel
37	TheDeenShowTV	378,000	USA	TV channel, magazine
38	The Ink of scholars channel	352,000	UK	Preacher portal

	Channel (last updated November 2020)	Subscriptions	Country	Channel type
39	Smile 2 Jannah	346,000	UK	Magazine channel, comedy
40	Digital Ummah	315,000	Belgium	Mirror channel
41	Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research	296,000	USA	Institute channel, preacher portal
42	Assimalhakeem	285,000		Preacher portal
43	MuslimAkhi	279,000	Australia	Preacher channel, Mufti Menk, mirror channel
44	Muhammad al-Muqit	270,000	Saudi Arabia	Oeuvre, interpreter, Qur'an, nasheed
45	EFDawah	249,000	UK	Preacher team, Eman Foundation Dawah Team
46	SCDawah Channel	242,000	UK	Preacher team, dawah
47	Muslim Central	235,000	South Africa	Preacher portal, mirror channel, Mufti Menk
48	Mohammadzafar	229,000	Canada	Nasheed, recitations, short sermons, mirror channel
49	Huda TV	228,000	Egypt	TV channel
50	Yasmin Mogahed	222,000		Preacher channel
51	Rational Believer	218,000	Germany	Anonymous narrator
52	The All-Loving	203,000	UK	Street dawah, Speakers' Corner, mirror channel, Mufti Menk
53	Towards Eternity	185,000	Turkey	Magazine, mirror channel, team
54	Reminders From Mohammed Hoblos	131,000		Preacher channel, mirror channel
55	Green Lane Masjid	123,000	UK	Magazine channel, preacher portal

Table 5: KorRex FRE, categorised on an exploratory basis

5 | Content strategies for the most popular channel types

The English-language channel types and German-language channel types were compared against each other over the course of the project, and this comparison produced significant findings about the transfer of ideas, knowledge and content strategies. The links between the individuals operating German-language and English-language YouTube channels also became substantially clearer, as did the similarity of the content produced.

The following chapter compares the most popular German-language and English-language channel types and defines paradigmatic channel types on the basis of their characteristics, or in other words their format and the content they disseminate. Over the course of the analytical work carried out within the framework of the project, this typology has proven useful for categorising the plethora of data, differentiating between content strategies and comparing German-language and English-language YouTube channels.

| Preacher channel

Figure 7: "Machts Klick?": Currently the most popular German-speaking preacher channel

Figure 8: "Dr Zakir Naik": The most popular English-speaking Salafi preacher channel

The "preacher channel" type is clearly centred around a prominent preacher, creating the impression that the content is shaped solely by this personality. Popular examples from the German-language FRE include the channels belonging to Pierre Vogel ("PierreVogel-

DE" and "Pierre Vogel Abu Hamza Official Page"), Turgay Altıngeyik ("Machts Klick?") and Ahmad Abul Baraa ("Abul Baraa Tube"). If the total number of channels is used as a criterion, this channel type dominates the Top 25 of the German-language FRE.

The list provided above reveals that this channel type also plays a significant role with regard to English-language content. A "team" variant of the "preacher channel" type can also be identified: the channel "iLovUAllah™" is a highly successful English-language channel which states that it is run by a team. Its content is influenced by at least two preachers (Belal Assad and Majed Mahmoud). A similar approach can also be identified in the German-language FRE; the channel "Young Muslim" is a good example.

A comparative analysis of channel types reveals a distinctive feature of the German-language channels in the FRE; these channels recommend each other significantly less than the English-language YouTube channels that were investigated. Many German-language channels in the FRE do not provide any recommendations at all. The channels in the Salafi core of the FRE are an exception in that they provide a significantly higher number of recommendations. As far as German-language content is concerned, the networks around the popular preachers Pierre Vogel, Abul Baraa and Marcel Krass are particularly striking. They form the core of the pro-Salafi German-language channels in the FRE.

Preacher portals

This channel type hosts selections of videos by different or multiple preachers. Portraits of the preachers in question are often displayed together on the channel banner, and they have their own playlists under the relevant "Playlists" section.

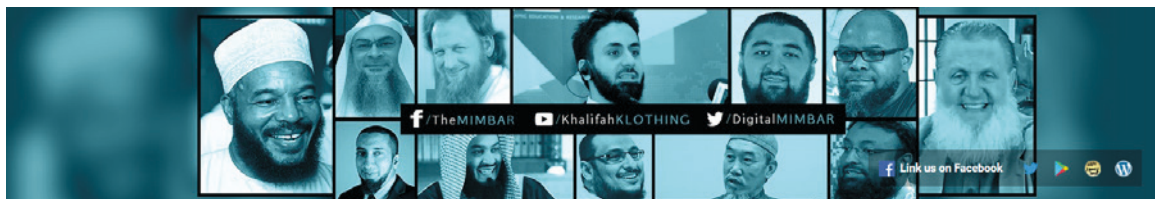Figure 9: Preacher portal: "Einladung zum Erfolg CH (EZE TEAM)" presents its most popular preachers.

Figure 10: Preacher portal: "Digital Mimbar": English-language Salafi preacher portal.

Preacher portals typically host videos that that can also be found on the official "preacher channels" (as described above) operated by the preachers themselves. Since these portals host older videos as well, this channel type often functions as a kind of online YouTube archive, providing access to videos that are no longer listed on the preachers' own official channels. These portals can also be distinguished from other channels such as "iLovUAllah™" in that they do not typically refer to regular cooperation between a "team" of preachers; the preachers each appear separately in their own videos, which are listed under different playlists. When viewed from this perspective, preacher portals also qualify as a special variant of the "mirror channel" type referred to below, since the majority of the videos that are uploaded and disseminated have not been produced by the channel owner. The individuals involved in operating a channel of the type "preacher portal" by selecting videos and updating the channel are frequently anonymous.

Hosting a large number of preachers' videos on one channel creates the impression that the preachers in question follow a common theological approach and thus wish to be regarded as a broad alliance or a strong community, in spite of their individual differences.

The channel type "preacher portal" is also very popular in the English-language YouTube landscape. Well-liked channels include "Muslim Speakers", "Digital Mimbar" and "Muslim Central". More generally speaking, the most widespread form of this channel type in the ranking of English-language channels appears to be a combination of preacher portal with other channel types. Certain preacher portals are linked to each other via the Featured Channels section on YouTube; this is true more frequently for the English-language preacher portals than for the German-language ones. This YouTube option allows channels to recommend each other, thereby establishing one of the basic prerequisites for a filter bubble.

Anonymous narrator

The range of topics covered by the "anonymous narrator" channel type is extremely broad. The content typically comprises very short and provocative contributions on individual Islamic concepts, existential problems or current events. The speaker is not shown in the videos hosted by this channel type, which means that his or her identity recedes into the background, and the audience is left free to focus fully on the message. On the English-language channels, the name or the original source is often mentioned briefly, and the voice is highly likely to be the speaker's original voice. By way of contrast, the videos on the German-language channels ("Botschaft des Islam" and "Lorans Yusuf") are entirely anonymous. No reference is made to the speakers' names or the sources, and in most cases it is also likely that the text that is spoken in German replaces an original spoken text. The individuals voicing the videos on the above-mentioned German-language channels are never named.

The narrative format of "epic" tales is often dominant in this channel type, and hence "epic narrator" would also be an appropriate name. Passages from the Qur'an, Sunnah and Islamic literature are expanded into epic narratives. Central topics include the apocalypse, the Prophet's Companions or jinns and other mythical creates described in the Qur'an.
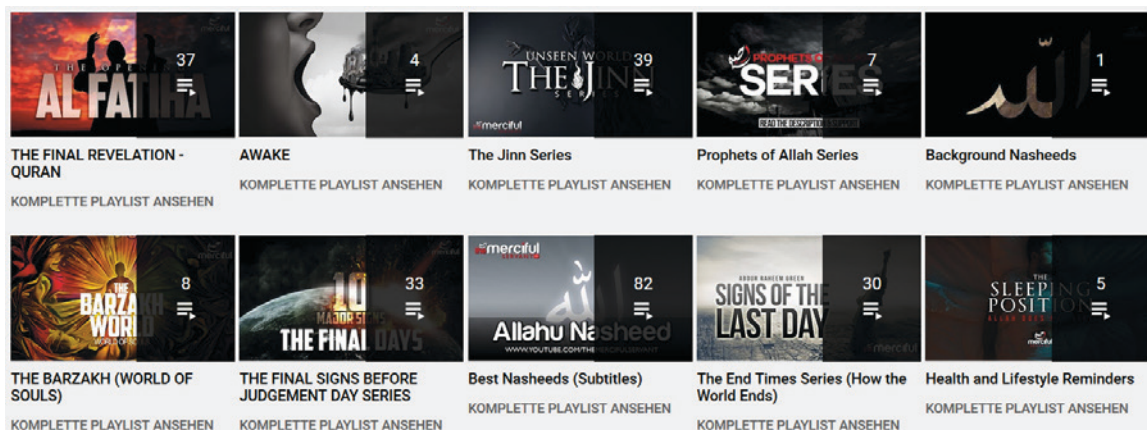
Figure 11: The "Merciful Servant" playlist provides a great deal of information about the range of topics

These constructed epics are told using sophisticated videos, animations and graphics, which are strongly reminiscent of the fantasy genre or computer games. High-quality and realistic videos and photographs featuring landscape or nature motifs are also characteristic backdrops for photomontages.
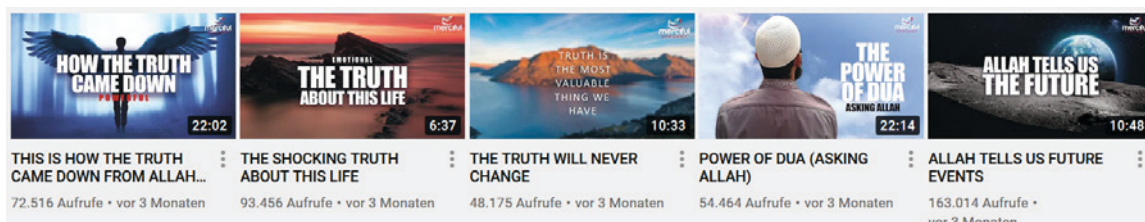
Figure 12: "Merciful Servant". This channel type is characterised by the use of a photorealistic style with montages and filters.

Typical channels from the FRE include "Botschaft des Islam", "Lorans Yusuf" and "STAR☾MOON Islam". The modus|insight report contains an analysis of the German-speaking FRE. The recent investigations carried out within the framework of the exploratory KorRex study shed significantly more light on the previous findings. Although "preacher channels" (see above) are the most widespread channel type in terms of subscriber and view counts, "anonymous narrator" channels are much more popular. This also appears to be a successful content strategy adopted by English-language YouTube channels. Channels based on a combination of different channel types are especially popular in this context; for example, "Merciful Servant" also uploads short reports or videos providing practical living tips. Further examples of English-speaking "anonymous narrator" channels include "TheProphetsPath" and "LoveAllah328".

A reliable method of identifying the party originally responsible for producing and uploading the videos hosted by the "anonymous narrator" channel type has not yet been found, since even the English-language channels of this type frequently host copies, and tracking down the original English-language sources is a challenging task. At least one channel emphasises the fact that it produces its own videos, however ("LoveAllah328").
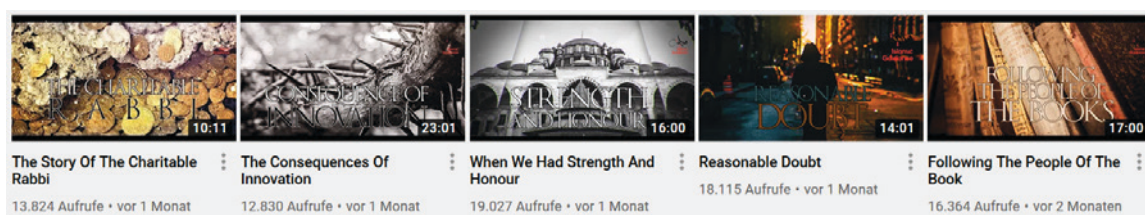
Figure 13: "Islamic Guidance" sets itself apart with a unique photorealistic style.
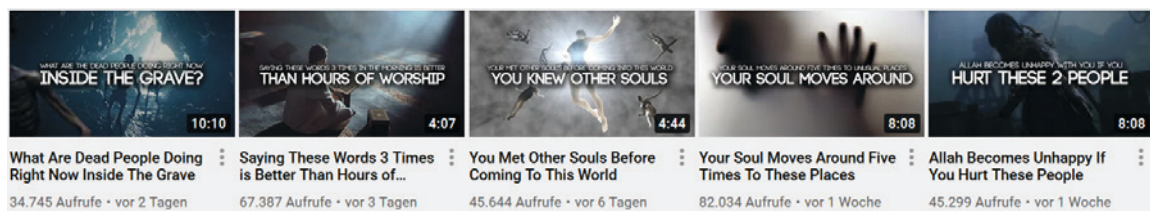
Figure 14: "LoveAllah328" also emphasises the self-produced nature of its content.

| Mirror channels

Generally speaking, the content of this channel type does not include self-produced videos; instead, all of the videos are "mirrored" content from other channels. Some of these videos are lightly edited, for example by adding a brief introduction or overlaying the channel logo on the video. The "preacher portal" type described above can be defined as a special variant of the "mirror channel" type. Classification as a separate channel type is however justified given the exclusive focus on preachers.

Mirror channels can also host a highly diverse mixture of videos with very different emphases. The channels "Hindenburgstrasse" or "Luqman – kraftvolle Ermahnungen" are the most representative examples of this channel type in the German-speaking FRE. A clear focus – for example on preachers, Qur'an recitations or epic narrations – cannot be identified for these channels.
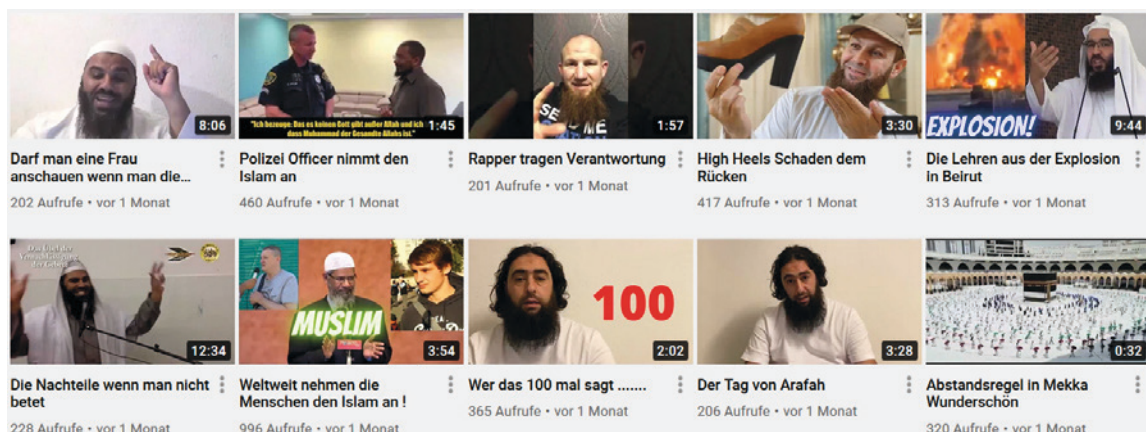
Figure 15: With its varied selection of mirrored content, "Hindenburgstrasse" was one of the most successful channels in the German-speaking FRE in 2019.

The following are striking examples of English-language mirror channels: "One Islam Productions", "TheFinalRevelation" and "Ya Allah Forgive Us".
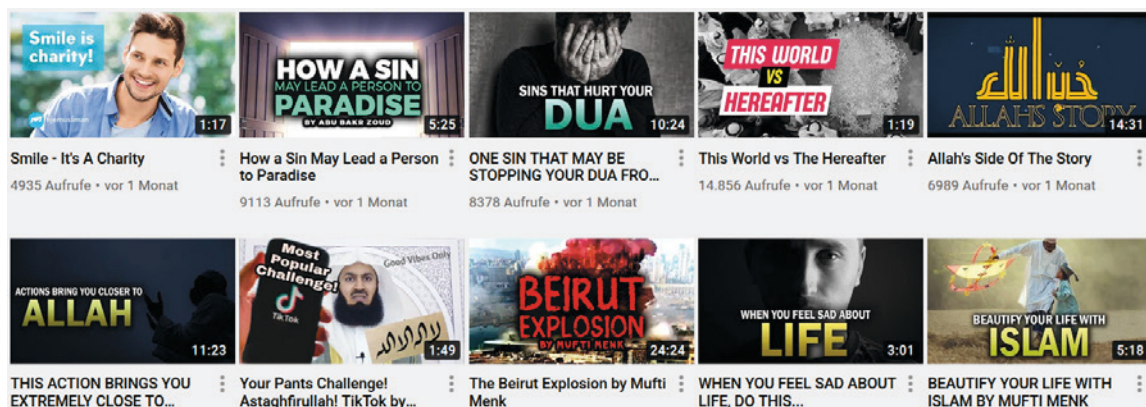

Figure 16: The mirror channel "One Islam Productions" hosts a varied range of content.

The development of a typology of YouTube channels is an effective means of performing a comparative analysis of the content strategies adopted by German-language and English-language channels. Anonymous narrators, preacher portals and preacher channels are the most successful channel types within the German-language and English-language YouTube landscapes. Their creators frequently base their content strategies on a combination of winning formulas from other channel types. Mirror channels are another very successful and widespread channel type, and benefit from the explosion in the number of videos available on YouTube. The channel types "preacher portal" and "anonymous narrator" can be regarded as subcategories of the channel type "mirror channel", since they too often upload content from other channels. Yet their prominence within the YouTube landscape justifies their categorisation as a separate channel type.

This means that significant correlations between the English-language and German-language channel types can be iden-

tified. Even though it is not always possible to prove that the German-speaking protagonists have taken their inspiration from their English-speaking counterparts, a time lag can be observed in most cases. For example, the anonymous narrator channels "Merciful Servant", "LoveAllah328" and "TheProphetsPath" were launched in 2010, 2011 and 2012 respectively, while "STAR☾MOON Islam", "Botschaft des Islam" and "Lorans Yusuf" first appeared on the Internet in 2012, 2013 and 2014 respectively. The same pattern can be observed among the mirror channels; "One Islam Productions" was launched in 2007 (24 January), "TheFinalRevelation" in 2008, and "Ya Allah Forgive Us" in 2013. The German-language equivalents were all launched on the Internet after a time lag ("Hindenburgstrasse" in 2007 (22 September) and "Luqman – Kraftvolle Ermahnungen" in 2013). It can therefore be assumed that the German-language channels relied heavily on inspiration of this kind, particularly around the 2010s. This might of course be attributable to the growth of the Internet around this period and the upgrading of the YouTube platform[16].

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16 The following are some examples: in 2010, the YouTube platform moved from Flash to HTML5 and launched a redesign; from July 2009, video sizes above 2GB were allowed; from 2010, video lengths exceeding 11 minutes were allowed (for example: https://blog.youtube/news-and-events/upload-size-doubles-hd-tips_8074). Users were also given the opportunity to select different resolutions. These developments alone made the platform more appealing during a period when more and more people were becoming interested in the Internet and finding their way online, and so it is probably no coincidence that most of the channels were launched in the few years either side of 2010.

6 | New trends

The previous chapter contained descriptions of the most successful channel types. Yet the spectrum of Salafi and Islamist channel types that can be identified on YouTube is significantly broader. It includes channels that specialise in a particular format and endeavour to meet the interests of specific groups in a more targeted manner, in an attempt to set themselves apart from the abundance of other content and the popular channels that have already gained a firm foothold. The successful or popular channels might not necessarily be the channels with the highest subscriber or view counts; instead, they might be the channels that reach their desired target groups and exert a lasting influence over them. New trends can be identified among these channel types, and these represent extremely promising sources of future online prevention projects. This chapter maps out the range of German-language and English-language channel types with lower subscriber and view counts. A comparison between German-language and English-language channels in this context reveals that the channel types making up the English-language YouTube landscape are significantly more diverse in nature.

| TV channels

It was already noted in the modus|insight report on the ABAT project that the "TV channel" type is surprisingly popular among German-speaking viewers, in spite of its low level of activity and paucity of content. This channel type apparently still holds untapped potential for the FRE, and has gained considerable importance over the nine months that have passed since the publication of the modus|insight report. Three German-language "TV channels" have established a solid presence: "IMAN TV", "Muslim Media" and "Im Auftrag des Islam TV".

Figure 17: "IMAN TV" is the most popular TV channel in the FRE (based on subscriber count), but is relatively inactive.

The English-speaking TV channels are much more popular, and they are much more active in terms of posting content, which in turn is significantly more up-to-date and diverse; this is clearly a plus point in the eyes of YouTube viewers. Examples of leading TV channels include "HudaTV" and "TheDeen-ShowTV", which demonstrate the potential inherent to the channel type.
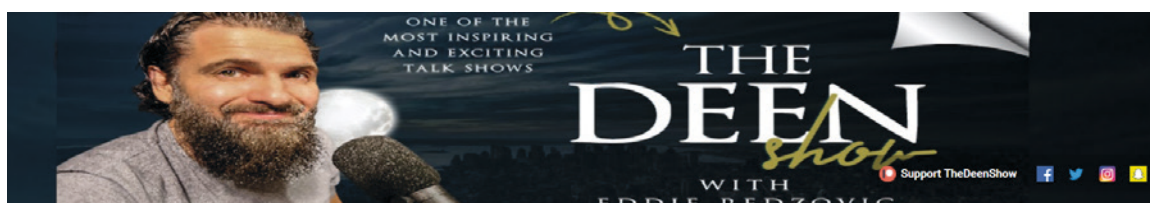

Figure 18: The banner of "TheDeenShowTV", one of the leading TV channels for English-speaking content.

"TheDeenShowTV" has posted almost 1,000 videos and has over 380,000 subscribers, for example. The playlists cover a broad spectrum of formats and focus on a range of entertainment-related or informative topics, such as "Reactions", "Contemporary Issues", "Travel the world VLOG" and "Stories from people who accepted Islam" or "Health Fitness & Nutrition".

Figure 19: The banner of the channel "HudaTV", which has the most extensive playlist of all the English-language channels.

"HudaTV" has uploaded over 17,000 videos, and its playlist is the most extensive among the channels that were analysed (as of October 2020). Unlike "TheDeenShowTV", "HudaTV" is an Egyptian TV broadcaster that also uploads its content to YouTube. This content is extremely diverse, ranging from sermons and educational shows (on the Qur'an or the Arabic language) through to entertainment (cooking shows and children's programmes).

Broadening the analysis to include Arabic and South and South-East Asian languages

heightens the importance of the "TV channel" type yet further. There are well-established and popular "TV broadcasters" producing content in these languages that specialise in Salafism and disseminate their work via YouTube.

The English-language TV channels offer a much more extensive and innovative range of content than their German-language counterparts. The network graphs produced to date for the ABAT and KorRex projects also reveal that the Islamic TV channels meet the enormous demand among users for news, documentation and up-to-date information[17].

Magazine channels

Quasi-journalistic formats define the content and – in particular – the structure of magazine channels. In terms of variety, their content resembles the different sections found in printed journals or magazines, and is categorised under headings such as interviews, commentary, analyses, reports and documentation, with the addition of Islamic theology. As far as the German-language FRE is concerned, "Generation Islam" provides extremely comprehensive and diverse content in journalistic formats of the sort found in magazines, such as interviews, opinions, reports and documentation.

None of the English-language channels researched to date appeared to follow a similar approach. Instead, channels can be identified that have specialised in certain formats such as interviews or short reports, for example "Ali Dawah" or "Talk Islam".
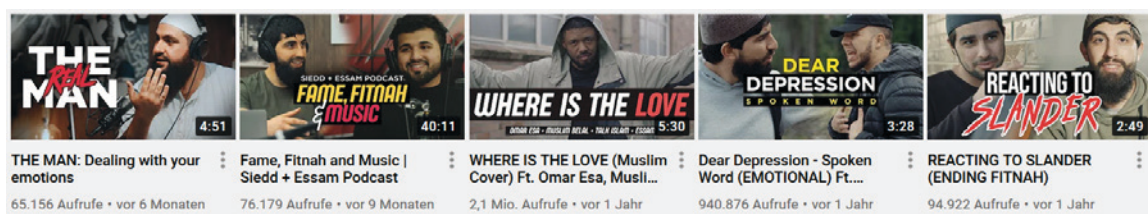

THE MAN: Dealing with your emotions
65.156 Aufrufe • vor 6 Monaten

Fame, Fitnah and Music | Siedd + Essam Podcast
76.179 Aufrufe • vor 9 Monaten

WHERE IS THE LOVE (Muslim Cover) Ft. Omar Esa, Musli...
2,1 Mio. Aufrufe • vor 1 Jahr

Dear Depression - Spoken Word (EMOTIONAL) Ft....
940.876 Aufrufe • vor 1 Jahr

REACTING TO SLANDER (ENDING FITNAH)
94.922 Aufrufe • vor 1 Jahr

Figure 20: "Talk Islam" is a popular channel specialising in up-to-date interviews and short reports

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17 Cf. Chapter 4: Networks of channels, p. 13 ff.

Institute channels

Channels that represent "institutes" are a further channel type that can be identified among English-speaking channels but not in the German-speaking FRE. Examples of these channels include "Bayyinah Institute", "AsSuffaInstitute", "Ebrahim College" and "Al Kawthar Academy". Only one German-language channel of this type currently exists, which presents itself as an "online academy" and has achieved substantial success in the German-language FRE (10,000 subscribers as of October 2020), namely "islamictutors".
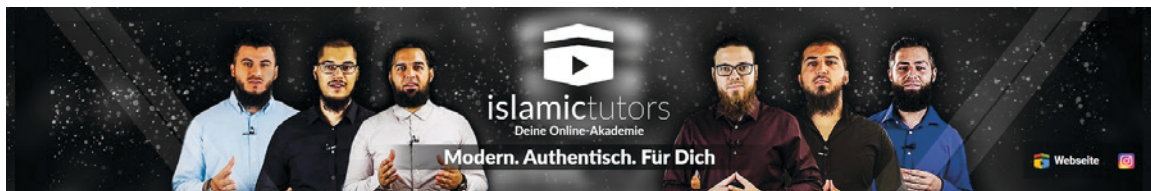
Figure 21: The banner of "islamictutors", which is a relatively recent project

The content posted by "islamictutors", which amounts to just under 100 videos and nine headings under the "Playlists" section, is far less extensive than other channels such as "Bayyinah Institute", which has over one million subscribers, has uploaded over 800 videos and has 37 headings under the "Playlists" section. The "Bayyinah Institute" YouTube channel was founded back in 2009 by the "star" preacher Nouman Ali Khan. By way of contrast, the channel "islamictutors" is a fairly recent project which was launched in 2015, and which is relatively inactive on YouTube.

Street dawah channels

This channel type is particularly widespread in English-speaking countries. Several channels specialise in uploading videos showing debates at Speakers' Corner in London, where people walking through the public park are addressed or discussions are initi- ated on the basis of short sermons or statements. Typical examples of popular channels of this type include "Islam, The Light of The Heart", "EF Dawah", "SC Dawah Channel" and "The All-Loving".

Figure 22: "SC Dawah Channel" specialises in videos showing debates at Speakers' Corner in London, and has high view counts.
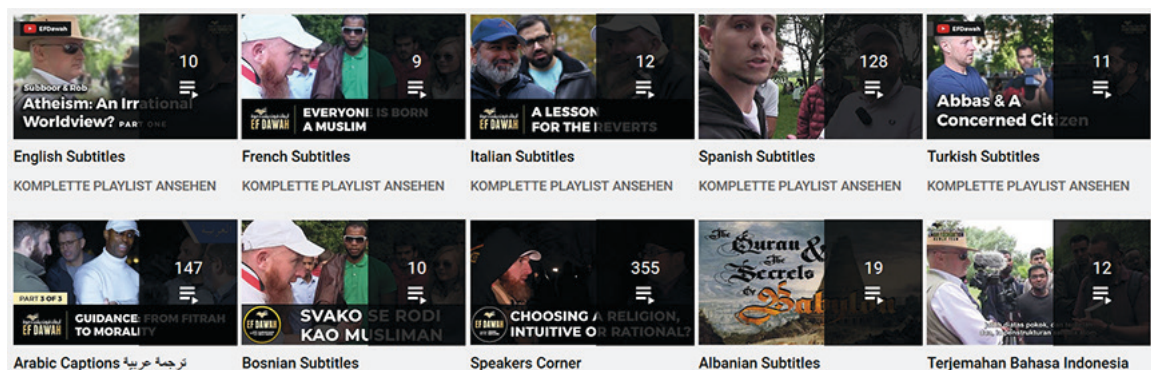
Figure 23: "EF-Dawah" translates debates at Speakers' Corner into many different languages.

Prominent examples of the "street dawah" channel type offering German-language content include "Fitrah Dawah" and "Iman TV", which are magazine channels from Austria.

| Animation channels

Islamic comics and animations are generally targeted at children and young people. This popular and successful group of channels includes examples such as "Stories of the Prophets – Quran Stories", "FreeQuranEducation" and "One4Kids / Zaky-Muslim Cartoons".

Figure 24: Animation channels are very popular in the KorRex FRE.

Particularly in South and South-East Asian countries, efforts are underway to develop this channel type and expand into multilingual content. So far there have been few attempts to make this format available in the German-language FRE and to follow examples such as "Generation Islam". The reasons for this are not yet clear. Prevention projects should seize the opportunity to leverage the potential inherent to this format before they are overtaken by channels operating in the FRE.
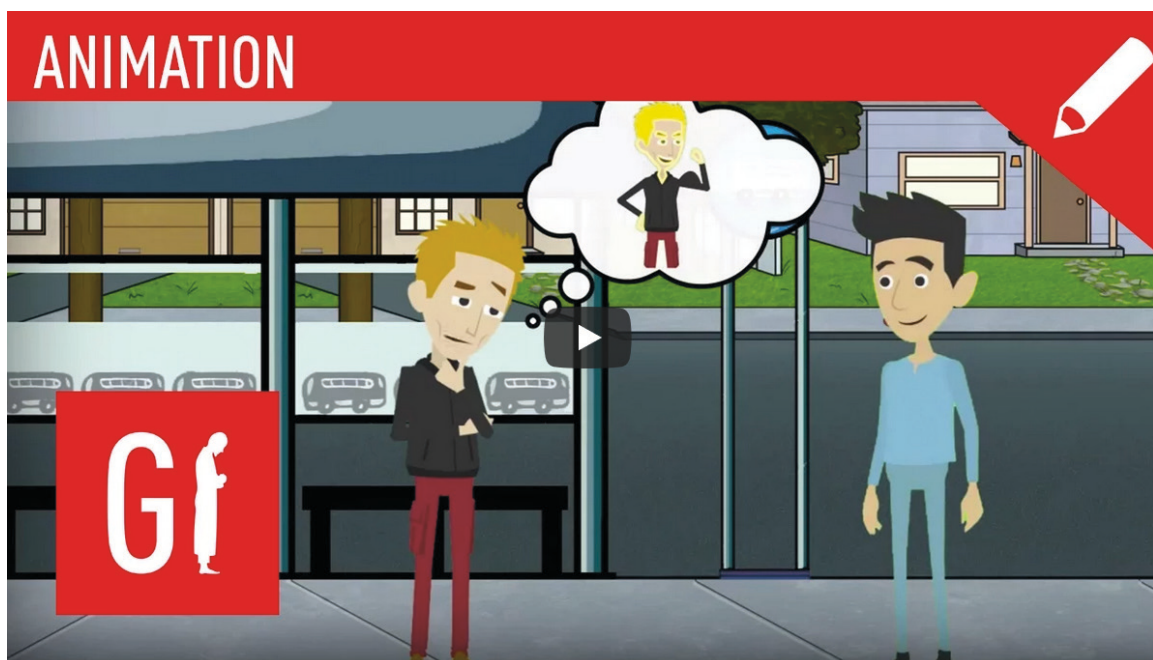
Daniel, Bilal und der Quran - Teil 2

Figure 25: "Generation Islam" is one of the few German-speaking channels that has also experimented with animations.

Qur'an channels

These channels focus on Qur'an recitations. The videos uploaded by channels of this type may be limited to a single reciter; alternatively, the channel may function as a shared portal for several reciters. The most successful English-language channels of this type include "One Ummah", "Tadabbur Daily" and "Fatih Seferagic". No channel of this type appears in the Top 25 of the German-language FRE.
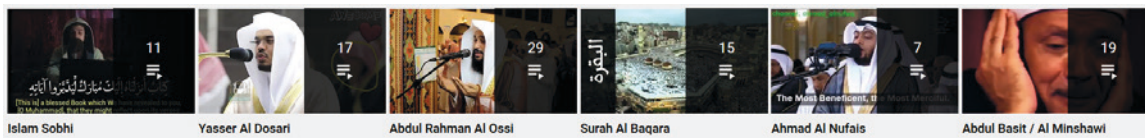

Figure 26: "One Ummah", which is a portal for Qur'an reciters, has 1.7 million subscribers.

Nasheed channels

Certain channels host content from individual interpreters, while others are nasheed portals. Popular nasheed interpreters with You-Tube channels include "Muhammad al-Muqit" and "mohammadzafar". German-language channels upload nasheeds by these interpreters or use them for their videos. As of October 2020, no specific channels focusing on German nasheeds have been identified.
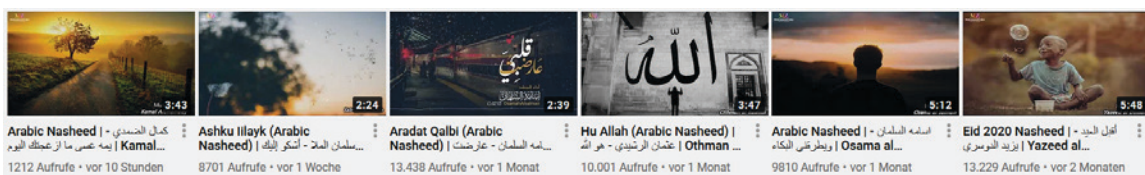

Figure 27: Videos by "mohammadzafar": the channel operated by one of the most popular nasheed interpreters in the world.

Initial findings from the channel type analysis

All of the channel types in the German-language FRE correlate to popular English-language channel types. Additional channel types hosting more specialised English-language content on YouTube can also be identified; these types are absent from the German-language landscape (with the exception of individual videos). Generally speaking, the English-language YouTube landscape displays a greater variety of channel types, combinations and specialisations.

The "preacher channel", "preacher portal", "anonymous narrator" and "mirror channel" types dominate; the different channels have different emphases, and combinations of their specialisations can also be identified. Combinations of the content strategies of various channel types are particularly successful, for example the combination of "preacher portal" and "anonymous narrator".

Based on the current state of analysis, it is not yet possible to differentiate between the channels that serve as the origin and source of the video productions and the respective mirror channels. Word field analyses and conventional research alone however reveal that the visual imagery, graphics and texts used in many videos posted by the most popular channels in the German-speaking FRE, such as "Botschaft des Islam", "Lorans Yusuf" or "STAR⸱MOON Islam" are copied from English into German.

7 | Transnational influence

Initial results reveal that certain channels in the FRE copy and translate English-language content on a one-to-one basis. It is also possible to demonstrate many structural parallels between the content strategies and winning formulas of the German-language and English-language channel types.

| Concealed and open influences

It is immediately apparent from an examination of the Top 25 channels in the German-language FRE that certain YouTube channels very openly recommend English-language or Arabic-language Salafi channels, personalities or websites. These include the channels "Pierre Vogel DE" and "Hindenburgstrasse", for example. Yet other channels, such as "Machts Klick?" or "Botschaft des Islam", do not include any recommendations on their pages, even though many similarities with popular English-language channels can be identified, starting with the layout, style and choice of topics.
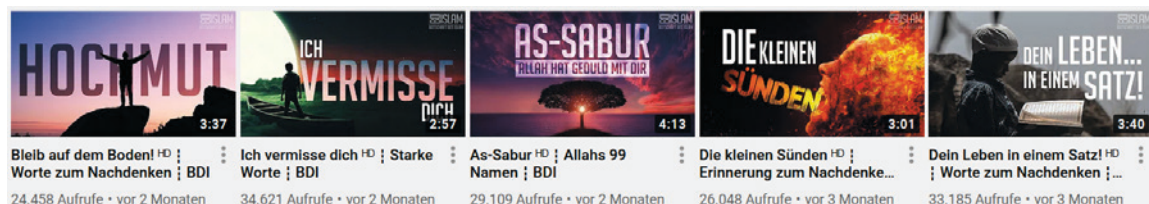

Figure 28: For comparison: the visual imagery of "Botschaft des Islam" displays many similarities with "Merciful Servant".
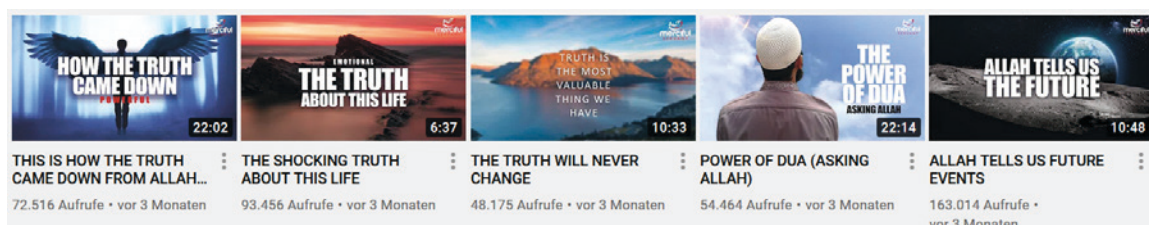

Figure 29: For comparison: „Merciful Servant"

The following table contains a provisional overview of the Top 25 channels in the German-language FRE with direct references. The references include channel and website recommendations, source material used for content, (videos, texts or audio recordings) and guest appearances. A parallel list of channels that do not provide any recommendations is also included (last updated in November 2020). The evaluation also covered the channels' presence on other social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook or Twitter, as well as the protagonists' own websites:

Influence/recommendations	D	E	A	+
Pierre Vogel DE				
Lorans Yusuf				
Hindenburgstrasse				
Generation Islam				
Pierre Vogel Abu Hamza Offical Page				
Der Islam verbindet				
STAR☾MOON Islam	x			
Habibiflo Dawah Produktion	x			
Abu Mikail Islamstudent				
DMG Braunschweig e.V.				
Marcel Krass				
HAQQ Analytics				
Stimme der Gelehrten			x	
Einladung zum Erfolg CH				
Flagge der Sunna				
Luqman-Kraftvolle Ermahnung				

Channels without direct references:

Botschaft des Islam

Machts Klick

IMAN TV

Fitrah Dawah

Young Muslim

Wissen für alle (Sheikh Abdellatif)

Abul Baraa Tube

Realität Islam

Die einzige Wahrheit

D *German-speaking channels*

E *English-speaking channels*

A *Arabic-speaking channels*

+ *Channels in other languages*

Salafi cluster around Pierre Vogel and others

x *Channel recommendations deleted*

Table 6: Preliminary overview of the Top 25 channels in the German-language FRE with direct references to English-language content.

An examination of the Top 25 channels in the German-language FRE reveals that the references are divided relatively evenly between German-language content (13 channels), English-language content (11 channels) and Arabic-language content (nine channels). The Balkans, Russia, Turkey and the South-Asian countries also account for a small number of references each. Based on the research carried out to date, no references can be identified in the case of nine channels (table on the right). The majority of German-language channels are therefore clearly influenced by content produced by other channels and YouTubers. An especially notable feature of the YouTube channels belonging to the cluster of Salafi preachers around Pierre Vogel, Abul Baraa and Marcel Krass (highlighted in green) is that they provide a particularly large number of references[18].

The Top 25 channels in the German-language FRE provide far fewer recommendations under the "Channels" section on the YouTube platform than the English-language channels. Examples of this phenomenon include the

Salafi mirror channels "Hindenburgstrasse" and "Luqman – Kraftvolle Ermahnungen", which upload English-language and Arabic-language videos but provide very few direct recommendations for the source channels[19]. The mirror channel "Stimme der Gelehrten" is also a special case; it uploads only Arabic-language videos, mainly originating from Saudi Arabia. The channel also deleted all of its channel recommendations between September and October 2020[20]; the motivation for this move is not clear.

The table is therefore based primarily on an assessment of the videos that have been uploaded, the playlists that have been created and the websites that are recommended, instead of direct channel recommendations. A certain level of reticence can also be observed in respect of playlists. The preacher portal "Habibiflo Dawah Produktion" is one of the few German-language channels in the FRE that has also created playlists under the names of English-speaking and Arabic-speaking preachers.

18 For a content-based categorisation of the channels, see the report "The Fringes of Extremism on YouTube" and the report "modus|insight: The Fringes of Extremism".
19 "Hindenburgstrasse" refers to a number of Arabic preacher channels: "Shaykh Ahmad Diban", "Shaykh Shuraym" and "Alijaberchannel". The English-speaking channels that are used are not recommended separately.
20 These included YouTube channels from Saudi Arabia, Kuwaiti and Egypt, for example "Idha al-quran al-karim", "Idha al-quran al-karim min al-qahira" and "bi-l-mahabba".
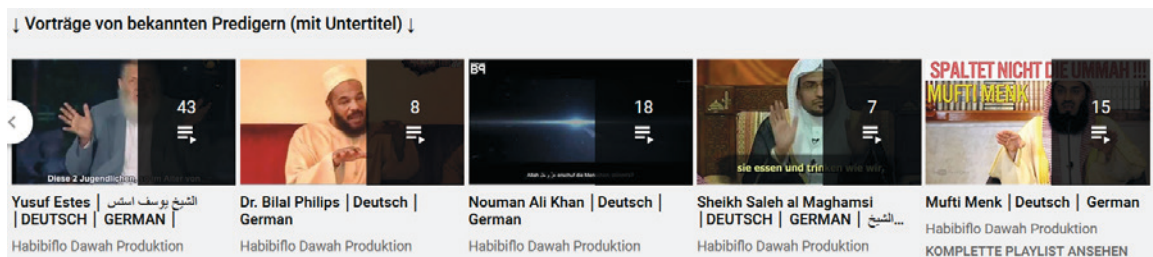
Figure 30: The playlists of "Habibiflo Dawah Produktion" direct users to popular English-speaking Salafi preachers whose sermons are subtitled in German.

Many of the videos uploaded to preacher portals such as "Habibiflo Dawah Produktion", "DMG Braunschweig e.V." or "Einladung zum Erfolg CH (EZE)" also contain multiple references to the influence exerted by popular English-speaking or Arabic-speaking Salafi preachers and channels. Once again, the source channels are not listed in the channel's recommendations [21]. It might even be the case that there is a trend towards reducing the number of transnational references, since the portraits of extremely popular and internationally renowned Salafi preachers that formerly appeared in the banner of "Habibiflo Dawah Produktion" were removed in 2020. Their names include (from left to right):

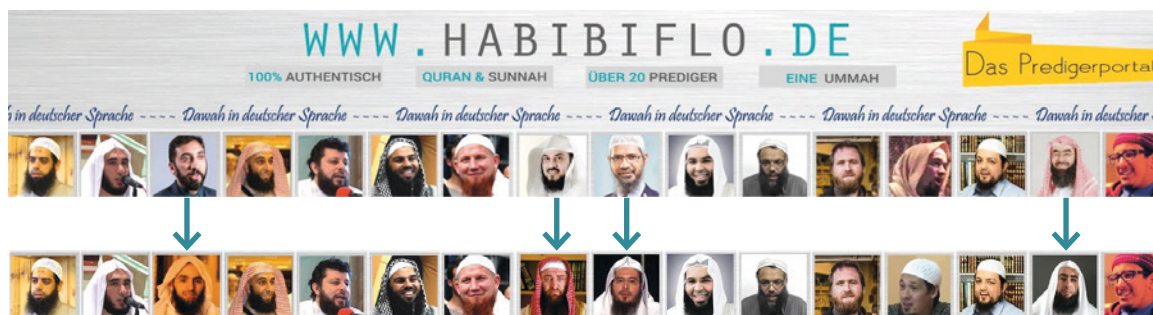Nouman Ali Khan (3rd), Mohammed Al-Arifi (8th), Dr Zakir Naik (9th) and Dr Nabil Al-Awadi (15th).

Figure 31: Top: Up until September 2020, the "Habibiflo Dawah Produktion" banner shows clear evidence of transnational links. Bottom: In the current banner, German-speaking preachers have replaced the international preachers (last updated November 2020).

They have been replaced by German-speaking preachers whose videos have been hosted by "Habibiflo Dawah Produktion" for many years: Abu Abdullah (3rd), Hassan Dabbagh (8th), Neil Bin Radhan (9th), unknown (13th) and Abu Dujana (15th). This recent change in banner design reflects an evolution in the content hosted by the channel itself, since the proportion of mirrored videos showing English-speaking and Arabic-speaking preachers is very low in comparison to videos with German-language content. Of the 12,196 videos

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21 "EZE" recommends at least one Albanian channel, namely "Thirrja Islame".

currently hosted by "Habibiflo Dawah Produktion", the playlists created by the channel contain just over 200 videos with content in a language other than German. Nevertheless, these playlists signpost interested viewers to Salafi preachers who are very popular within the international community[22].

Winding paths: programme channels as sources for channel recommendations

The research that was carried out revealed a new and separate channel type assigned the working title "programme channel". These programme channels – "Umm Muslima", for example – are of particular interest when it comes to investigations into the diversity of interests displayed by users and the influence exerted by non-German-language content. These channels appear puzzling at first glance since they have low subscriber counts but high view counts; some of them host only a small amount of content, and most are relatively inactive when it comes to uploading videos. On the other hand, programme channels provide a comparatively high number of channel recommendations in the "Channels" section.

These recommendations typically cover a range of very diverse secular and non-secular topics, some of which are at odds with the ideal Salafi lifestyle. The channels that are recommended post content relating not only to topics of particular interest from a Salafi or Islamist perspective, but also relating to cooking, lifestyle and beauty, practical living tips, sport (bodybuilding and martial arts), knowledge and news and a broad spectrum of entertainment, amusement, fake news and conspiracy theories. The network graphs also clearly highlight this diversity of interests, which appears to be typical for many users within the bubble. The "programme channel" type functions as an archive in terms of the Salafi and Islamist channels it recommends, thereby significantly expanding the range of information that can be accessed by viewers searching for content of this kind. This special function appears to be highly valued by the community of YouTube users.

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22 Alongside the preachers named above, videos can also be found on the channel "Habibiflo Dawah Produktion" by Mohamed Hoblos, Yusuf Estes, Dr Bilal Philips, Mufti Menk, Shaykh Salih al-Magamsi and Abdurraheem Green, all of whom operate their own YouTube channels and are frequently mirrored on other channels.
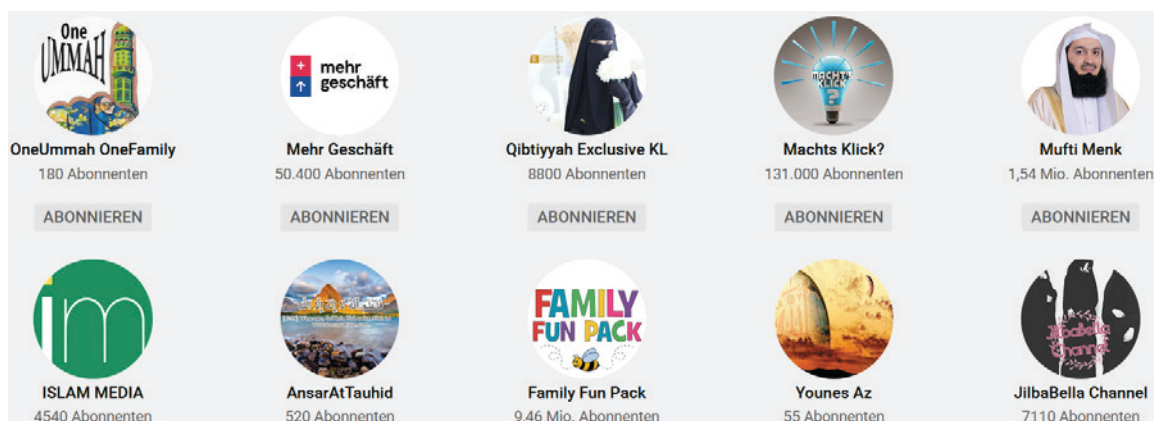
Figure 32: The range of content recommended by the programme channel "Umm Muslima" is diverse and multilingual. Extremely popular YouTube channels appear alongside channels with low subscriber counts. Many of the channels also appear to be specifically targeted at women.

In the German-language FRE, the channel "Umm Muslima" has the most extensive list of recommendations identified to date; it currently numbers over 1,700 channels, and the list is still being added to by the channel owner. The recommendations include almost all of the Top 25 channels in the German-speaking FRE (see the table above). The list of recommendations also includes many small Salafi or Islamist channels that almost never appear in response to general search queries and can therefore only be found through targeted research or detailed knowledge of the YouTube landscape. The recommendations are not restricted to German-language content; instead, they also include both popular and less well-known channels from around the world, posting content in many different languages.

| Links to websites

Alongside playlists, mirrored videos and channel recommendations, links to blogs or websites provide additional and vital evidence of links between the German-language FRE and foreign channels and the influence exerted by the latter over the content produced by the former. The websites associat-

of these projects are multilingual, which means that they reach viewers all around the world; for example, many YouTube channels (such as those operated by Pierre Vogel, "Habibiflo Dawah Produktion" and "Hindenburgstrasse") link to the Saudi Arabian mission project "The Religion of Islam (IR)", which
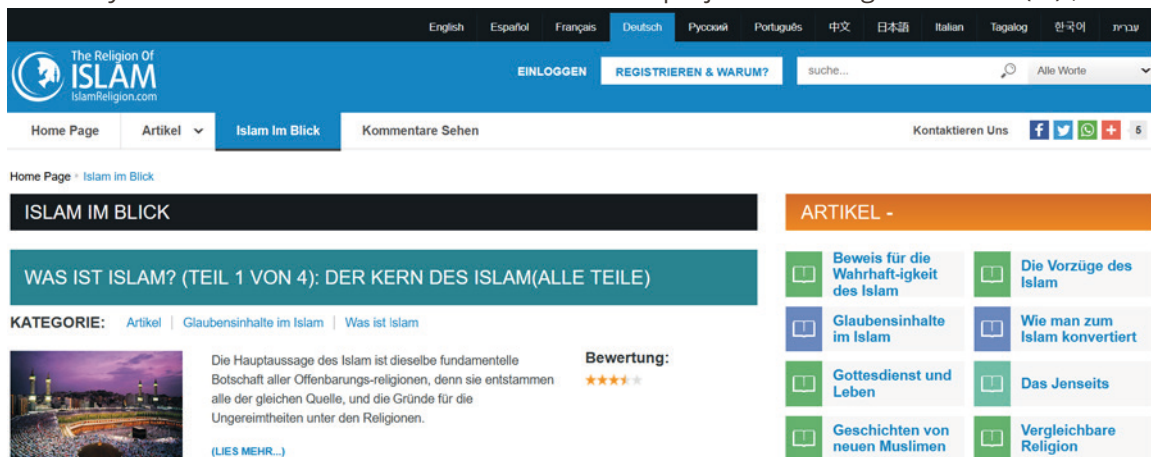

Figure 33: Screenshot of the website "Islamreligion.com".

The website "Islamreligion.com" posts an extremely extensive range of content, including many of the English-speaking and Arabic-speaking Salafi preachers named above. Alongside a number of prominent German-language websites within this scene, "Habibflo Dawah Produktion" also recom-

mends another major English-language website that posts content as diverse as "Islamreligion.com" project, namely "Chatislamonline". This website hosts a chat facility for the purpose of direct and spontaneous communication with users.
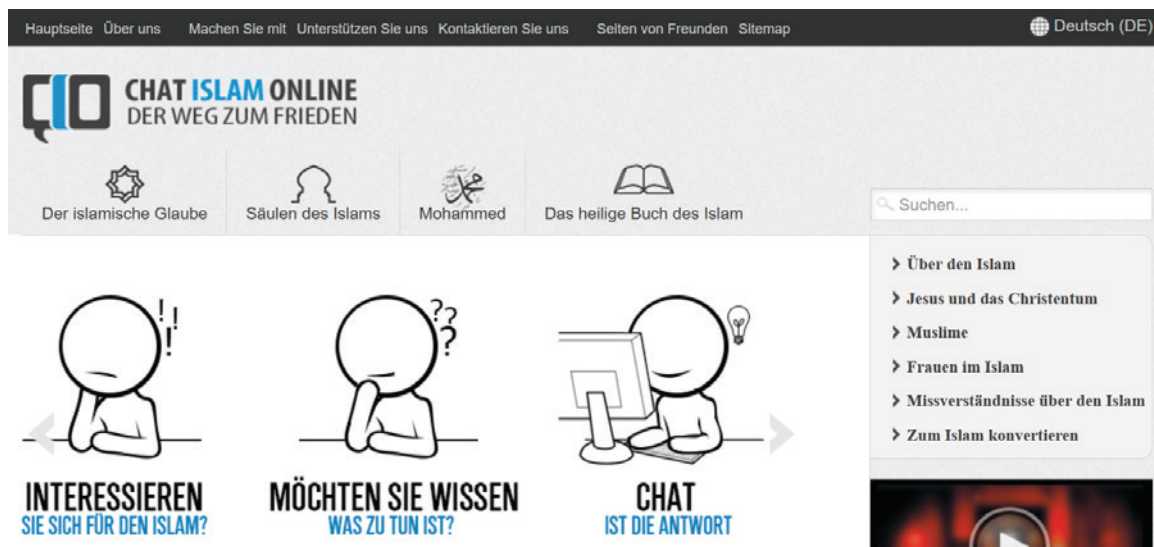
Figure 34: Screenshot of the website "Chatislamonline".

Summary

Most of the Top 25 channels in the German-language FRE are influenced by popular English-language and Arabic-language channels that are located in the core of the network graph based on the current state of analysis. Yet they provide very few **direct** recommendations for these channels or their popular preachers. Certain channels refrain from providing recommendations or deliberately fail to cite the original source of their content; by doing so, they are clearly keen to position themselves as independent operations. German-language programme channels also appear to provide informative insights into the broad range of interests held by users, as well as offering pointers to smaller and less popular channels across the Salafi and Islamist spectrum posting content in many different languages.

8 | Direct copies posted by German-language channels

Based on the TF-IDF method described in the section on methodology, 118 videos were identified that can be regarded as "direct" copies. Of these videos, 64 were direct copies posted by the channel "Botschaft des Islam". "Botschaft des Islam" is the largest channel in the FRE, and was categorised as a hybrid channel in the exploratory ABAT study. "Botschaft des Islam" has uploaded 365 videos in total (as of 3 November 2020). It follows that 17.5% of the videos on this channel are copied directly from English-language channels based in other countries. Of the 316 videos posted by the channel "Lorans Yusuf", 15 are based on English-language content. This means that almost 5% of the uploaded videos are direct copies. Other channels that host direct copies (at least one or more) include "Generation Islam", "STAR☾MOON Islam", "Eindruck TV" and "Islamische Fakten2". The following channels are the most frequent sources of copied videos: "MercifulServant", based in the United Kingdom (40 copies), "The Daily Reminder", based in Sri Lanka (19 copies), "TheProphetsPath", based in Canada (18 copies) and "iLovUAllah™", based in the USA (16 copies). All of the German-language videos were created and uploaded some time after the English-language videos, which is another argument in favour of categorising them as copies. The period of time that elapsed between the date on which the original video was posted and the date on which the copy was posted varied greatly in some cases, ranging from two to four years. In most cases, however, videos were copied after a period of between six months and up to two years. It can be concluded from the above that the content is probably not dictated by foreign organisations or controlled centrally; instead, the videos are "pirated copies".

| Use of copies by "anonymous narrators"

A notable feature of the direct copies investigated within the framework of the project is that they can all be classified as "anonymous narrator" videos. Whereas the English versions of the videos typically consist of recorded sermons overlaid with new video material, the German videos include new spoken tracks voiced by the channel's leading stars. The fact that the videos can be categorised as direct copies suggests that the transcript is machine-translated into German. The anonymity of the speakers and the sophistication of the visual imagery appear to make it more likely that English-language videos will be copied by "anonymous narrator" channels.

Particularly popular topics for copied videos include stories about ancestors and issues of personal conflict, and copying is especially probable in the case of emotional

stories about the "correct" way for believers to behave and about problems relating to romantic relationships and death. Based on an analysis of titles, the preachers that frequently speak on English-language videos are Nouman Ali Khan (12th), Mufti Menk (9th) and Bilal Assad (4th).

Figure 35 und 36: direct comparison of the video thumbnails for "Botschaft des Islam" and "Merciful-Servant".

What is copied?

It is worth pointing out that although the spoken text in the videos is copied on a one-to-one basis, the same cannot be said for the visual imagery. The German-language channels demonstrate their creativity in this respect and typically use stock footage as a backdrop for the videos, albeit with similar methods of presentation and symbolism. In terms of the style of delivery, the speakers of the English-language models use intonation more emphatically, with either an exhortative or humorous tone depending on the preacher. The German copies are more reticent in style, and do not succeed in conveying either the humour of the English-speaking preachers nor the exhortations that are either spoken directly or implied by the preacher's tone.

Distinctive feature of "Botschaft des Islam" and "Lorans Yusuf"
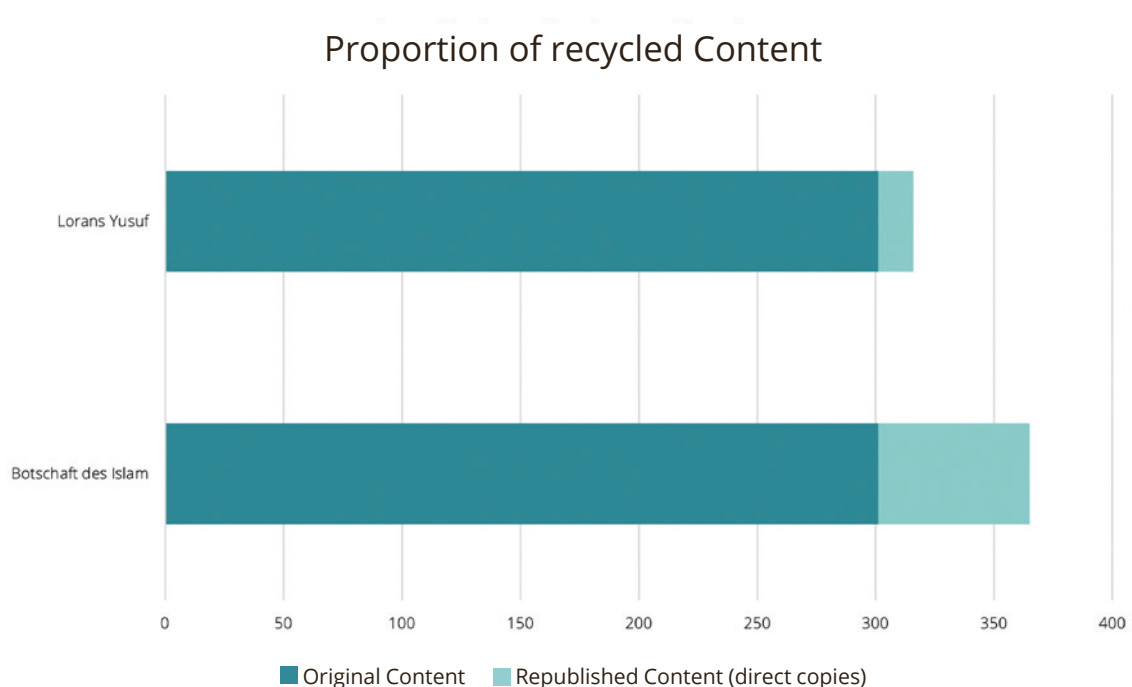
Proportion of recycled Content

Diagram 1: Proportion of recycled Content on the two channels "Botschaft des Islam" and "Lorans Yusuf".

As noted above, a particularly high proportion of the videos uploaded by "Botschaft des Islam" and "Lorans Yusuf" are copied. Both of the channels appear to base their own videos on English-language models at least occasionally. This fact may be attributable to the regularity with which the videos are uploaded. "Botschaft des Islam" uploads a video almost every Sunday, while the timetable of uploads by "Lorans Yusuf" is somewhat less regular, varying between 1 and 14 days in the period between August and October. On average, however, "Lorans Yusuf" uploads one video per week to YouTube (one video every 6.6 days). It would appear that the channels are particularly likely to use direct copies in order to maintain this frequency of posting.

| Implications for parties involved in prevention efforts

The videos produced by channels of the type "anonymous narrator" are particularly likely to be copied from English-language channels; this may provide reliable pointers for individuals involved in online prevention efforts in terms of the formats and topics that are appealing to users in the fringes of extremism. For example, a closer examination of the playlists and evolving approaches of the English-language channels "MercifulServant", "The Daily Reminder", "TheProphetsPath" and "iLovUAllah™" would be worthwhile with a view to anticipating the changes that are likely to be observed in the most prominent German-language channels in the future. Prompt action could then be taken to adapt the thematic range of German-language content posted by parties involved in prevention efforts.

9 | Recommendations for parties involved in prevention efforts

The findings set out above can serve as a source of valuable practical findings for parties involved in prevention efforts. The correlations identified between the English-language and German-language YouTube landscapes in the fringes of religious extremism suggest that it would be worthwhile examining the English-language channels with a view to shaping the production and execution of effective prevention campaigns in German-speaking countries. Although the outcomes published in this document are of an exploratory nature, they nevertheless allow the following conclusions that are relevant for parties involved in prevention efforts:

1 A large number of structural parallels can be drawn between the content strategies and winning formulas of the German-language and English-language channel types. A useful goal for parties involved in prevention efforts could be the inclusion of their own channels as recommendations on programme channels, or the launching of their own programme channels, focusing on particular topics and including recommendations for well-known English-language channels.

2 The English-language Salafi and Islamist channel types that can be identified on YouTube cover a significantly broader spectrum than the channel types in the German-language FRE. The channels often specialise in a particular format, presuma-

bly with a view to differentiating themselves from other content and the major popular channels. This allows them to respond to the interests of very specific groups in a more targeted manner.

3 The successful or popular channels might not necessarily be the channels with the highest subscriber or view counts; instead, they might be the channels that reach their desired target groups and exert a lasting influence over them. New trends can be identified among these channel types, which may serve as a promising basis for future online prevention projects targeted at specific groups.

4 To date, only a small number of channels in the German-language FRE have attempted to deploy the format "Islamic comics and animations"; they include "Stories of the Prophets – Quran Stories", "FreeQuranEducation" and "One4Kids / Zaky-Muslim Cartoons". Although the reason for this is not yet clear, prevention projects should seize the opportunity to leverage the potential inherent to this format before they are overtaken by channels operating in the FRE.

5 The videos produced by channels of the type "anonymous narrator" are particularly likely to be copied from English-language channels; this may provide reliable pointers for parties involved in online prevention efforts in terms of the formats – and

in particular the topics – that are or might be appealing to users. For example, a closer examination of the playlists and evolving approaches of the English-language channels "MercifulServant", "The Daily Reminder", "TheProphetsPath" and "iLovUAllah™" would be worthwhile with a view to anticipating the changes that are likely to be observed in the most prominent German-language channels in the future. Prompt action could then be taken to adapt the thematic range of German-language preventive content.

6 Certain channels that are especially popular among users copy at least some of their videos wholesale from the most prominent English-language channels. These include in particular "Botschaft des Islam" and "Lorans Yusuf", two of the Top 3

channels in the FRE. It follows that parties involved in prevention efforts could also work with copies, albeit in such a way as to promote the values of freedom and democracy.

A systematic expansion of the scope of analysis to include references to and influences exerted by English-language channels would appear to be an appropriate means of developing effective national prevention strategies in German-speaking countries. If the producers of counter-narratives and alternative narratives made use of English-language formats and topics identified on the basis of these references, targeted and timely online prevention strategies could be developed before these new formats otherwise reached German-speaking viewers.

10 | Conclusion

As the first stage of the project, a comparative basis was established between the German-language fringes of religious extremism identified during the ABAT project and the corresponding English-language channels. This included the building of a KorRex database of English-language channels producing Islam-related content, a network analysis including the production of two network graphs, and the compilation of the most popular English-language channels producing Islam-related content in a KorRex channel list. Overall, the list of the most successful English-language channels producing Islam-related content needed to be expanded to a total of 55 in order to present the different characteristics of the leading channels with an adequate level of clarity. In the case of the German-language channels, however, it was sufficient to update the Top 25 channels in the FRE.

The methods and working routines previously developed during the ABAT monitoring project proved useful during all phases of the KorRex project, and were also further modified and clarified. For example, the amounts of data that were captured and analysed were significantly greater in volume than the amounts handled over the same period during the previous ABAT project.

Geographically speaking, the bubble was dominated by channels from Western-influenced countries and mainly English-speaking countries. As might be expected, these include the United Kingdom and the United States. The KorRex list also includes very popular channels from South Africa, Australia and Canada, however. English-language channels from the Netherlands, Sweden, Belgium and Germany are also represented. Channels originating from regions with majority Muslim populations include those from Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states, India, Indonesia and Malaysia.

More detailed content-based qualifying analysis of the central channels revealed that this primarily English-language filter bubble (as is the case for the German-language FRE) is a Sunni/fundamentalist bubble, within which the content is shaped by many popular YouTubers from the Salafi and Islamist spectrum. Within the (exploratory) framework of the ABAT and KorRex projects, it was possible to demonstrate that both the German-language and English-language content on YouTube is dominated by Sunni/fundamentalist channels, most of which are Salafi channels.

Further and more detailed analysis would be necessary to differentiate the content more precisely on the basis of different currents of thought. Based on the current state of anal-

ysis, it appears likely that Salafi preachers and channels are virtually the sole purveyors of information about Islam on the YouTube platform.

A subsequent qualitative and quantitative analysis delivered the initial well-founded evidence of correlations with English-language channels. A systematic expansion of the scope of analysis to include references to and influences exerted by English-language channels would therefore appear to be an appropriate means of developing effective national prevention strategies in German-speaking countries. If the producers of counter-content made use of English-language formats and topics identified on the basis of these references, targeted and timely online prevention strategies could be developed before these new formats otherwise reached German-speaking viewers.

The exploratory analytical work carried out to date with regard to structures and references indicates that the diverse material produced by English-speaking and Arabic-speaking Salafi and Islamist channels is also familiar to German-speaking YouTubers and influences the design of their content. It would be necessary to carry out more detailed studies analysing this content, for example the arguments or the use of narratives, in order to determine the extent to which the influence exerted by the English-language content is dominated by the sermons or doctrines of certain Salafi preachers and currents.

Alongside the analysis of other platforms, the significance of "traditional" websites should not be underestimated in this connection. Websites function as comprehensive, highly informative and multilingual media portals. The permanent chat facilities hosted on these websites mean that they also allow users to communicate spontaneously and directly with the channel owners. Future analytical work should focus in greater depth on their role.

To summarise, the study revealed once again that the Internet can serve only as an ephemeral repository of material that is in a state of constant dynamic flux. Certain platforms become irrelevant, while others emerge and new formats become popular. As far as YouTube is concerned, for example, certain channels relaunch with new layouts and structures, delete content or present the protagonists of their videos in a new environment or a new outfit. A number of popular channels even removed their content from the platform for short periods over the course of the project, such as "Machts Klick?" or "STAR☾MOON Islam".

Continuous monitoring and recording of these different phases is therefore the only way to archive and analyse developments and connections.

11 | Bibliography

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