

Fighting from the Pulpit: Religious Leaders and Violent Conflict in Israel *

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Abstract

Religious leaders greatly influence their constituents' political behavior. Yet, it is unclear what events trigger nationalist attitudes among religious leaders and why this effect occurs more among some religious leaders rather than others. In this paper, I examine the content of Israeli Rabbinic rhetoric during different military and political conflicts. Drawing on an original collection of Sabbath pamphlets distributed to Synagogues, I demonstrate that religious rhetoric is highly responsive to levels of violence for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I find that religious rhetoric and tone are more nationalist during conflict with the Palestinians, and that this effect is mediated by religious ideologies towards the state. In contrast, religious rhetoric does not respond to military conflict in Lebanon or other internal Israeli political conflicts. These findings highlight under what conditions religious leaders infuse conflict with a religious tone, arguably making it harder to gain support for political compromise among the religious public.

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1 Introduction

Ample evidence exists that citizens take cues from religious leaders when forming opinions about salient political issues (Grzymala-Busse, 2012; Djupe and Calfano, 2013; Masoud, Jamal and Nugent, 2016). The influence of religious leaders seems especially consequential during conflict, particularly when the conflict involves sacred places or territory (Atran, Axelrod and Davis, 2007; Svensson, 2007; Hassner, 2009; Manekin, Grossman and Mitts, 2017). Yet, measurement concerns and causal identification challenges have impeded the fine-grained study of religious leaders in conflict settings.

In this paper, I explore how religious leaders respond to heightened conflict where religious beliefs play an important role. In this context, do religious leaders serve as a moderating voice, or do they contribute to an escalation in violence? I examine this question by analyzing how religious leaders respond to different conflicts in Israel. In the past, religious support by Israel's leading Rabbis was critical for the peace process, the Oslo accords, and for resolving conflict on the Temple Mount (Usher, 1999; Gopin, 2002; Hassner, 2009). However, recent years have seen a right-wing shift in Rabbinic opinion, and the religious community has adopted a hawkish and uncompromising stance on the peace process.¹ For example, the Israeli police have investigated and pressed charges against several hardline Rabbis for inciting violence.² In contrast, other religious leaders have been actively involved in peace dialogues.³

Despite the link between religious leaders and violence, the literature often does not consider temporality at all and treats the violent rhetoric of religious elites as if it was fixed over time (Nielsen, 2017). I argue that this is not the case, and that this oversimplification makes it difficult to understand when religious elites will stoke conflict. Since religious leaders see their primary task as upholding and enforcing sacred values, I argue they are more likely to use nationalist rhetoric during conflict when religious values such as the indivisibility of sacred territory are at risk. In contrast, they will be less likely to respond to conflicts that involve territory which is valuable for strategic reasons but possess less symbolic value.

Other scholarship which focuses on the effects of conflict, such as the ‘rally round the flag effect’, typically distinguishes between political elites and the masses. However, it is theoretically unclear whether religious elites are more likely to view conflict as a strategic opportunity to become more popular (like elites), or to engage in patriotic impulses (like the masses). I argue that the incentives generated by conflict will be mediated by how one’s religious community views the state, implying that leaders cannot simply bend the power of congregations to their will.

To assess these hypotheses, I collect and analyze the writings of religious leaders from Sabbath pamphlets (*Alonei Shabbat*). These pamphlets are an important vehicle that Jewish Israeli religious leaders use to communicate with followers on a weekly basis.⁴ Building an original panel dataset of over 10,000 articles written by over 200 religious leaders in these religious pamphlets, this paper examines weekly changes in religious leaders’ discourse using structural topic models. I estimate the effect of conflict on religious leader rhetoric by exploiting the variation of conflict intensity over time for different military and political conflicts. To vary the type of conflict, I compare episodes of violence during the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, one of the best-known and longest-enduring religiously linked conflicts in the world today, to other instances of conflict such as the Lebanon war in 2006 or the evacuation of Israeli settlements.

My results indicate that religious rhetoric becomes more nationalist in frequency and tone during times of military conflict with the Palestinians. I find that conflict increases the share of nationalist rhetoric topics in Sabbath pamphlets by approximately 40 percent. I also find that nationalist rhetoric during conflict with the Palestinians changes from a mostly civic discourse which emphasizes statehood to an ethnic discourse which emphasizes fighting and defeating one’s enemies. Examining why conflict has this impact on religious leaders, I compare conflict with the Palestinians to conflict in Lebanon and other internal Israeli political conflicts. I find that these changes in rhetoric are reserved exclusively for the Israeli-

Palestinian conflict. This result is consistent with a theoretical argument which posits that religious leaders are more likely to reserve their religious ire for conflicts that involves sacred territory. In addition, these results weigh against a salience explanation where religious leaders respond to every conflict as part of a tendency to respond to important political events.

I also consider how religious leaders face different incentives which may help shape their response to conflict. I propose that religious leaders who belong to religious communities with prior nationalist beliefs will be more likely to view conflict as an opportunity to gain new followers and promote hawkish religious-nationalist opinions among the Israeli public (Meyer and Staggenborg, 1996). My results suggest that political theology does mediate one's response to conflict, where religious leaders who belong to communities with favorable attitudes towards Zionism and the state adopt more nationalist language during conflict. In contrast, religious leaders in religious communities opposed to Zionism do *not* use more nationalist language during conflict.

This article makes four key contributions. First, despite the prominent link between religious leaders and conflict, it is unclear how religious leaders respond to conflict. I help fill this gap by providing a theoretical framework that distinguishes between distinct types of conflict and the political incentives which different religious leaders face. Second, scholarship has recognized that religious conflicts are harder to resolve, but our understanding of the social mechanisms through which this operates remains limited. My results arguably highlight a potential mechanism by which religious leaders help sustain conflict by providing moral authority to continuous state military actions and infusing the conflict with a religious tone.⁵

Third, scholars have mostly looked at religious wars in the context of Christianity or Islam (Toft, 2007; Toft and Zhukov, 2015). I contribute to this literature by examining Jewish religious leader rhetoric in the context of conflict. The focus on religious leaders also complements existing studies that have mainly focused on other religious actors in Israel

such as the religious political parties and radical groups like *Gush Emunim* (Pedahzur, 2012; Mendelsohn, 2016), and other studies which have focused on the effects of terror without considering the possible mediating role of religious rhetoric (Berrebi and Klor, 2008; Getmansky and Zeitzoff, 2014; Zeitzoff, 2014; Peffley, Hutchinson and Shamir, 2015; Grossman, Manekin and Miodownik, 2015; Canetti et al., 2017; Mitts, 2017b). Fourth, the paper provides a novel methodological approach to studying religious leaders and conflict by combining causal inference tools with big data. This contributes to several other recent works that have examined important determinants of religious leader behavior using text (Genovese, 2015; Nielsen, 2017). I add to these works by collecting a panel of time-stamped religious materials, which allows me to study changes in the weekly discourse of religious leaders during important political events.

2 Religious Leaders and Conflict

Despite the prominent link between religious leaders and conflict, there is little systematic work on the impact that conflict has on religious leaders, as expressed by their religious rhetoric. In this section, I outline my hypotheses and their application to the Israeli context.

2.1 Indivisible Territory and Different Types of Conflict

Many scholars note that conflicts which involve indivisible goods are harder to resolve. Typically, these indivisible goods relate to territory, the heart of many conflicts (Johnson and Toft, 2014; Toft, 2014). When the disputed territory is viewed as sacred, conflict can even take on a religious tone (Appleby, 2000). These religious conflicts tend to be longer, more violent, and deadlier than other conflicts (Toft, 2007).

However, scholars disagree why some territory is perceived as indivisible. According to Fearon (1995), a rational choice framework would argue that there are few issues which are

inherently indivisible. Rather, this framework attributes the existence of indivisible goods to domestic factors or other mechanisms. In contrast, other work argues that there are sacred spaces which are inherently harder to resolve by division, such as the Temple Mount in Jerusalem (Hassner, 2003, 2009). In addition to sacred spaces, territory may be viewed as more precious if it was part of one's homeland. For example, Shelef (2016) finds that homeland territory which has been lost increases the likelihood of future conflict.

Representing a middle ground between rational choice and constructivist theories, Goddard (2006, 2009) argues that territory can become indivisible due to social constructs. Specifically, territory which is initially divisible can become indivisible due to uncompromising claims made by political elites. In turn, political elites become locked into these intractable positions due to the need to maintain legitimacy. According to this view, territory can become indivisible due to political processes. This implies that the process is also reversible where indivisible territory becomes suddenly divisible.

Building on this theory of legitimacy, I argue that in addition to political elites, there are other elites in society who actively enforce the indivisibility of territory: religious leaders. Due to their moral authority, religious leaders are uniquely situated to help enforce claims of indivisibility (or potential compromises) with appeals to religious scripture and authority. Indeed, research has shown that religious leaders have a large and substantive influence on a host of controversial moral political issues, even when these messages are cross-cutting (Djupe and Calfano, 2013; Ben-Nun Bloom, Arikan and Courtemanche, 2015; Masoud, Jamal and Nugent, 2016; Margolis, 2018). Moreover, exposure to religious teachings leads to more charitable giving and pro-social behavior (Warner et al., 2015; McClendon and Riedl, 2015; Condra, Isaqzadeh and Linardi, 2017). Finally, religious leaders can also use prayer times to mobilize for street protests (Butt, 2016).

One way for religious leaders to enforce claims of indivisibility on territory is to merge together nationalist and religious messages in their sermons. Yet, the desire for religious

leaders to engage in religious-nationalist rhetoric should not be the same across all conflicts. Rather, this need should be stronger for conflicts that involve territory with high symbolic value that is perceived as indivisible (Manekin, Grossman and Mitts, 2017). In contrast, they should be less likely to attach religious value to territory which only contains strategic value (Zellman, 2015). This suggests the following hypothesis:

H1: Religious leaders are more likely to engage in nationalist rhetoric during conflict that involves territory with symbolic value.

2.2 Religious Ideology and the State

My second hypothesis builds on literature which discusses the ‘rally ’round the flag effect’. This effect refers to the boost in popularity for political leaders due to conflict. One important finding from this literature is that the effect of conflict on presidential popularity is mediated by political elites (Baker and Oneal, 2001; Baum, 2002). However, it is theoretically unclear to what extent religious leaders use conflict to gain followers (like other political elites) or respond reflexively with more nationalism (like the masses).

According to the former scenario, religious leaders may use nationalist rhetoric in an opportunistic manner. Specifically, during times of conflict, there is an opportunity for religious leaders to gain more supporters in a fragmented religious community (Berman, 2009). If the median individual becomes more extreme at times of conflict due to a ‘rally ’round the flag effect’, leaders vying for their support also must shift towards the more extreme. At the same time, we would expect that the potential for religious leaders to gain more followers using nationalist rhetoric will differ according to their religious communities’ relationship to the state. An important part of a religious group’s ideology is its political theology and political standing with the state (Philpott, 2007, 2009). Consequently, when a religious group enjoys a good relationship with the state, religious leaders will have more incentives to use nationalist rhetoric. In contrast, religious leaders that lead religious groups

with more ambivalent attitudes toward the state will have fewer incentives to change their rhetoric during conflict. Indeed, nationalist rhetoric could even backfire as some religious communities might penalize a religious leader who is seen as too close to the ‘secular state’ (Juergensmeyer, 2008).

In contrast, religious leaders may respond to conflict like other citizens and reflexively use nationalist rhetoric to signal their patriotism (Baker and Oneal, 2001; Baum, 2002). Under this scenario, religious leaders should respond in a similar fashion to conflict with more nationalist rhetoric, with less regard towards their community’s attitude towards the state. This is also consistent with the mechanism where religious leaders respond directly to the psychological effects of political violence associated with conflict with more nationalism (Bar-Tal, 2000; Petersen, 2002; Hirsch-Hoefler et al., 2016).⁶

I argue that religious leaders are more likely to act strategically like other political elites. According to several scholars, religious leaders make use of extreme rhetoric as a tool for ideologically outbidding opponents (Blaydes and Linzer, 2012; Breslawski and Ives, 2018). This extreme rhetoric signals one’s authenticity, as one eschews “political correctness” during times of conflict (Nielsen, 2017). This suggests an additional hypothesis:

H2: The effects of conflict on religious leaders will be mediated by the religious subgroup’s attitude towards the state.

In the next subsection, I describe how my hypotheses can be applied to religious leaders and conflict in the Israeli context.

2.3 Jewish Religious Leaders and Conflict in Israel

Jewish religious leaders have a great influence on religious and political affairs in Israel. Religious political parties will usually seek Rabbinical guidance and approval when deciding how to vote on key political issues of the day.⁷ This influence also manifests itself regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which involves territory that is considered sacred by many indi-

viduals. Many religious leaders subscribe to the view that it is forbidden to give away parts of the land of Israel, even in exchange for peace. Some observers believe that prominent conflicts such as the Six-Day War in 1967 (which tripled Israel's territory) and the trauma of the 1973 Arab-Israeli War (*Yom Kippur* war) transformed Israeli society.⁸ This was particularly true regarding the religious ideology of Religious Zionism, whose focus shifted from supporting the state to strong beliefs in building settlements and Greater Israel (Shelef, 2010). However, it is less clear whether smaller-scale military conflicts would have a similar impact on religious leaders, especially for conflicts that do not involve sacred territory (such as Lebanon).

In addition, the attitudes of religious leaders are not religiously or politically uniform in Israel. An important cleavage issue among religious leaders in Israel is a group's political theology (Philpott, 2007), as expressed by its attitudes towards Zionism and the state of Israel. On one end of the spectrum regarding attitudes towards Zionism are *Haredi* Rabbis who on religious and ideological grounds are opposed to Zionism. One reason for their opposition was a strong *Haredi* concern that secular Zionism violated traditional religious belief regarding the Messianic process (Ravitzky, 1996).⁹ In contrast, leaders from the Religious Zionist community have a more favorable attitude towards Zionism and the state of Israel. This group primarily sees Zionism as the beginning of the Messianic process.¹⁰

These differences in religious theology have important political and social implications. For instance, the Religious Zionist community in Israel is more likely to support more hawkish political parties who have taken a leading role in the settlement enterprise, while *Haredi* political parties tend to not involve themselves in foreign affairs. In addition, members of the Religious Zionist community serve in the army with many becoming officers, while most *Haredim* learn in religious seminaries and abstain from army service (Cohen, 1993).

2.4 Impact of Religious Leaders on Conflict

Finally, it is important to consider the following question: what impact does nationalist rhetoric by religious leaders have on conflict? In this context, it is important to distinguish between the logic of civil war onset and dynamics during civil wars (Cederman and Vogt, 2017). While religious leaders respond to conflict, it seems unlikely that religious leaders initiate the precise timing of conflict in most contexts. First, conflict is often times initiated by the other side, catching religious leaders unprepared. Second, most religious leaders have no direct access to state or military power. However, even if religious leaders do not initiate the onset of conflict, they may still play an important role during conflict and contribute to the likelihood of future conflicts.

For example, religious leaders can provide support for acts of political violence during conflict and help determine who is a legitimate target (De Juan, 2008; Hegghammer, 2013; Basedau, Pfeiffer and Vu, 2016; Hassner, 2016). Other scholars also note that militant groups involved in conflict are increasingly likely to use religious rhetoric to help overcome collective action problems that plague mobilization efforts during conflict (Toft, 2007; Berman, 2009; Isaacs, 2016; Breslawski and Ives, 2018). In some instances, religious leaders can even serve in an advisory or leadership role, like religious leaders who helped set up the Jewish Underground in Israel (Perliger and Pedahzur, 2011).

In the next subsection, I elaborate upon the Sabbath pamphlets, my data source of religious leader discourse.

3 Converting Religious Pamphlets into Data

To study the effects of conflict on religious leader discourse, I converted religious texts from over 100 weekly leaflets into a format that can be analyzed quantitatively using web-scraping and text analysis techniques (Grimmer and Stewart, 2013). The overall sample size is 10,968

articles written by 250 different religious leaders over a ten-year span (2006-2015). This section and the online appendix describe in more detail how I built this unique corpus.

3.1 Religious Pamphlets

Religious leaders in Israel systematically communicate their opinions in several ways. In contrast to other religious traditions (Djupe and Calfano, 2013), the local sermon is a relatively insignificant channel in Israel. Indeed, many local Synagogues and prayer services do not have a weekly Sabbath sermon due to the long prayer service (over 2 hours), cost of hiring a Rabbi, and religious prohibitions on microphones. Moreover, when there are sermons on the Sabbath, religious prohibitions on electronic recording (and travel) prevent their diffusion to larger audiences. In response, religious leaders in Israel have created other forms of religious communication, such as audio tapes, radio shows, and religious pamphlets (Caplan, 1997). In this paper, I focus on religious pamphlets, which are viewed as a very prominent channel of religious communication. Qualitative evidence also suggests that the pamphlets have become an important institutional part of the Synagogue experience as other forms of electronic media are prohibited on the Sabbath (Caplan, 2006).

According to a prominent overview on Israeli religious pamphlets, the motivations for producing and reading the weekly pamphlets are threefold (Caplan, 2006). First, the pamphlets serve as a media alternative to the “secular” media in Israel. While the secular media is viewed by religious leaders, and large parts of the religious population as “biased” against religion, the pamphlets allow for a more positive religious perspective on the religious and political issues of the day (Cohen, 2000; Rashi, 2011). Second, the pamphlets serve as a gateway for connecting religious leaders to the mass religious public. While most scholarly work is “inaccessible” to most of the religious population, the pamphlets are written in a way that allow “ordinary” people to access religious leader opinion on religious and political matters. In this regard, they are part of a greater trend towards folk religion in Israel which

includes visiting graves of famous Rabbis and religiously-inspired music. Third, the great diversity of pamphlets reflect the fragmentation of the religious community in Israel. As noted by Caplan (2006), a widespread platitude in Israel is that “if your organization does not put out a pamphlet, it does not exist.”

While it is hard to quantify precisely the scope of the phenomenon, older estimates suggest there are over 1.5 million pamphlets published weekly (Israel’s total population is less than 9 million people).¹¹ Considering that the religious population who frequent a Synagogue on a weekly basis is estimated to be about 1 million people, this indicates that there are more pamphlets being published than those who go to Synagogue. Pamphlets are usually sent out in the mail and distributed by local organizations or volunteers to neighborhood Synagogues. Most Synagogues have a table where a multitude of pamphlets are put out prior to the Sabbath, and it is common for people to take several pamphlets when they attend Synagogue during Sabbath prayer. These pamphlets are also frequently read during the prayer service, a practice that has attracted Rabbinic criticism (Caplan, 2006).

Many pamphlets contain advertisements, which mostly fund the costs of publishing. The pamphlets are typically 8-10 pages, which contain articles from the same 5-6 scholars on different topics. The typical pamphlet - like a newspaper - contains several genres. There is usually a main article that ties in events from the weekly Bible reading with current events. While the purpose of the article is usually homiletic, it is not uncommon for the discussion to focus on current political events.

Finally, most pamphlets are affiliated with religious movements. While Ultra-Orthodox pamphlets are less involved with politics, most Religious Zionist pamphlets are loosely affiliated with political parties. In other words, while having no explicit political affiliation, most make endorsements around elections for specific parties and will allow political entrepreneurs to advertise in the pamphlets.¹²

3.2 Sampling and Generalizability

My analysis focuses on religious leaders whose teachings are available in religious pamphlets. These pamphlets include articles by important senior religious leaders, and articles by religious educators who are not well-known outside of their local community. My analysis, however, does not include religious leaders whose teachings are only available in other formats such as audio or video, due to the logistical difficulty involved in converting Hebrew audio or video to quantitative data.

I developed a sampling frame of written pamphlets using a combination of methods: multiple visits to different Synagogues across Israel, expert interviews, Israel’s National Library catalog, and internet searches. With these methods, I identified over 25 pamphlets that are circulated nationally, and over 400 pamphlets that are circulated locally among different *Haredi* communities.

As indicated by the sampling frame, the pamphlets differ in several important ways (see Table A1). First, they differ in which religious community they target: Religious Zionist, *Ashkenazi Haredi*, and *Sephardic Haredi*. Second, pamphlets differ in their circulation (ranging from 3,000-180,000), year they were first established (1984-2014), and their target audience (youth, the non-religious, local community, or the well-educated). While it would be ideal to randomly sample from this sampling frame, this method proved unfeasible as many pamphlets are not available in any archive or only available at Israel’s National Library. Thus, I chose a stratified sample based on the following criteria: importance of the pamphlet, target audience, and ease of collection.

For the *Haredi* communities, I randomly sampled pamphlets from an independent online archive which contains over-time copies of 200 distinct pamphlets.¹³ These pamphlets are typically distributed to local *Haredi* Synagogues, where the pamphlet is a written lecture by one religious leader. From the online archive, I randomly selected 20 percent of pamphlets from a large collection of 15,000 pamphlets.¹⁴

For the Religious Zionist community, there are nine pamphlets that are delivered together nationally to virtually all Religious Zionist Synagogues.¹⁵ I chose two important pamphlets that represent different segments of the community. The first pamphlet, *Be'ahava Uve'emuna*, is a well-known leaflet associated with *Yeshivat Machon Meir*, which represents the more hawkish wing of the Religious Zionist community.¹⁶ The second, *Shabbat Beshabato*, the first pamphlet to be published on a weekly basis (since 1985), is associated with the more mainstream part of the Religious Zionist community.¹⁷ Notably, each of these pamphlets contains about 5-10 articles by a diverse set of leaders in the Religious Zionist community.

To complete my sample, I grouped together 15 'independent' pamphlets that are distributed by other organizations. These pamphlets are typically distributed independently by activists, and either engage in outreach or represent a 'fringe' ideological community. From this group, I selected *Sichat Hashavua*, the pamphlet with the largest circulation. This pamphlet is associated with the *Chabad* movement, a well-known *Haredi* group known for its outreach to non-religious Jews in Jewish communities around the world.¹⁸ Similar in style to the Religious Zionist pamphlets, this pamphlet also contains 5-10 articles by a diverse set of religious leaders in the *Chabad* community.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the sample. The sample is diverse, but not strictly representative. It leaves out rarer and harder-to-access pamphlets, so the results say more about popular mainstream writers than fringe figures. The availability of issues also varies by pamphlet, so although I do my best to collect all of them, there are gaps due to availability. As such, I am confident in these results for the religious leaders in the mainstream Religious Zionist and *Haredi* communities, who are religiously and politically influential in Israel. However, they may not hold if I were able to look at rarer or more niche pamphlets (such as the very nationalist *Eretz Yisrael Shelanu* or anti-Zionist *Neturei Karta* pamphlets) who play a more marginal role in Israeli society.

3.3 Measurement of Key Variables

To measure religious rhetoric, I used Structural Topic Models (STM). Specifically, these methods classified the large collections of religious texts into distinct themes/topics by looking for associations or clustering between words (Blei, 2012; Grimmer and Stewart, 2013; Lucas et al., 2015). In these models, a topic is defined as a collection of words where each word has a higher or lower probability of belonging to a topic. In addition, each document is composed of multiple topics. Using STM allows me to include covariates in the topic model, such as author or year (Roberts et al., 2014). This helps improve the precision of the topic model, since it can incorporate information about the texts in the analysis. Similar methods have been used by scholars to measure the political content of sermons, support for ISIS, and Jihadism (Woolfalk, 2013; Mitts, 2017a; Nielsen, 2017).

Using a Structural Topic Model (STM), I identified ten main topics in the corpus, including nationalist and religious topics.¹⁹ Figure 1 plots the key words and topic labels for these 10 topics.²⁰ As noted in the figure, most topics are concerned with religious and ethical teachings. For instance, prominent topics include writings that emphasize religious and legal scholarship (Topics 2 and 4), mysticism (Topics 7 and 8), and texts that cater to parents and kids (Topic 5). In contrast, nationalist writings (Topic 1) stress modern political and national concepts such as the state, land, community, and army.²¹

A closer look at the nationalist texts indicates that the discourse reflects a religious nationalist discourse that places Zionism in a religious context, rather than a secular nationalist discourse (Figure A3 shows snippets from the highest-ranked nationalist texts.) The texts also do not hesitate to give right-winged nationalist advice that is critical of current government policy, including hawkish opinions such as more Jewish legislation or annexing settlements. Overall, the rhetoric is very hawkish, where the government and the army are encouraged to take harsh measures against the Palestinians during conflict.

For data on weekly conflict, I use a (0/1) dichotomous variable. I define military conflict

with the Palestinians as the start and end of hostilities for the three most recent military operations in Gaza (Operations Cast Lead, Pillar of Defense, and Protective Edge).²² For a more fine-grained measure of conflict, I use data on the weekly number of Israeli and Palestinian casualties between 2006 and 2015.²³ This data also distinguishes between Palestinians killed by Israel’s security forces or Israeli civilians, and between Israeli civilians or security forces killed by Palestinians. Finally, I examine five other political events where one would anticipate higher levels of nationalism: the 2006 Lebanon War, settlement evacuations, protests concerning the drafting of Yeshiva students to the Israeli army, Israel’s large-scale social justice protests of 2011, and national elections.²⁴

4 Empirical Strategy

To estimate the effect that conflict has on religious leaders, I use a panel with two-way fixed effects. This model exploits the variation in conflict over time to assess its impact on the weekly proportion of religious leader discourse on nationalist topics. I propose the following model:

$$Y_{i,j,t} = \alpha_{i,t} + \beta \text{conflict}_t + \gamma_j + \delta_p + \varepsilon_{i,t} \quad (1)$$

where the outcome variable Y is the topic proportion for nationalism made by Rabbi i in pamphlet j in week t . The main explanatory variable β is the presence of conflict for week t . The model also includes γ_j , a fixed effect for each religious leader that controls for unobserved characteristics over time between different religious leaders, and δ_p is a year fixed effect to control for common factors that change over the period. Standard errors are clustered by religious leader.

4.1 Validity of Design

One threat to the empirical strategy is that since religious figures play a large role in politics, they can influence Israeli political leaders to pursue conflict. Under this scenario, the relationship between conflict and religious rhetoric would be spurious if religious leaders are influencing the onset of conflict - either by causing terror attacks or influencing Israel military behavior. To overcome this problem, I exploit the variation of conflict intensity over time. For example, by focusing on conflicts with Gaza, I am exploiting the relative lack of violence in Israel before and after these conflicts. Moreover, the comparison of religious leader discourse during several different periods of conflict should allow for estimates of the impact of conflict on religious leader discourse.

Thus, the identification strategy relies on two key assumptions. First, that in the absence of conflict, the trends of religious leader discourse would remain the same. Second, that the precise timing of conflict is exogenous to the weekly content of each document. This is quite plausible since it is unlikely that Palestinian violence or Israeli military strategy are driven by the exact contents of a weekly pamphlet.²⁵ While the overall long-term effects of these publications are to plausibly move the Israeli religious public or religious politicians to adopt more right-wing opinions on the conflict, it is unlikely that specific documents drive short-term events (see also Figure 3 below where I test for this possibility). However, one might also be concerned that religious leader rhetoric is correlated with other factors that do predict conflict, such as influence on settler activities or Israeli religious political leaders. Conditioning on the content of prior documents provides a way of controlling for these factors, helping mitigate (partially) the effects of omitted variable bias. This strategy is similar in spirit to a difference-in-differences approach that uses the variation of conflict over time to control for possible time-specific effects. However, it must be acknowledged that this design does not strictly allow for making causal inferences.

5 Impact of Conflict on Religious Rhetoric

I present the results for my main specifications using an OLS panel fixed effects regression in Table 1 (see Equation 1). The estimated results from Column 2 indicate that religious leaders increase their nationalist rhetoric during conflict with the Palestinians by 0.04 percentage points on average.²⁶ The effect is both statistically significant and substantively large. The results imply that conflict increases nationalist rhetoric by approximately 40 percent (baseline mean of 0.1). These changes in nationalist topic frequency during conflict come at the expense of other topics, such as religious or legal scholarship (see Figure A4).²⁷ These changes are also larger than the shifts in topic frequency associated with the seasonal changes in the Biblical reading cycle (see Figure A5), and higher than estimates reported in other recent papers using STM.²⁸

One might be concerned that Rabbinic response to conflict would be dependent on the political climate, wherein stronger ties by religious leaders would increase their likelihood of pursuing nationalist rhetoric.²⁹ However, as shown in Column 3, there is no significant relationship between nationalist rhetoric and political ties. Column 4 indicates that the impact of conflict on nationalist rhetoric is not affected by the religious ties to the coalition or economic conditions (proxied by the quarterly unemployment rate).³⁰

In addition to an increase in the prevalence of nationalist rhetoric, the results in Figure 2 suggest that the *content* of rhetoric shifts during periods of conflict with the Palestinians. For nationalist rhetoric, the figure suggests that during periods of non-conflict there is an emphasis on developing the state. In contrast, during periods of conflict there is an emphasis on Israel's fight with its enemies. Thus, one can detect two types of nationalist rhetoric, where the more hawkish version is emphasized during conflict with the Palestinians.

5.1 Robustness of Results

In this section, I present several robustness checks to increase the confidence in the results.

First, I assess whether the results are due to the possibility that religious leaders are relating to the salience of current events. In that case, one would anticipate that their religious rhetoric would change in response to other major political events in Israel. In Table 2, I run my main specification, but examine periods where there were important political conflicts in Israel. As indicated by Table 2, other important political events, including the 2006 Lebanon war, have no significant effect on nationalist rhetoric. This implies that religious leaders do not respond to all important political conflicts (like newspapers) but respond selectively to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which involves a dispute over sacred territory.

Second, I assess to what extent nationalist rhetoric is conflated with words that simply describe events during periods of conflict. In order to perform this analysis, I acquired a list of 50 common words that are used by the media during conflict in Gaza (Fogel-Dror, Shenhav and Sheaffer, 2018).³¹ I then reran the analysis without these terms. The results in Table A3 imply that the results remain statistically significant, although the estimates are smaller in magnitude. In addition, Figure A6 indicates that after removing conflict words, there is still a distinct form of hawkish nationalism that uses language such as 'terror', 'enemy', 'united', and 'enough'. Overall, these results indicate that part of the effects of conflict on nationalism are driven by the description of conflict.

Third, I assess whether religious rhetoric responds to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, or does it cause conflict. To examine the possibility of reverse causality, I plot for each military conflict religious rhetoric five weeks before and five weeks after each conflict. As indicated by Figure 3, religious rhetoric largely increases after conflict starts, suggesting that conflict drives rhetoric. This suggests that religious leaders respond to wartime dynamics but seem unlikely to be driving the actual conflict events. In addition, rhetoric tapers off after the termination of conflict, suggesting that conflict does not have long-term effects.

Fourth, I show that the main results are robust to different measurement choices. Thus, I rerun the main specification using a more fine-grained measure of conflict: Israeli and

Palestinian casualties. Consistent with the results above, Table A4 indicates that Israeli and Palestinian casualties are associated with higher levels of nationalist rhetoric. The results suggest that the effects of military conflict are similar in magnitude to the effects of about 15 Israeli casualties or 500 Palestinian casualties. This magnitude implies that casualties during military conflict are primarily driving the results. Interestingly, the results also suggest that this increase is primarily driven by Israeli military casualties and Palestinian casualties caused by the Israeli army. In contrast, Israeli civilian casualties have no statistically significant effect on nationalist rhetoric.

Finally, I show that the results are not strictly dependent on the choice of 10 topics in the corpus. I show this by rerunning the topic model, varying the number of topics. I then plot the model estimates separately for nationalism, using the main two-way fixed effects specification. As indicated by Figure A7, the estimates remain significant and largely similar when increasing the number of topics beyond 10 (11-15 topics). However, the results are not robust for fewer than nine topics. This is due to the fact that the nationalist topic becomes less distinct, merging with other related topics (such as education, events, and Bible). This implies that the results are largely robust to the number of topics, with an important caveat that the number of topics is large enough to allow for a distinct nationalist topic.

6 Religious Heterogeneity

Why does rhetoric by religious leaders become more nationalist during times of conflict with the Palestinians? To examine what is unique about violent events involving the Palestinians, I explore to what extent there are heterogeneous effects of conflict for different types of religious leaders.

Figure 4 plots nationalist rhetoric by religious leaders over-time, distinguishing between religious leaders from different religious groups. The figure shows interesting differences between religious leaders, both in overall levels of nationalism and over-time trends. For

instance, religious leaders from Ultra-Orthodox communities have low levels of nationalism, which remains steady over time. In contrast, leaders from other religious communities have higher levels of nationalism that varies over time.

To assess to what extent these over-time fluctuations are driven by conflict, I rerun my main specification, distinguishing between religious leaders from different religious groups. The results in Figure 5 imply that not all religious leaders respond to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the same way. Specifically, Religious Zionist and *Chabad* leaders respond to conflict with more nationalism. In contrast, *Haredi* leaders do not use more nationalist rhetoric during conflict, even if this rhetoric could be used to attract more followers.³² Interestingly, Figure A9 implies that more nationalism during conflict largely comes at the expense of ‘worship’ topics (for the Religious Zionist and *Chabad* communities) or ‘scholarship’ (for the *Haredi* communities).

6.1 Potential Mechanisms

One potential explanation for these differences relates to religious leader ideology and support for nationalism, where religious leaders who oppose nationalism remain indifferent during conflict. This would support the argument that differences in political theology mediate nationalist tendencies, and that religious leaders are unlikely to stray in the short-term from important tenets of political theology (Philpott, 2007).

Related, one can attribute these differences to social factors such as the level of varying service in the IDF across religious groups (Cohen, 1993). Specifically, we would expect that nationalist rhetoric would increase for religious leaders that belong to communities whose constituents serve in the IDF (Religious Zionism and *Chabad*). According to this explanation, differences between religious leaders relates to the need to express empathy during conflict, where this need is higher for religious communities whose families are actively participating in conflict. If this is the case, these results are consistent with the broader ‘rally ’round the

flag’ literature, where the pressure to signal allegiance is larger for religious leaders whose communities are more actively engaged in the conflict.

7 Conclusion

Recent work titled “God’s Century” argues that conflict in the 21st century will be highly influenced by religion - helping determine whether conflict descends into a drawn-out civil war or reconciliation and peace (Toft, Philpott and Shah, 2011). Prominent examples of conflicts where religious beliefs play an important role include conflict between Sunnis and Shias in Iraq and Syria, between Hindus and Muslims in India, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These conflicts are marked by recurring rounds of violence and their intractability.

In that vein, this paper has examined how religious leaders in Israel respond to different types of military conflict. By showing how religious leaders are more likely to engage in nationalist rhetoric during conflict with the Palestinians, my findings provide evidence that even short bouts of violence have an effect in shaping and politicizing the messaging of religious leaders. My findings also show that religious leaders respond in a stronger nationalist manner to conflict which involves sacred territory (conflict with the Palestinians), and that these effects are mediated by the political ideology of one’s religious community towards the state.

This paper contributes to previous literature on religion and conflict by providing a fine-grained analysis on religious leaders and their rhetoric during conflict. They highlight one potential mechanism for why religious conflicts are harder to resolve, where religious leaders frame conflict in a religious light. From a policy perspective, the results suggest that political leaders should provide incentives for religious leaders to moderate their nationalist rhetoric during conflict. In addition, reconciliation events between prominent religious leaders during conflict may help prevent religiously inspired forms of violence.

Finally, several key limitations to the study should be noted and exploited as avenues for

future research. First, future research should examine to what extent religious leaders respond to conflict like other secular leaders. According to the ‘rally ’round the flag’ literature, both elites and masses may move in a more nationalist direction. While my results are consistent with this literature, it is beyond the scope of this paper to analyze the Israeli press generally. I choose to focus on religious leaders since they are exceptional actors due to their unique moral authority. Second, future research should also examine in more detail to what extent religious leader rhetoric has causal effects on conflict - such as in influencing military actions, government policy, or people’s political behavior.

Notes

1. See the most recent Pew Report on Israel, which indicates that Israel's religious populations hold more hawkish views on the peace process. Available at: <http://www.pewforum.org/2016/03/08/israels-religiously-divided-society/>
2. See <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-west-bank-rabbi-to-stand-trial-for-incitement-against-arabs-1.5483816>
3. For one example of dialogue between religious leaders during conflict, see <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/press-room/view/muslim-jewish-religious-leaders-denounce-violence-promote-peace-in-unprecedented>
4. Several online surveys among the religious public suggest that popular pamphlets have a percentage of readership that is comparable to Israel's most popular written media outlets. For example, *Miskar*, a survey firm for the Religious Zionist community, shows that the readership for pamphlets and newspapers are comparable (about 30 percent). For the report (in Hebrew), see: <https://www.miskar.co.il/he/surveys/132>.
5. In the Israeli-Palestinian context, Ginges et al. (2007) note that offering material incentives over Jerusalem or refugees created backlash for both Israeli and Palestinian respondents. They attribute this backlash to the psychological mechanism where individuals recoil from a cost-benefit analysis over sacred values.
6. It should be noted that some scholars argue that religious actors have *less* of a need to engage in nationalist language during conflict (Fischer et al., 2006; Norenzayan et al., 2009).
7. The three-major religious political parties in Israel are the Jewish Home, *Shas*, and United Torah Judaism.
8. For one discussion, see: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/06/how-the-six-day-war-changed-religion/528981/>.
9. A primary rabbinic source for *Haredi* opposition to Zionism was the "Three Oaths", which was understood as a vow taken by Jewry not to migrate in large numbers to Israel by 'force' (Ravitzky, 1996). This teaching states: "What are these Three Oaths? One, that Israel should not storm the wall. Two, the Holy One

adjured Israel not to rebel against the nations of the world. Three, the Holy One adjured the nations that they would not oppress Israel too much” (*Ketubot* 110b).

10. According to Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, an influential religious thinker, redemption would take place in two stages. First, a more physical stage such as establishing the state, a strong army, and returning Jewish exiles to Israel. Second, a more spiritual or religious stage which would involve the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple, and the state being run by religious law.

11. See <http://www.haaretz.com/weekend/week-s-end/who-says-print-journalism-is-dying-1.217254>

12. There are some exceptions, where some pamphlets were produced by specific political parties. However, most of these are now defunct. Examples include The Weekly Stream (Shas), Our Land of Israel (National Union Party), and *Oneg Shabbat* (Likud).

13. Given the disdain for the internet in the *Haredi* community, very few organizations maintain an online presence. However, several *Haredi* sites independently maintain an online archive of pamphlets. For this reason, there is little reason to think that the pamphlets available on this site differ in important ways from pamphlets that are not on the site. The Hebrew archive is available at <http://beinenu.com/alonim>.

14. I take a sample due to the logistics involved in converting massive amounts of Hebrew text into data.

15. These pamphlets are all currently published and distributed by *Mekor Rishon*. While originally independent, these pamphlets cut costs by sharing the same publisher and distributor.

16. For the Hebrew archive see http://www.meirtv.co.il/site/alon_list.asp

17. For the Hebrew archive see <http://zomet.org.il/?CategoryID=160&ArticleID=1>

18. For the Hebrew archive see <http://www.chabad.org.il/Magazines/Articles.asp?CategoryID=30>

19. In the online appendix, I provide more details on the STM model including its model specification and validation.

20. While there is no ‘right’ number of topics, Figure A1 assesses the relative exclusivity and semantic coherence for different numbers of topics. The results imply that the ideal number of topics for the corpus is between 10-20 topics.

21. Figure A2 shows the correlations among the different topics. The results suggest that religious and legal scholarship are central to the corpus. This is not surprising as these pamphlets are primarily educational and religious tools.

22. Operation Cast Lead began on December 26, 2008 and ended on January 18, 2009. Operation Pillar of Defense lasted from November 14, 2012 until November 21, 2012. Finally, Operation Protective Edge (the 2014 Israel-Gaza conflict) started with the kidnapping of the three teenagers in Israel (June 12, 2014) and lasted until the end of Israel’s military operations in Gaza (August 26, 2014).

23. This data is available on the *Btselem* website at <http://www.btselem.org/statistics>

24. Settlement protests refers to protests against the settlement evacuations of Amona (January 25, 2006 - February 8, 2006) and Migron (August 25, 2012- September 9, 2012). Army protests refer to large-scale protests against the drafting of Yeshiva students to the army (February 17, 2014 - March 9, 2014). Social justice protests refer to the protest activities that happened in Israel between July 14, 2011 and October 29, 2011. Elections refer to the two weeks before and two weeks after the 2006, 2009, and 2013 national elections in Israel.

25. This assumption seems safer when one also considers the timing of events. Pamphlets are sent to the printers at the beginning of the week so that there is time for them to be published and distributed before Friday. Thus, there is about a one-week lag between events and religious leader responses, as seen from instances where specific political events are noted in the pamphlets.

26. The results are also robust to using a lagged dependent variable (see Table A2).

27. Figure A4 also shows that other topics besides nationalism do not increase in frequency during conflict, with the exception of Bible rhetoric. However, this slight increase may be due to the fact that nationalist texts tend to use Biblical verses to religiously justify nationalist sentiments.

28. For example, Terman (2017) reports an effect of 3.4-3.6 percent for female rights when reporting on Muslim countries. In addition, Genovese (2015) reports a small and statistically insignificant effect for the effect of crisis on the political content of papal communications. Finally, Tingley (2017) reports coefficients in the 0.02 range for an experimental treatment looking at US power.

29. Due to the fact that there are three main religious political parties who have been inside and outside of the ruling coalition, religious ties for different religious leaders to the government vary over time (including periods of conflict). For example, United Torah Judaism, a *Haredi* party, was part of the 2008 coalition during Operation Cast Lead, while the Jewish Home, a Religious Zionist party, was part of the 2014 coalition during Operation Protective Edge.

30. I control for economic conditions, since it is possible religious leaders might be more likely to express nationalist opinions during conflict when economic conditions are poor.

31. These words are: Israel, Hamas, Israeli, rocket, Gaza, military, civilian, operation, killed, fire, tunnel, strike, attack, soldier, ceasefire, militant, IDF, ground, fighting, fired, truce, air, area, cease-fire, conflict, official, death, day, army, July, hit, people, city, southern, group, force, offensive, target, casualty, missile, border, time, home, launched, end, Tuesday, school, killing, edge, war.

32. According to Israel's Peace Index, support for Israel's army operations are very high. For example, in July 2014 during Operation Pillar of Defense, public support for the operation was at 95 percent. See <http://peaceindex.org/indexMainEng.aspx>

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Table 1: Impact of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict on Nationalist Rhetoric

	Nationalist Rhetoric			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Military Conflict	0.049 (0.013)	0.043 (0.012)		0.043 (0.011)
Political Ties to Coalition			−0.001 (0.006)	0.003 (0.006)
Economic Conditions				0.003 (0.003)
Rabbi FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FEs	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	10,968	10,968	10,968	10,968
Adj. R-squared	0.437	0.437	0.434	0.437

Notes: Standard errors are clustered by Rabbi.

Table 2: Impact of Other Political Conflicts on Nationalist Rhetoric

	Nationalist Rhetoric				
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Second Lebanon War	0.015 (0.015)				
Settlement Evacuations		-0.007 (0.010)			
IDF Draft Protests			-0.009 (0.013)		
Social Justice Protests				-0.007 (0.008)	
National Elections					-0.008 (0.010)
Political Ties to Coalition	-0.013 (0.006)	-0.013 (0.006)	-0.013 (0.006)	-0.013 (0.006)	-0.015 (0.006)
Economic Conditions	0.006 (0.004)	0.006 (0.004)	0.006 (0.004)	0.006 (0.004)	0.007 (0.004)
Rabbi FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	10,968	10,968	10,968	10,968	10,968
Adj. R-squared	0.435	0.435	0.435	0.435	0.435

Notes: See Table 1. Standard errors are clustered by Rabbi.

1. Nationalism	F: Jew, land, state, war, day, world, community FREX: state, government, Zionism, citizen, soldier, Tzahal, army F: יהודי, ארץ, מדינה, מלחמה, ים, עולם, ציבור FREX: מדינה, ממשלה, ציונות, אזרח, חייל, צה, צבא
2. Religious Scholarship	F: yes, name, wrote, spoke, the Rabbi, Torah, mountain FREX: authority, by, lesson plan, Torah lesson plan, view, Torah-view, Modi'in Illit F: כן, שם, כתב, דבר, רבי, תור, הר FREX: שליט, עי, מערכה_שיעור, מערכה_שיעור_תור, צפייה, תור_צפייה, מודיעין_עילית
3. Bible	F: land, Moses, name, Jacob, that, Father, Torah portion FREX: desert, Pharoah, Rashi, Rashi, Jacob, Egypt F: ארץ, משה, שם, יעקב, אשר, אב, פרשה FREX: במדבר, פרעה, רש, רש_י, י, יעקב, מצרים
4. Legal Scholarship	F: law, spoke, forbidden, yes, therefore, name, obligation FREX: vow, exempt, Tzitzit, inherit, excommunicate, steal, obligated F: דין, דבר, אינה, כן, הרי, שם, חייב FREX: נדר, פטור, ציצית, יורש, חרם, גזל, חייב
5. Holidays	F: blessing, day, prayer, day, blessed, happiness, late FREX: Purim, Kippur, Tabernacles, bless, fast, blessed, Yom Kippur F: ברכה, יום, תפילה, ים, ברך, שמחה, איחר FREX: פורים, כיפור, סוכות, ברך, צום, בירך, יום_כיפור
6. Education	F: child, life, person, man, permitted, world, path FREX: youth, parent, personality, couple, psychologist, education, teacher F: ילד, חיים, אדם, איש, הותר, עולם, דרך FREX: נוער, הורה, אישיות, זוג, פסיכולוג, חינוך, מורה
7. Hasidic Tales	F: Rebbe, person, Rabbi, face, hand, late, spoke FREX: story, suddenly, answered, doctor, Father, my side, requested F: רבי, איש, רב, פנים, יד, איחר, דבר FREX: סיפר, פתע, ענה, רופא, אבא, צדי, ביקש
8. Mysticism	F: man, world, Torah, God, spoke, hand, Torah FREX: Messiah, redemption, evil inclination, created, God, purpose, creation F: אדם, עולם, תורה, קב, דבר, יד, תור FREX: משיח, גאולה, יצר_רע, נברא, קב, תכלית, בריאה
9. Events	F: Rabbi, book, Yeshiva, Torah, year, land, Chabad FREX: Chabad, Chabad, Yeshiva, Chasidic head, Wide F: רב, ספר, ישיבה, תור, שנה, ארץ, ד FREX: חב_ד, חב, ישיבה, אדמו, אדמו_ר, רחב, ר
10. Halacha (law)	F: Sabbath, forbid, yes, prohibition, permitted, spoke, candle FREX: lit, candle, lighting, Chanuka, cook, food, permitted F: שבת, אסר, כן, איסור, מותר, דבר, נר FREX: הדליק, נר, הדלקה, חנוכה, בישול, מאכל, מותר

Figure 1: **Topics in the Religious Corpus**,³⁸ "F:" indicates words that are most frequent in each topic. "FREX:" indicates words that are both frequent in and exclusive to each topic.



Figure 2: **Impact of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict on Nationalist Rhetoric** This plot shows the distribution of words in nationalist discourse during periods of conflict and non-conflict. Word color indicates the uniqueness of the word, with blacker nodes having a more positive association with conflict. Word size is proportional to the number of words in the corpus devoted to the topic.

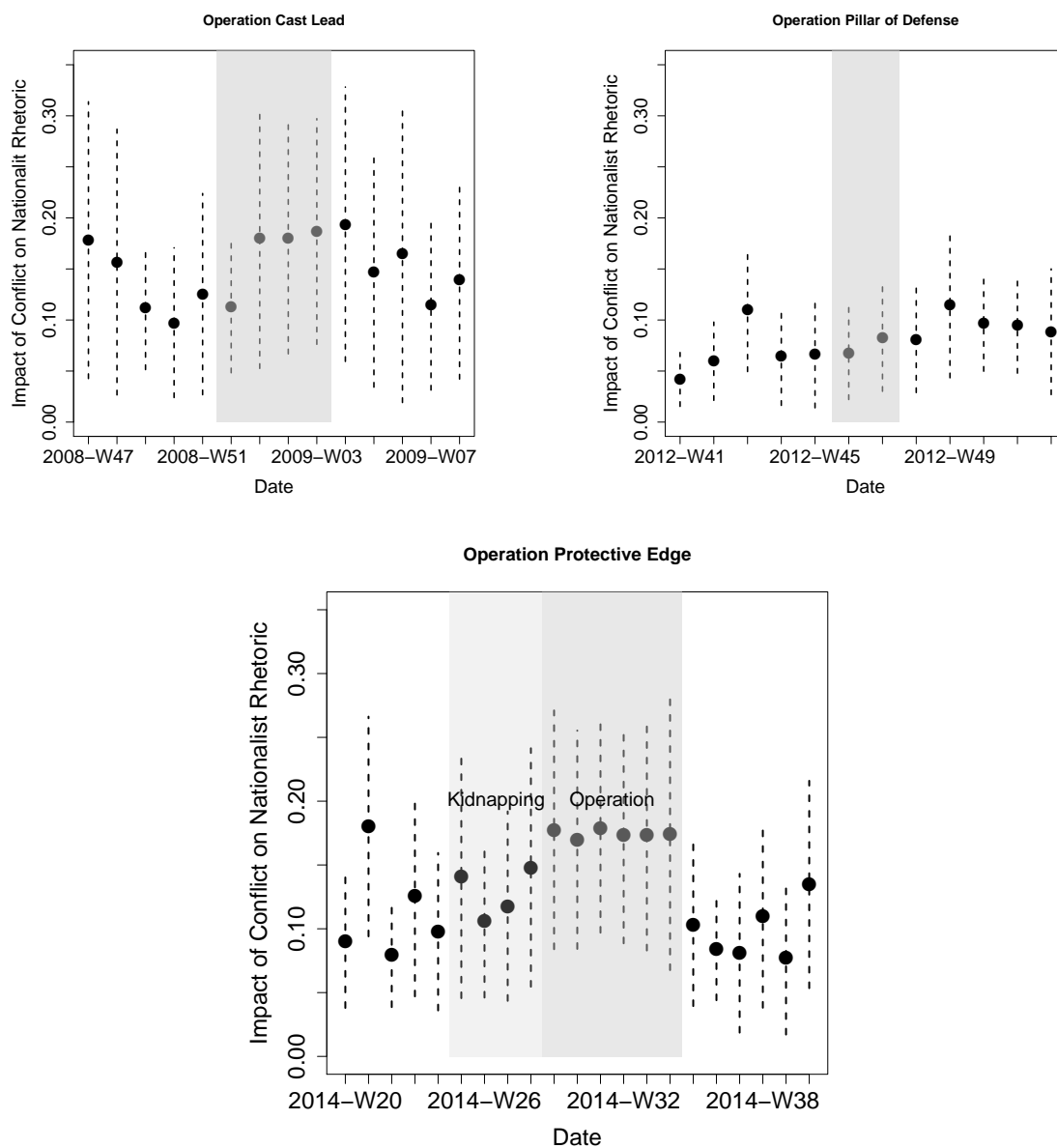


Figure 3: **Nationalist Rhetoric and Israeli Military Operations in Gaza.** The plot shows the mean measure of nationalist rhetoric made that week with 95 % confidence intervals. Conflict periods are highlighted.

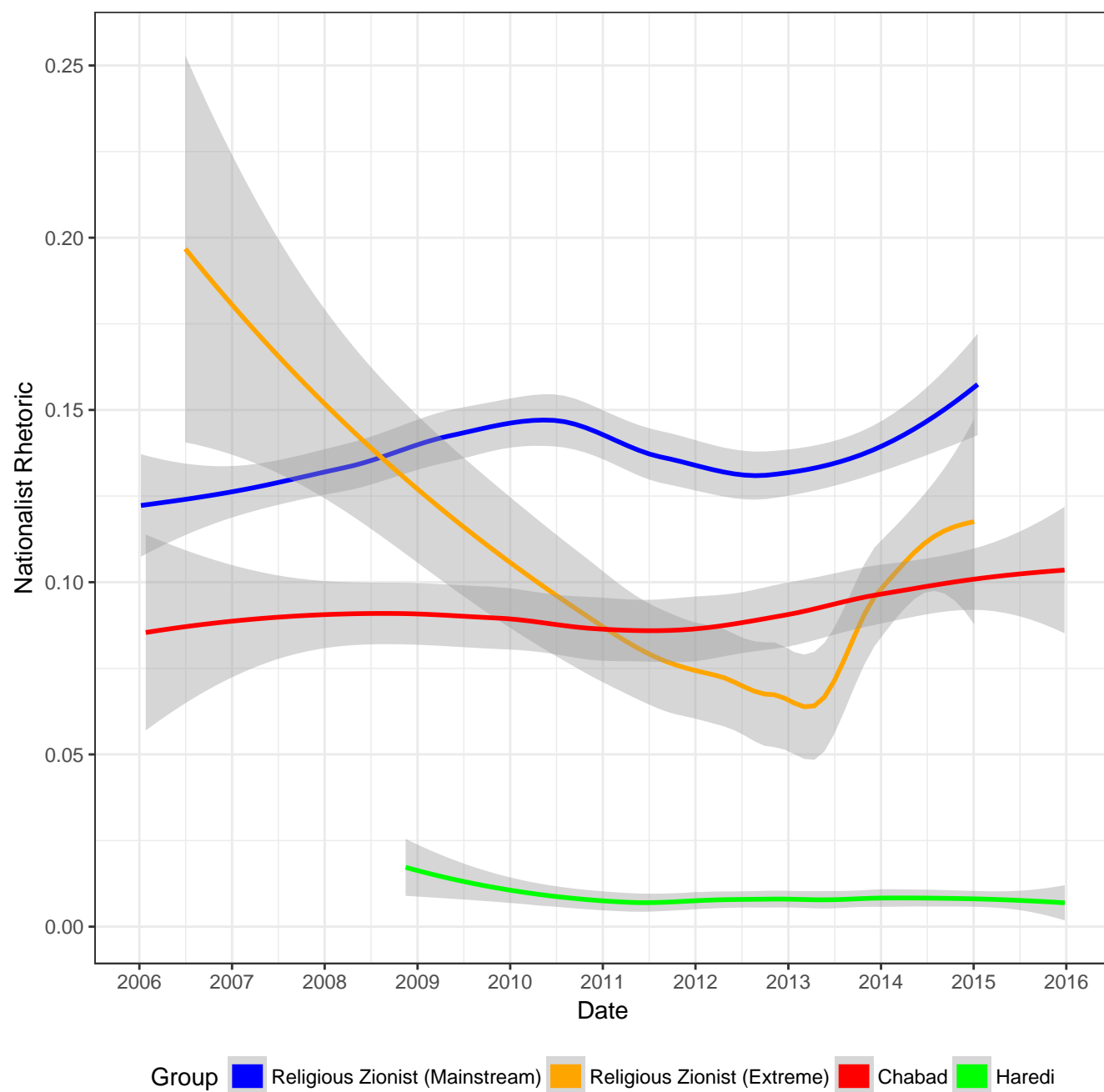


Figure 4: **Nationalist Rhetoric by Group Over Time** This plot shows the proportion of nationalist rhetoric over time for each religious group.

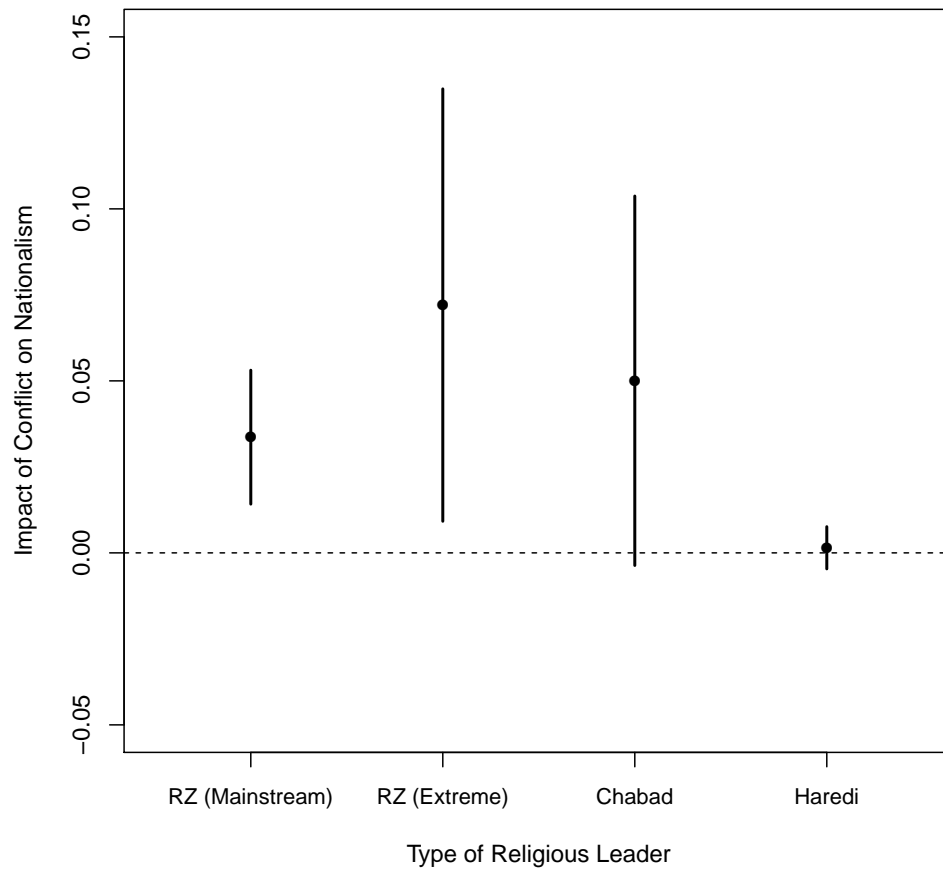


Figure 5: **Impact of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict on Nationalism, By Religious Group** See Table 1. The plot shows the coefficients and 95% confidence intervals for the main religious groups in Israel.

Online Appendix

A Religious Leaders in the Sabbath Pamphlets

My sample includes important religious leaders, and other leaders with less political clout. There are articles by 250 different religious leaders, where 50 leaders have 50 or more articles. Important writers include Rabbi Shlomo Aviner (*Rosh Yeshiva* of *Ateret Cohanim* and one of the spiritual leaders of Religious Zionism), Rav Yisrael Rosen (director of *Zomet* institute and adviser to the Jewish Home party), Rabbi Menachem Brod (prominent *Chabad* spokesman), Rav Elimelech Biderman (a very popular *Chasidic* sermon giver), and Rav Shalom Arush (*Rosh Yeshiva* of *Chut shel Chesed*). Less important figures include educators, pulpit Rabbis, and other religious elites in the community.

A.1 How Influential are the Sabbath Pamphlets?

It is important to consider to what extent religious pamphlets are influential. Unlike changes in rhetoric which can be assessed in a more causal manner, there are two main challenges involved in making a precise or causal inference regarding the impact of leader rhetoric on religious readers' opinion or behavior. First, simple correlations between reader's political opinions and exposure to pamphlets would be misleading due to self-selection of partisan media sources. Second, even when the pamphlets are read, it is not clear to what extent people accept the content in them. Most religious people read other forms of religious media - such as religious newspapers - and regular forms of secular media.

One ideal design that would alleviate some of these concerns would be to run a survey experiment in Israel that samples religious individuals. Treatment would be defined as exposure to a hawkish religious text from a pamphlet, whereas the control group would receive a more moderate religious text. Respondents in the control and treatment groups could then be compared across a host of political attitudes outcomes. This design would be similar in

spirit to Woolfalk (2013), who estimates the impact of political cues by religious leaders using experimental evidence. An alternative design would implement an RCT in Israel that would allow users to select from different types of partisan media. This would be like Jo (2017), who uses a RCT in South Korea to measure the causal impact of partisan media on political behavior.

In the interim, I present two pieces of preliminary qualitative evidence which suggests that religious leader rhetoric in the pamphlets has an impact. First, I interviewed several experts in Israel who are knowledgeable about the religious community in Israel. All of them noted that the Sabbath pamphlets are very popular and well read, particularly among young people. Pamphlets are typically read in Synagogue, and conversation during Sabbath meals frequently discuss the pamphlets.

Second, Israeli media sources will report on statements - especially controversial ones - made in these Sabbath pamphlets. For example, controversy regarding Binyamin Netanyahu’s beliefs about the two-state solution was arguably triggered by an article that appeared in a religious pamphlet *Olam Katan* which had asked different political parties, including the Likud “What is the opinion of the head of your party regarding the creation of a Palestinian State?” In the pamphlet, Likud Knesset member Tzipi Hotovely - young and religious - was noted as saying that “The Prime Minister announced that the Bar-Ilan speech is null and void. Netanyahu’s entire political biography is a fight against the creation of a Palestinian state” (see <http://www.vox.com/2015/3/8/8171001/netanyahu-two-state>).

B Textual Analysis Details

I elaborate in this section on how I converted the pamphlets to data using topic models.

B.1 Data Pre-Processing

To enable the use of statistical text methods, I made several standard modifications to the data. Texts were stemmed using a Hebrew stemmer developed by the Technion, and methods described in Mitts (2017). After stemming, texts were transliterated from Hebrew into Latin characters, and numbers and common stop words were removed. In addition, texts with less than 100 words were removed from the corpus. Bigrams and trigrams were added to each text. Tokens that appeared less than 50 times in the corpus were removed.

B.2 Structured Topic Model

Topic models identify topics in texts by observing clusters of similar words.¹ These are latent categories typically identified using Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) models (Blei, Ng and Jordan, 2003). The discovery of categories is unsupervised, where the user input is the number of topics. Structured topic models are topic models that allow for the inclusion of covariates, which improves the precision of the topics. My structured topic model includes the following covariates:

$$Y_{ijt} = \alpha + \beta \text{pamphlet} + S(\text{week}_t) + \epsilon_{ijt} \quad (1)$$

where the outcome variable Y is the topic proportion made by Rabbi i in pamphlet j in week t . The model controls for pamphlet type and includes a spline for time, factors which explain variation in religious leader discourse.

B.3 Validation of the Topic Model

I assigned names to the different topics based on close reading of texts with high proportions of specific topics and using the top-ranked keywords (frequency and FREX). I validated the topic model using two different tests. First, I show how the topic frequency of religious

sermons is sensitive to different parts of the Bible. Exploiting the cyclical nature of the weekly Bible reading, sermons during the book of Deuteronomy - a legal book that reviews laws for the land of Israel - are more likely to discuss legal issues and scholarship, while sermons during Genesis are low on scholarship (see Figure A5). In contrast, sermons during the book of Numbers - detailing the people's journey to the land of Israel - are more likely to discuss nationalist topics. Second, I show that the topic content varies by pamphlet type. Specifically, Religious Zionist pamphlets are more nationalistic, while sermons in *Haredi* pamphlets are more likely to discuss religious and legal scholarship (see Figure A8).

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- Blei, David M, Andrew Y Ng and Michael I Jordan. 2003. “Latent dirichlet allocation.” *Journal of machine Learning research* 3(Jan):993–1022.
- Jo, Donghee. 2017. “Better the Devil You know : An RCT on News Consumption.” *Working Paper* .
- Mitts, Tamar. 2017. “Terrorism and the Rise of Right-Wing Content in Israeli Books.” *International Organization* (forthcoming).
- Woolfalk, Miya. 2013. Essays on Social Contexts and Individual Politics: The Political Influence of Religious Institutions and Ethno-Racial Neighborhood Contexts PhD thesis Harvard University.

Table A1: Sampling Frame of Religious Pamphlets

	Hebrew Title	English Title	Ideological Bent	Organization	Number Published Weekly	Year First Published	Total Pamphlets	Major Writers
Religious Zionist Pamphlets								
1	שבת בשבתו	An Appointed Time	Religious Zionism -- mainstream	Zomet and Hapoel Hamizrahi	70,000	1984	1,674	Rav Rozen
2	מצב הרוח	Mood of the time	Religious Zionism -- mainstream	Private Individuals	60,000	2008	438	
3	שביעי	Seventh Year	Religious Zionism -- mainstream	Private Individuals	50,000	2010	260	
4	נופים	Views	Religious Zionism -- mainstream	Private Individuals		2014	157	
5	באהבה ובאמונה	Love and Faith	Religious Zionism -- Chardal	Machon Meir	50,000	1995	1,122	Rabbi Shlomo Aviner
6	עולם קטן	Small World	Religious Zionism -- Chardal	Olam Katan	80,000	2004	598	Mix of Rabbis and writers.
7	יש"ע שלנו	Our West Bank	Religious Zionism -- Chardal	Yesha Council	50,000	2005	535	
8	גילוי דעת	Gilui daat	Religious Zionism -- Chardal	Aviya Foundation	70,000	2010	356	
9	קול צופיך	Voice of your Gazers	Religious Zionist -- Sephardi	Voice of Eliyahu		1997	873	Rav Mordechai Eliyahu; Rav Shmuel Eliyahu

Independent Pamphlets

Table A1: Sampling Frame of Religious Pamphlets

1	שיחת השבוע	Weekly Talk	Haredi -- Chabad -- Outreach	Habad	180,000	1986	1,586	Rav Menchem Brod
2	שיחת הגאולה	Redemption Talk	Haredi -- Chabad (Messianic)	Center for Redemption		1994	1,150	Rav Zimroni Zik
3	שלום לעם	Peace to the Nation	Haredi -- Sephardi -- Outreach	Judaism, Tradition, and Peace		2004	780	
4	הידברות עונג שבת	Speak about the Delights of Shabbat	Haredi -- Sephardi -- Outreach	Hidabroot		2011	308	Rabbi Zamir Cohen
5	מעין השבוע	The Weekly Stream	Haredi -- Sephardi	To the Stream		1990	891	
6	מאורות הדף היומי	Meorot Hadaf Yomi	Haredi -- Scholarly	Bnei Brak		1999	940	
7	עלים לתרופה	Leaves for Healing	Haredi -- Belz	Antwerp: Belz Hasidim		1995	1,064	
8	לידע ולהודיע	To Know and Announce	Haredi - Neturei Karta	Neturei Karta		2008	403	
9	Torah Tidbits	Torah Tidbits	Orthodox (English)	Israel Center	30,000	1992	1,224	Phil Chernofsky
10	גל עיני	Open my Eyes	Religious Zionsim -- Chardal/Chabad	Gal Einai	40,000	2014	116	Rav Yitzchak Ginsburgh
11	ארץ ישראל שלנו	Our Land of Israel	Religious Zionism -- Chardal/Chabad	The Saving Land of Israel Group		2007	165	Rabbi Shalom Dov Wolfe; Rabbi Dov Lior
12	תאיר נרי	The Light of Neri	Religious Zionism -- Chardal	The light of Neri		2009	361	Harav Nir Ben Artzi

Table A1: Sampling Frame of Religious Pamphlets

13	שבת שלום	Peaceful Sabbath	Religious Zionism -- liberal	Ways of Peace	3,000	1998	1,011	
14	שבתון	Sabbath	Religious Zionism -- liberal	Shabaton (Petah Tikva)	60,000	2000	825	Rav Sherlo
15	קרוב אליך	Close to You	Religious Zionism -- Chasidic	Karov Elecha (Petah Tikva)	70,000	2013	178	Rav Steinsaltz; Rabbi Jonathan Sacks
Select Haredi Pamphlets (from list of 400)								
1	באר הפרשה	The Weekly Well	Haredi - Lelov	Wellsprings of Faith Foundation			1,681	Rav Elimelech Biderman
2	שבילי פנחס	Paths of Pinchas	Haredi- Belz			2012		Rabbi Pinches Friedman
3	סיפורי צדיקים	Stories of the Righteous	Haredi- Kretchnif	Rechovot			296	
4	אז נדברו	Then we will talk	Haredi	Haifa			368	Rabbi Shmuel Pollack
5	מסביב לשולחן	Around the Table	Haredi	Jerusalem		1998	730	
6	איש לרעהו	A person to his friend	Haredi	Love of Truth Center		2008	980	
7	חוט של חסד	A string of Kindness	Haredi -- Breslov	Breslov		2007	530	Rav Shalom Arush
8	פניני עין חמד	Pearls from Ein Hemed	Haredi -- Sephardi	Mevaseret Ziyon	5,500	2006	606	

Table A2: Impact of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict on Nationalist Rhetoric, Lagged Model

	Nationalist Rhetoric		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Military Conflict	0.054 (0.015)	0.049 (0.014)	0.047 (0.013)
Economic Conditions			0.003 (0.003)
Religious Parties in Coalition			−0.005 (0.005)
Rabbi FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FEs	No	Yes	Yes
Observations	10,968	10,968	10,968
Adj. R-squared	0.437	0.438	0.438

Table A3: Impact of Conflict on Nationalist Rhetoric, Conflict Words Removed

	Nationalist Rhetoric		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Military Conflict	0.035 (0.012)	0.029 (0.010)	0.028 (0.010)
Economic Conditions			0.003 (0.003)
Religious Parties in Coalition			−0.005 (0.005)
Rabbi FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FEs	No	Yes	Yes
Observations	10,968	10,968	10,968
Adj. R-squared	0.467	0.467	0.467

Table A4: Impact of Israeli-Palestinian Violence on Nationalist Rhetoric

	Nationalist Rhetoric			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Israeli Casualties	0.003 (0.001)			
Civilian Casualties		0.001 (0.001)		
Military Casualties		0.003 (0.001)		
Palestinian Casualties			0.0001 (0.00003)	
Killed by Israeli Civilians				−0.003 (0.006)
Killed by Israeli Military				0.0001 (0.00003)
Economic Conditions	0.005 (0.004)	0.005 (0.004)	0.005 (0.004)	0.005 (0.003)
Religious Parties in Coalition	−0.011 (0.006)	−0.012 (0.006)	−0.008 (0.005)	−0.008 (0.005)
Rabbi FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	10,968	10,968	10,968	10,968
Adj. R-squared	0.436	0.436	0.437	0.437

Notes: Standard errors are clustered by Rabbi.

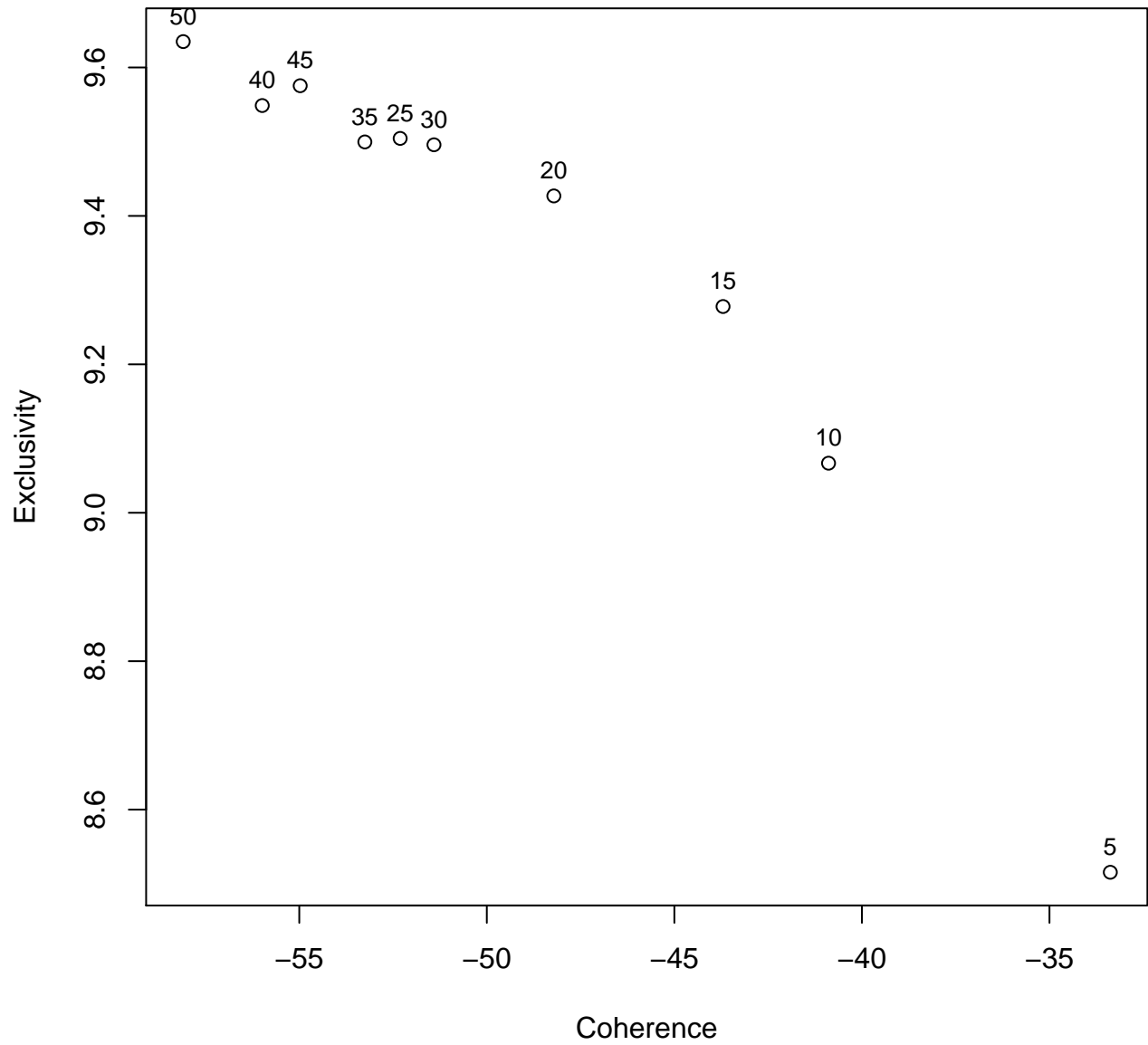


Figure A1: **Ideal Number of Topics** The plot shows the exclusivity and semantic coherence for different numbers of topics.

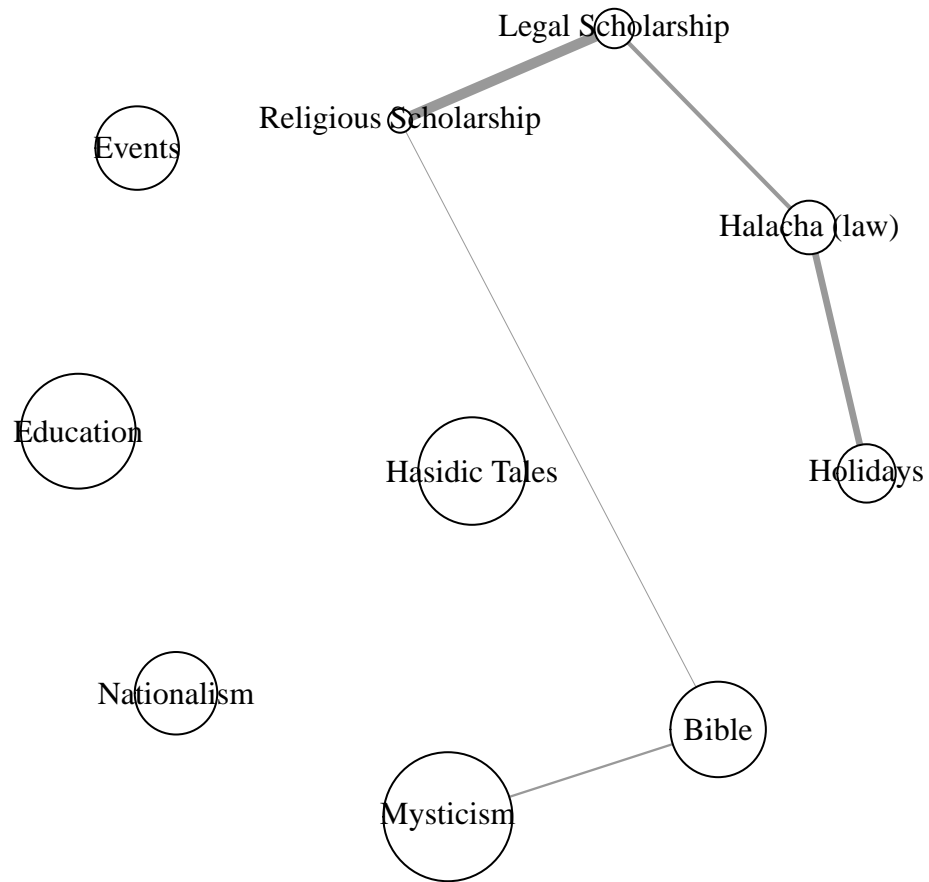


Figure A2: **Network Correlation among Topics** The plot shows the correlation between topics. Thicker lines indicate a stronger correlation between topics. Topic circle size is proportional to the mean proportion of the topic in the corpus.

Nationalist Rhetoric

The Israeli Government Against Zionist Laws: Behind the scenes of parliamentary activity are bills designed to promote national and Zionist issues, but the government opposes them and prevents their advancement and approval in the Knesset ... According to the existing law, every member of the Knesset declares allegiance to the State of Israel at the beginning of his term. I proposed that the Declaration of Trusts be expanded and stated: "I declare allegiance to the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state," in order to make it clear to all members of the Knesset that all members of the Knesset are committed to the Jewish character of the State of Israel, including Arab MKs. [*Zevulun Orlev, June 26, 2010 (no conflict)*]

A Slippery Migron Slope: Until recently, I did not delve into the Migron issue on a specific level. Like most of the country's citizens, even supporters of the political right, I was impressed that, aside from the question of justifying settlement-settlement in general, this is a local legal battle; Land costs, civil rights, priority in the destruction of illegal structures, etc. After reading a little bit of neutral background material, it turns out that this is a slippery, precedent-setting, disastrous disaster for the entire settlement in Judea and Samaria. [*Rav Yisrael Rosen; September 24, 2011 (no conflict)*]

The War is in Full Swing: The goal of world diplomacy is to break the public's stamina so that it will have to accept the miserable agreement that they are trying to dictate. Ostensibly, the days seem routine. People go to work, spend time in malls, go on vacation. But that's an illusion. We are in the midst of a war and are subject to a well planned, integrated attack. The US Secretary of State's warning of a boycott of Israel, if it does not give in to the agreement dictated to it, is not a slip of the tongue ... We must understand that we are at war for our very existence. While this is not a war of tanks and planes, it is a political battle, but it is no less critical. And when the Jews feel that they are being pushed against the wall, they know how to unite and demonstrate their steadfastness, the one that has overcome mighty and powerful nations with the help of the Lord of Israel. [*Rabbi Menachem Brod; February 7, 2014 (no conflict)*]

Figure A3: **Examples of Nationalist Texts** This plot shows brief snippets of the three texts ranked highest in the Nationalist topic. The texts are translated from the original Hebrew, by Google Translate.

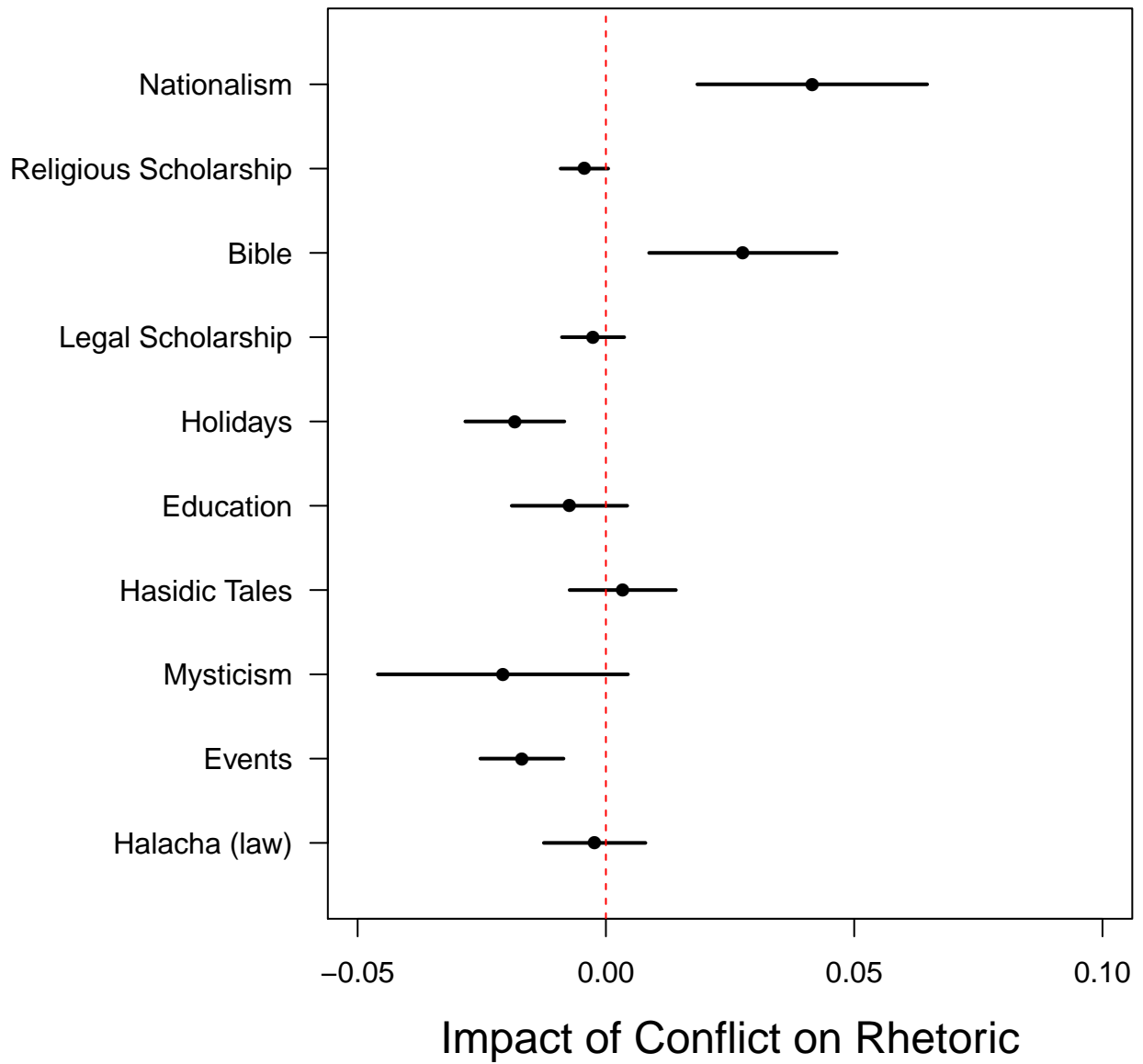
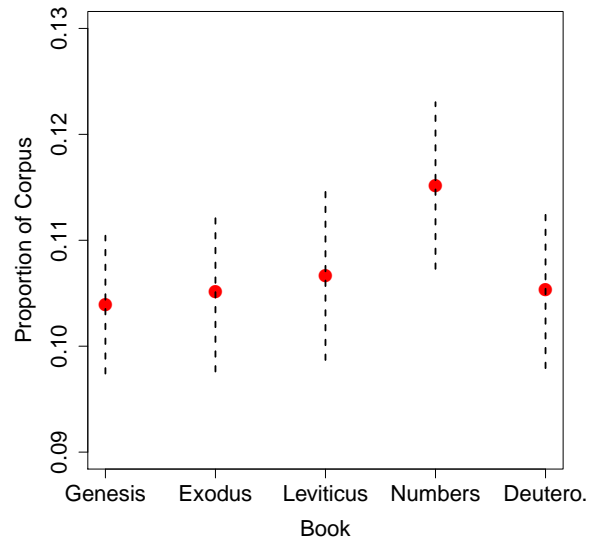
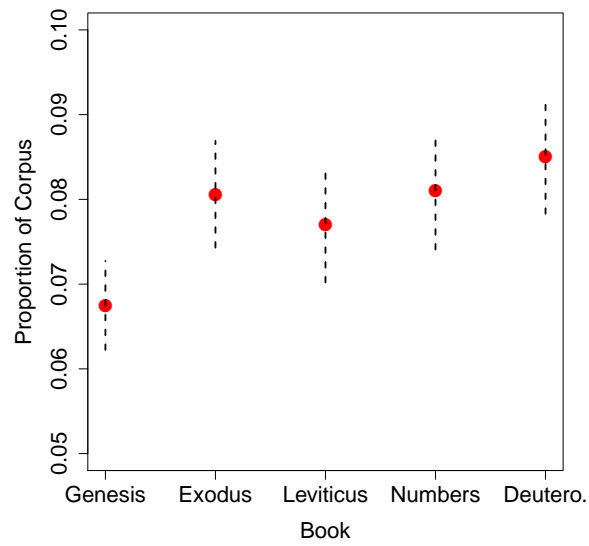


Figure A4: **Impact of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict on All Topics** See Table 1.



(a) Nationalism



(b) Religious and Legal Scholarship

Figure A5: **Distribution of Topics by Books of Bible** This plot shows the distribution of select topics across the five different books of the Bible.



Figure A6: **Impact of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict on Nationalist Rhetoric, Conflict Words Removed** See Figure 2 notes.

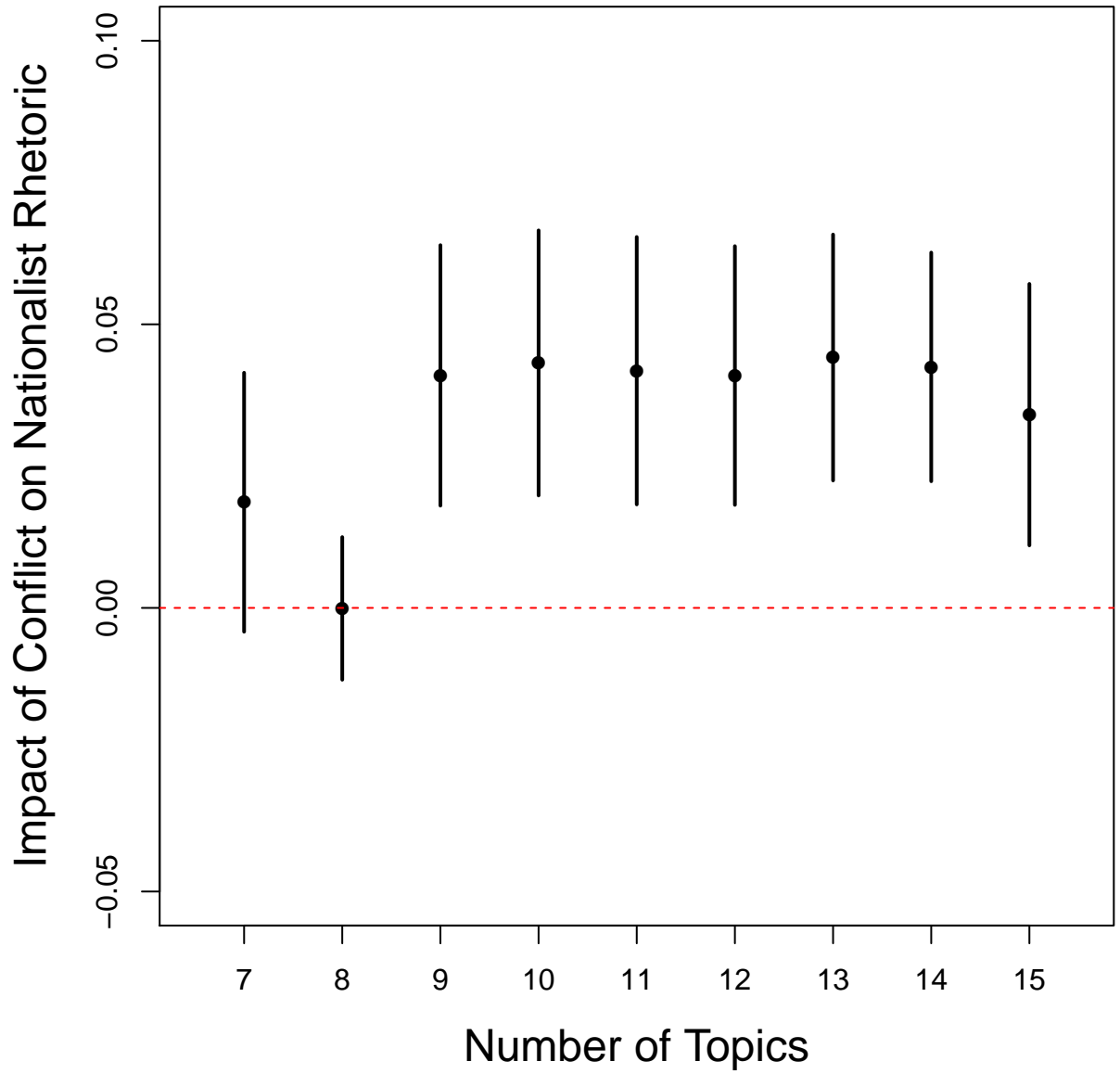


Figure A7: **Impact of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict on Nationalist Rhetoric Among Different Number of Topics** See Table 1. The plot shows the coefficients and 95 % confidence intervals for topic models that range from 7-15 topics.

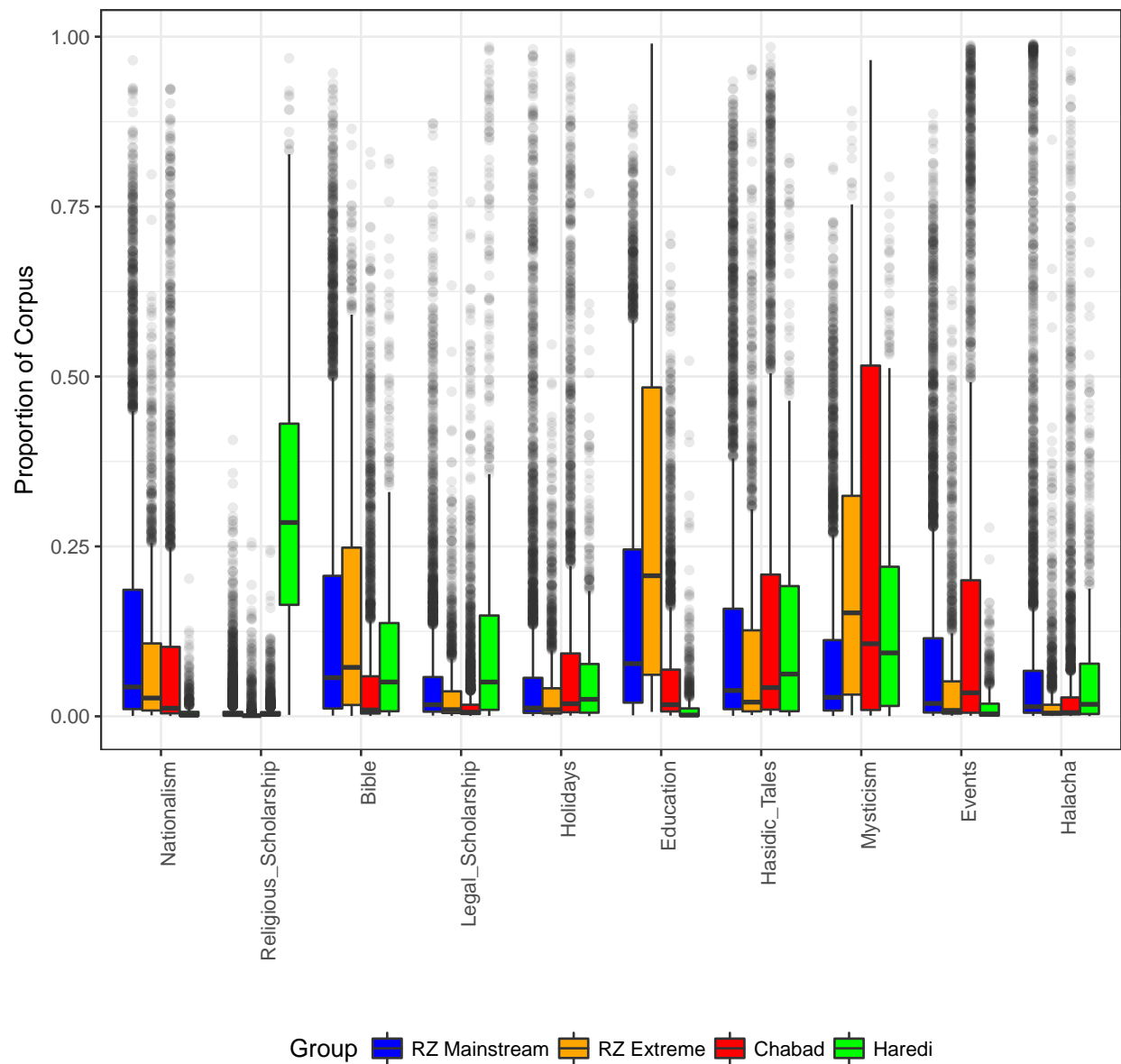
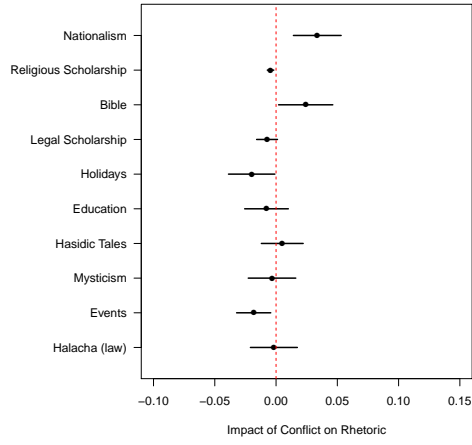
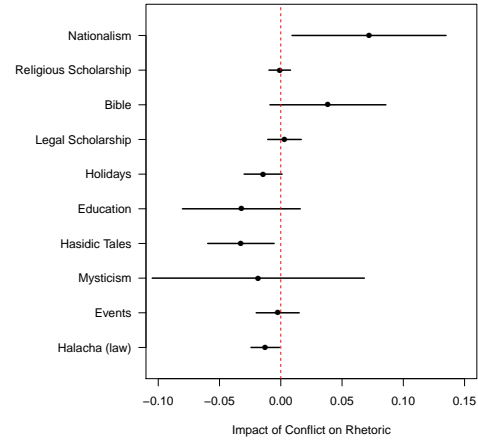


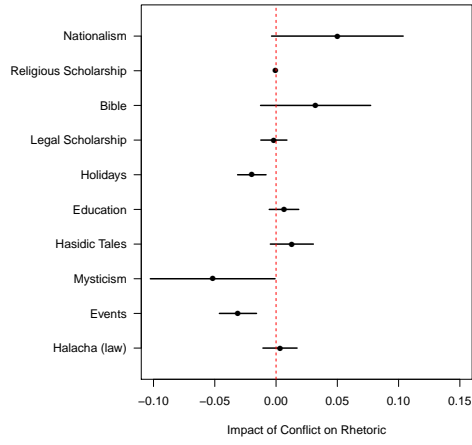
Figure A8: **Distribution of Topics by Religious Group** This plot shows the distribution of select topics for each religious group across the different pamphlets.



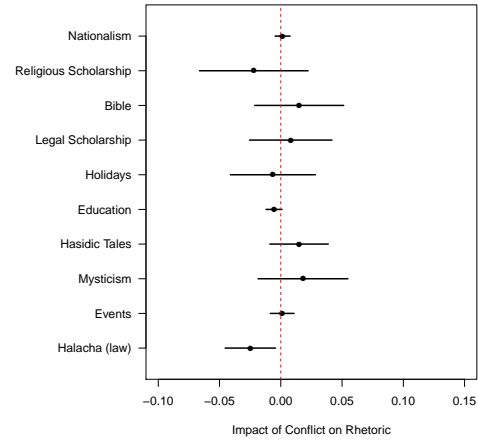
(a) Religious Zionist (Mainstream)



(b) Religious Zionist (Extreme)



(c) Chabad



(d) Haredi

Figure A9: **Impact of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict on All Topics, By Group** See Table 1.