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. 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; Canetti et al., 2017). 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 first argue that while religious leaders may respond to conflict with more nationalist rhetoric, it is important to distinguish between different kinds of conflict and the unique incentives that dissimilar religious leaders may face. Second, I consider how nationalist rhetoric by religious leaders may impact conflict.

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. These issues include Evangelical leaders concerned about climate change (Djupe and Calfano, 2013), pro-immigration teachings that highlight universal values (Ben-Nun Bloom, Arikan and Courtemanche, 2015; Margolis, 2018) and passages from the Koran which support female political leadership (Masoud, Jamal and Nugent, 2016). Moreover, exposure to religious teachings or even the mere presence of a religious authority 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 extreme rhetoric. In contrast, religious leaders that lead religious groups with more ambivalent attitudes toward the state will have less 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-Hoefer et al., 2016).  

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.
2.3 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 many 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 addition, it is important to distinguish between the short-term and long-term effects of nationalist rhetoric by religious leaders on conflict. For example, religious leaders may use nationalist rhetoric in the short-term to help provide moral authority to state actions during conflict. As scholars note, conflict and violence generate a range of emotions such as fear and anger (Petersen, 2002; Pearlman, 2013). Thus, hawkish rhetoric by religious leaders can act as a form of emotional reassurance, leading to greater group cohesion and willingness to fight back against common threats (Posen, 1993).

In the long-term, it is possible that nationalist rhetoric contributes to cycles of conflict.
For example, several scholars debate to what extent conflict is cyclical, where violence by one side makes a violent response more likely (Jaeger and Paserman, 2006; Haushofer, Biletzki and Kanwisher, 2010; Jaeger and Paserman, 2014). However, this literature focuses almost exclusively on the military capacity of both sides. In contrast, the social mechanisms which contribute to cycles of violence are less understood. Nationalist rhetoric by religious leaders may contribute to further cycles of violence by imbuing the conflict with a religious tone, making political compromise harder to achieve in the long-term.7

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

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.8 It is also common for Israeli non-religious political leaders to seek out the approval of major Rabbinical leaders for important political decisions. In this vein, the recently deceased Rabbi Ovadia Yosef has been described as the “Sephardic kingmaker of Israeli politics” due to his ability to form or break up governing coalitions.9 Similarly, leaders such as the recently deceased Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, considered the preeminent authority on Jewish law by Ashkenazi Ultra-Orthodox Jews (Haredim) had great influence on Israeli politics through his rulings on conversion and divorce in Israel.10

This influence also manifests itself regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which involves territory that is considered sacred by many individuals. Many religious leaders subscribe to the view that is it 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.11 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 relates to a factor emphasized by Philpott (2007): a group’s political theology, 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). 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. These differences in religious theology have important political 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 are viewed as more politically moderate who do involve themselves in foreign affairs. In addition, members of the Religious Zionist community serve in the army, while most Haredim refuse to serve in the army.

Yet, despite their predicted importance, little systematic research exists on religious leaders and conflict in Israel. This dearth is also in contrast to a well-developed literature that examines the causal effects of violence on people’s political behavior, voting, and attitudes toward the peace process (Berrebi and Klor, 2008; Getmansky and Zeitzoff, 2014; Zeitzoff, 2014; Peffley, Hutchinson and Shamir, 2015; Canetti et al., 2017). Recent work also shows that terrorism leads to more right-wing content in Israeli books (Mitts, 2017b) and that combat experience reduces support for peace and reconciliation among ex-combatants in Israel.
However, it is not clear to what extent these studies shed light on religious leader behavior. As noted in an analogous context by Nielsen (2017), explanations for possible drivers of Jihadi radicalization among lay Muslims may not extend easily to explain the choices of Muslim clerics. Moreover, it is possible that changes in religious rhetoric may help drive civilian responses to terror. This would be the case if in addition to the direct effects of terror, there are indirect effects of terror which are partially mediated by changes in nationalist rhetoric by secular or religious elites.

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

### 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 many scholars view this as the most prominent channel. 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 pam-
phlets 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 public 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 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). 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 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, which 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.

4 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). The online appendix describes in more detail how I built this unique corpus.

4.1 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. However, my analysis 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. 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.

For the Religious Zionist community, there are 9 pamphlets that are delivered together nationally to virtually all Religious Zionist Synagogues. 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. 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. 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, and associated with the Chabad movement, a well-known Haredi group known for its outreach to non-religious Jews in Jewish communities around the world. Similar in style to the Religious Zionist pamphlets, this pamphlet also contains 5-10 articles by a diverse set of religious
Finally, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the sample. The sample is diverse, but not strictly representative. It leaves out rarer and hard 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.

### 4.2 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. Figure 1 plots the key words and topic labels for these 10-topics. 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.\textsuperscript{22}

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 2 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).\textsuperscript{23} For a more fine-grained measure of conflict, I use data on the weekly number of Israeli and Palestinian casualties between 2006 and 2015.\textsuperscript{24} 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.\textsuperscript{25}

5 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:

\[ Y_{i,j,t} = \alpha_{i,t} + \beta_{\text{conflict}_t} + \gamma_j + \delta_p + \varepsilon_{i,t} \]  \hspace{1cm} (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 \( \beta \) is the presence of conflict for week \( t \). The model also includes \( \gamma_j \), a fixed effect for each religious leader that controls for unobserved characteristics over time between different religious leaders, and \( \delta_p \) is a year fixed effect to control for common factors that change over the period. Standard errors are clustered by religious leader.

5.1 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. 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 4 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. Overall, 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.

6 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. 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). These changes are also larger than the shifts in topic frequency associated with the seasonal changes in the Biblical reading cycle (see Figure A1), and higher than estimates reported in other recent papers using STM.

In addition to an increase in the prevalence of nationalist rhetoric, the results in Figure 3 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.
6.1 Robustness of Results

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

First, one might be concerned that Rabbinic response to conflict would be dependent on the economic conditions, where they might be hesitant to express more nationalist opinions when economic conditions are good (proxied by the quarterly unemployment rate). It is also possible they would be more reluctant to use more nationalist rhetoric if the religious political parties were in the government coalition. As indicated by column 3, the impact of conflict on nationalist rhetoric is not affected by the country’s economic or political circumstances.

Second, I assess whether religious rhetoric responds to conflict, or does it cause conflict. To examine the possibility of reverse causality, I plot for each military conflict religious rhetoric 5 weeks before and 5 weeks after each conflict. As indicated by Figure 4, religious rhetoric largely increases after conflict starts, suggesting the 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.

Third, 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 2 indicates that Israeli and Palestinian casualties are associated with higher levels of nationalist rhetoric. Substantively, 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. 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 ten 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 (Table 1, Column 2). As indicated by Figure 5, the estimates remain significant and largely similar when increasing the number of topics beyond ten (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.

6.2 Potential Mechanisms

Why does rhetoric by religious leaders become more nationalist during times of conflict with the Palestinians? One possibility is 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 3, I run my main specification, but examine periods where there were important political conflicts in Israel. As indicated by Table 3, 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.

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. Thus, I rerun the main specification in Figure 6, distinguishing between religious leaders from different religious groups. The results imply that not all religious leaders respond to 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.
One 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 sort-term from important tenets of political theology (Philpott, 2007). Alternatively, one can attribute these differences to audience effects, where pamphlets that are largely written for insiders who oppose Zionism are less likely to respond to conflict. This would help explain why Chabad pamphlets, proselytizing materials written primarily for a non-religious audience who support Zionism, uses more nationalist rhetoric during conflict. If this is the case, these results are consistent with well-known distinction made in the religion literature between firms and clubs, where firms are more likely to seek out popular support while clubs pander to insiders (Iannaccone, 1998).

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/


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. 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. It should be acknowledged that it is difficult to assess the casual impact of religious rhetoric. Thus, I do not directly test the impact of religious rhetoric on conflict in this paper. This is especially true in a broader context of highly nationalized and mobilized media (traditional and social) during Israel’s wars in Gaza (Zeitzoff, 2011, 2018). I elaborate on this point more in the online appendix.

8. The three-major religious political parties in Israel are the Jewish Home, Shas, and United Torah Judaism.

9. Most famously, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef ordered Shas to support the Rabin government and the Oslo
israeli/.

10. See http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/19/world/middleeast/rabbi-y-s-elyashiv-master-of-talmudic-
law-dies-at-102.html.

11. For one discussion, see: https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/06/how-the-
six-day-war-changed-religion/528981/.

12. 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).

13. 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.


15. 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.

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

17. 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.

18. For the Hebrew archive see http://www.meirtv.co.il/site/alon_list.asp
19. For the Hebrew archive see http://zomet.org.il/?CategoryID=160&ArticleID=1

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

21. In the online appendix, I provide more details on the STM model including its model specification and validation (see Figures A1 - A2).

22. Figure A3 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.


24. This data is available on the Btselem website at http://www.btselem.org/statistics


26. 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.

27. The results are also robust to using a lagged dependent variable (see Table A2).
28. 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.

29. 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.

30. 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
References


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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationalist Rhetoric</th>
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<th>Model 3</th>
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<td>0.042</td>
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<td>(0.012)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>0.437</td>
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Notes: Standard errors are clustered by Rabbi.
Table 2: Impact of Israeli-Palestinian Violence on Nationalist Rhetoric

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Nationalist Rhetoric</th>
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<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
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Notes: Standard errors are clustered by Rabbi.
Table 3: Impact of Other Political Conflicts on Nationalist Rhetoric

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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: See Table 1, Column 3. 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: ידיע, ארץ, מדינה, מדינת, ידיע, ציבורי, ציבורי                        |
|                                   | FREX: מדינה, מדינת, ציבורי, ציבורי, ציבורי, ציבורי                     |
| 2. Religious Scholarship          | F: yes, name, wrote, spoke, the Rabbi, Torah, mountain                 |
|                                   | FREX: authority, by, lesson plan, Torah lesson plan, view, Torah view, Mod'in Lil'it |
|                                   | F: לק, שלט, תורת, תורה, תורה, תורה                         |
| 3. Bible                          | F: land, Moses, name, Jacob, that, Father, Torah portion               |
|                                   | FREX: desert, Pharaoh, Rashi, Rashi, Jacob, Egypt                     |
| 4. Legal Scholarship              | F: law, spoke, forbidden, yes, therefore, name, obligation             |
|                                   | FREX: vow, exempt, Tzitzit, inherit, excommunicate, steal, obligated   |
| 5. Holidays                       | F: blessing, day, prayer, day, blessed, happiness, late                |
|                                   | FREX: Purim, Kippur, Tabernacles, bless, fast, blessed, Yom Kippur     |
| 6. Education                      | F: child, life, person, man, permitted, world, path                   |
|                                   | FREX: youth, parent, personality, couple, psychologist, education, teacher |
| 7. Hasidic Tales                  | F: Rebbe, person, Rabbi, face, hand, late, spoke                      |
|                                   | FREX: story, suddenly, answered, doctor, Father, my side, requested    |
| 8. Mysticism                      | F: man, world, Torah, God, spoke, hand, Torah                         |
|                                   | FREX: Messiah, redemption, evil inclination, created, God, purpose, creation |
|                                   | FREX: Chabad, Chabad, Yeshiva, Chasidic head, Wide                     |
| 10. Halacha (law)                 | F: Sabbath, forbid, yes, prohibition, permitted, spoke, candle         |
|                                   | FREX: lit, candle, lighting, Chanuka, cook, food, permitted            |

Figure 1: Topics in the Religious Corpus. "F:" indicates words that are most frequent in each topic. "FREX:" indicates words that are both frequent in and exclusive to each topic.
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 2: *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 3: **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 4: 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 5: Impact of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict on Nationalist Rhetoric Among Different Number of Topics See Table 1, column 2. The plot shows the coefficients and 95% confidence intervals for topic models that range from 7-15 topics.
Figure 6: **Impact of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict on Nationalism, By Religious Group** See Table 1, column 3. The plot shows the coefficients and 95% confidence intervals for the three 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 seems 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. 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:

\[ Y_{ijt} = \alpha + \beta \text{pamphlet} + S(\text{week}_t) + \epsilon_{ijt} \]  

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 (see Figure A1). 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 A2).
References


International Organization (forthcoming).

Table A1: Sampling Frame of Religious Pamphlets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrew Title</th>
<th>English Title</th>
<th>Ideological Bent</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Number Published Weekly</th>
<th>Year First Published</th>
<th>Total Pamphlets</th>
<th>Major Writers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 계획에 배신한 이스라엘</td>
<td>An Appointed Time</td>
<td>Religious Zionism -- mainstream</td>
<td>Zomet and Hapoel Hamizrachi</td>
<td>70,000</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>1,674</td>
<td>Rav Rozen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 חזבָּה הוהי</td>
<td>Mood of the time</td>
<td>Religious Zionism -- mainstream</td>
<td>Private Individuals</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>438</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 שבעתים</td>
<td>Seventh Year</td>
<td>Religious Zionism -- mainstream</td>
<td>Private Individuals</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>260</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 נוֹשָׁם</td>
<td>Views</td>
<td>Religious Zionism -- mainstream</td>
<td>Private Individuals</td>
<td></td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>157</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 אהבה והאמונה</td>
<td>Love and Faith</td>
<td>Religious Zionism -- Chardal</td>
<td>Machon Meir</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>1,122</td>
<td>Rabbi Shlomo Aviner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 שעלה כנף</td>
<td>Small World</td>
<td>Religious Zionism -- Chardal</td>
<td>Olam Katan</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>Mix of Rabbis and writers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 ישע עכננה</td>
<td>Our West Bank</td>
<td>Religious Zionism -- Chardal</td>
<td>Yesha Council</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>535</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 גליום געש</td>
<td>Gilui daat</td>
<td>Religious Zionism -- Chardal</td>
<td>Aviya Foundation</td>
<td>70,000</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>356</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 קול צופים</td>
<td>Voice of your Gazers</td>
<td>Religious Zionist -- Sephardi</td>
<td>Voice of Eliyahu</td>
<td></td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>873</td>
<td>Eliyahu; Rav Shmuel Eliyahu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Independent Pamphlets


### Table A1: Sampling Frame of Religious Pamphlets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>Weekly Talk</th>
<th>Haredi -- Chabad -- Outreach</th>
<th>Habad</th>
<th>180,000</th>
<th>1986</th>
<th>1,586</th>
<th>Rav Menchem Brod</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Redemption Talk</td>
<td>Haredi -- Chabad (Messianic)</td>
<td>Center for Redemption</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>1,150</td>
<td>Rav Zimroni Zik</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Peace to the Nation</td>
<td>Haredi -- Sephardi -- Outreach</td>
<td>Judaism, Tradition, and Peace</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>780</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Speak about the Delights of Shabbat</td>
<td>Haredi -- Sephardi -- Outreach</td>
<td>Hidabroot</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>Rabbi Zamir Cohen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Weekly Stream</td>
<td>Haredi -- Sephardi</td>
<td>To the Stream</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>891</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Meorot Hadaf Yomi</td>
<td>Haredi -- Scholarly</td>
<td>Bnei Brak</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>940</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Leaves for Healing</td>
<td>Haredi -- Belz</td>
<td>Antwerp: Belz Hasidim</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>1,064</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>To Know and Announce</td>
<td>Haredi - Neturei Karta</td>
<td>Neturei Karta</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>403</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Torah Tidbits</td>
<td>Torah Tidbits</td>
<td>Orthodox (English)</td>
<td>Israel Center</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>1,224</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Open my Eyes</td>
<td>Religious Zionism -- Chardal/Chabad</td>
<td>Gal Einai</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>Rav Yitzchak Ginsburgh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Our Land of Israel</td>
<td>Religious Zionism -- Chardal/Chabad</td>
<td>The Saving Land of Israel Group</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>Rabbi Shalom Dov Wolfe; Rabbi Dov Lior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The Light of Neri</td>
<td>Religious Zionism -- Chardal</td>
<td>The light of Neri</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>Harav Nir Ben Artzi</td>
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</table>
Table A1: Sampling Frame of Religious Pamphlets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Religion/School</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Copies</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Peaceful Sabbath</td>
<td>Religious Zionism -- liberal</td>
<td>Ways of Peace</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>1,011</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Sabbath</td>
<td>Religious Zionism -- liberal</td>
<td>Shabaton (Petah Tikva)</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>825</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Close to You</td>
<td>Religious Zionism -- Karov Elecha</td>
<td>(Petah Tikva)</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>178</td>
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</table>

**Select Haredi Pamphlets (from list of 400)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Foundation</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Copies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Weekly Well</td>
<td>Haredi - Lelov</td>
<td>Wellsprings of Faith Foundation</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1,681</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Paths of Pinchas</td>
<td>Haredi - Belz</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Stories of the Righteous</td>
<td>Haredi - Kretchniff</td>
<td>Rechovot</td>
<td></td>
<td>296</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>An Evening</td>
<td>Haredi</td>
<td>Haifa</td>
<td></td>
<td>368</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Around the Table</td>
<td>Haredi</td>
<td>Jerusalem</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>A person to his friend</td>
<td>Haredi</td>
<td>Love of Truth Center</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>980</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>A string of Kindness</td>
<td>Haredi – Breslov</td>
<td>Breslov</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Pearls from Ein Hemed</td>
<td>Haredi – Sephardi</td>
<td>Mevaseret Ziyon</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>606</td>
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</table>

Rav Elimelech Biderman
Rabbi Pinches Friedman
Rav Shmuel Pollack
Rav Shlom Arush
Table A2: Impact of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict on Nationalist Rhetoric, Lagged Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationalist Rhetoric</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Military Conflict</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>0.047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.015)</td>
<td>(0.014)</td>
<td>(0.013)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Conditions</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.003)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Parties in Coalition</td>
<td>−0.005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabbi FEs</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year FEs</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>10,968</td>
<td>10,968</td>
<td>10,968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adj. R-squared</td>
<td>0.437</td>
<td>0.438</td>
<td>0.438</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure A1: **Distribution of Topics by Books of Bible** This plot shows the distribution of select topics across the five different books of the Bible.
Figure A2: Distribution of Topics by Religious Group

This plot shows the distribution of select topics for each religious group across the different pamphlets.
Figure A3: **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.
Figure A4: **Impact of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict on All Topics** See Table 1, column 3.