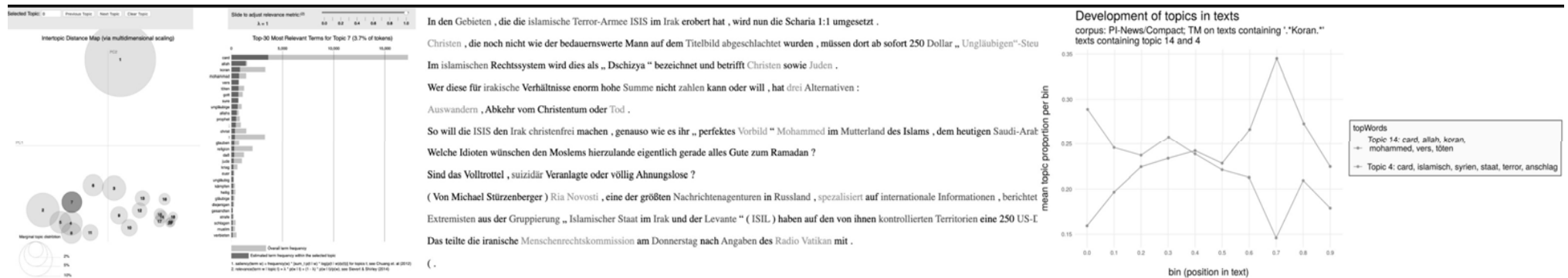


Evaluations of the Quran in right-wing populist media. Metapragmatic sequence analyses with topic modeling

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Introduction and Research Focus

Es sind eben nur Moslems, die ihre "Heilige Schrift" als Lizenz zum Töten ansehen. Oder zum Frauenschlagen, wie es der Prügelfers 4:34 klar vorgibt.

It is only Muslims who regard their "Holy Scripture" as a license to kill. Or to beat women, as the beating verse 4:34 clearly dictates. [Translation]

Research questions:

- How does an evaluative practice that refers to and interprets the Quran works in order to articulate the reasons for the fundamental otherness of Muslims?
- How can a data-driven approach such as Topic Modeling help us to identify textual patterns of Islamophobic evaluative practices concerning the Quran?

Outline

1. Data
2. Methodological Approach & Operationalization
3. Empirical Results
4. Conclusion and outlook



Data

Data

- Right-wing populist online media: *Politically Incorrect News* and *Compact Online* (PINES-Corpus)
- 24k texts / 14 mio. token / 2008–2018

Characteristics

- "group-focused enmity" (Heitmeyer, Freiheit, and Sitzer 2020)
- small range of topics (Bubenhofer, Calleri, and Dreesen 2018)

Methodological Approach: Grounded Theory

Practices: REFERING | CITING | INTERPRETING | GENERALIZING

- 1) *Just a small selection of hundreds of **timelessly** valid **Quran-commands** that Islamic "holy"-warriors have invoked for 1400 years, killing 270 million people: **"And kill them wherever you come across them, and drive them out from where they have driven you out; for the temptation to unbelief is worse than killing."** (Sura 2, Verse 191)*
- 2) *The fact that not every Muslim carries it out 100% in the sense of the Prophet and the **Quran** like the orthodox believers of the Islamic state **does not mean that Islamic ideology can be subdivided. It is simply fascist and all-encompassing.***

Methodological Approach: Grounded Theory

These evaluative practices lead to a differentiation between 'enlightened European reading and evaluation' and 'violent Islamic reading and evaluation' [othering]:

Impossibility of discussing with Muslims: *One would not understand it if one did not know Arabic. Typical Muslim-Taqiyya, if the followers of the killer-cult do not want to admit the cruelty of the Quran.*

Impossibility of interpreting: *that the Quran in connection with the Sunnah and the biography of Mohammed does not allow other interpretations; there is only THE ISLAM, clearly defined by the Quran*

Muslims as receiver of commands: *The sleepers were also normal people, quite nice, and one day they got the order: Now we blow up the towers in America. If a Muslim converts to what is in the Quran - and this cannot be denied, it is all in there - then he is dangerous.*

In conclusion those evaluative practices are based on and create language-ideological standpoints: Reading is evidence (for 'the West')/Reading is dangerous (for Muslims); texts are not ambiguous; interpretations are poor excuses, etc.

Methodological Approach: Topic Modeling

- topic modeling approach: suite of algorithms to determine thematic structures in a large collection of texts (e.g., Blei 2012)
- **topic**: distribution over the vocabulary in the corpus = words in a topic are ordered according to their joint co-occurrence in texts and by thus show semantic coherence

Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA):

- documents exhibit more than one topic (Blei 2012, 78)
- *hyperparameter optimization*: topics have a different overall probability to occur in a text (Wallach et al., 2009)
- crucial output:
 - Topics
 - Distribution of topics over documents
 - Distribution of topics over words

Methodological Approach: Topic Modeling

- How can we utilize Topic Modeling in order to identify evaluative practices in texts?
- Operationalization:
 1. topic variability in texts containing word forms with “quran”
 2. combination of topics within these texts
 3. development of topics within texts (“pathways”)
- LDA topic model
 - 20 topics in 2k documents / approx. 1 mio. token
 - stopwords: words occurring in more than 80% of the documents
 - Numbers were masked with “CARD”

1) Topic Variability & references on the Quran

Topic 3: Police operations against Islamic violence

card, polizei, berichten, wegen, mann, täter, moslem, uhr, koran, opfer, tat, polizist, schwer, beid, mehrer, verletzen, person, monat, handeln, schlagen, spät, staatsanwaltschaft, berlin, foto, zunächst

e.g., “*there were reports about a quran lying on the back seats of the car*” (PINES_10360)

Topic 4: Islamist attacks abroad

card, islamisch, syrien, staat, terror, anschlag, i, moschee, terrorist, irak, krieg, töten, berichten, dschihad, paris, dschihadisten, isis, ägypten, regierung, westlich, usa, soldat, ziel, weste|westen, kampf,

e.g.: “The Allah-warriors of Boko Haram have attacked the city of Baga in the northeast of Nigeria and massacred all " unbelievers " there in conformity with the Quran.” (PINES_12363)

Topic 7: Violent crimes against women, children, families

frau, kind, mann, mädchen, familie, kopftuch, mutter, tochter, vater, moslemisch, opfer, religiös, vergewaltigung, eltern, ehe, sexuell, ehfrau, vergewaltigen, heiraten, c., gericht, ehemann, richter, schwester, weiblich, angeklagte, männlich, töten, haus, urteil

e.g., “the guest of Frau Merkel ‘embellished’ the apartment with sayings from the Quran and praises to Allah and his prophet, which he wrote on furniture and walls” (PINES_8414)

1) Topic Variability & references on the Quran

Topic 14: Citation of suras from the Quran

card, allah, koran, mohammed, vers, töten, gott, sure, ungläubige, allahs, prophet, ;, christ, !, glauben, religion, daß, jude, krieg, euer, ungläubig, kämpfen, heilig, gläubige, diejenigen, gesandten, strafe, schlagen, muslim, verbieten

“[...] These Muslims in the Islamic state repeat exactly the cruel deeds of their "prophet" Mohammed. It will never stop with the mass murders that have been going on for 1400 years, as long as Mohammed is considered the perfect role model and these timelessly valid orders are written in the Quran:

2:191 And slay them wherever ye come upon them and drive them out from where they have driven you out: for the temptation to unbelief is worse than killing.

2:193 And fight against them until there be no more persecution, and the religion is only Allah's.

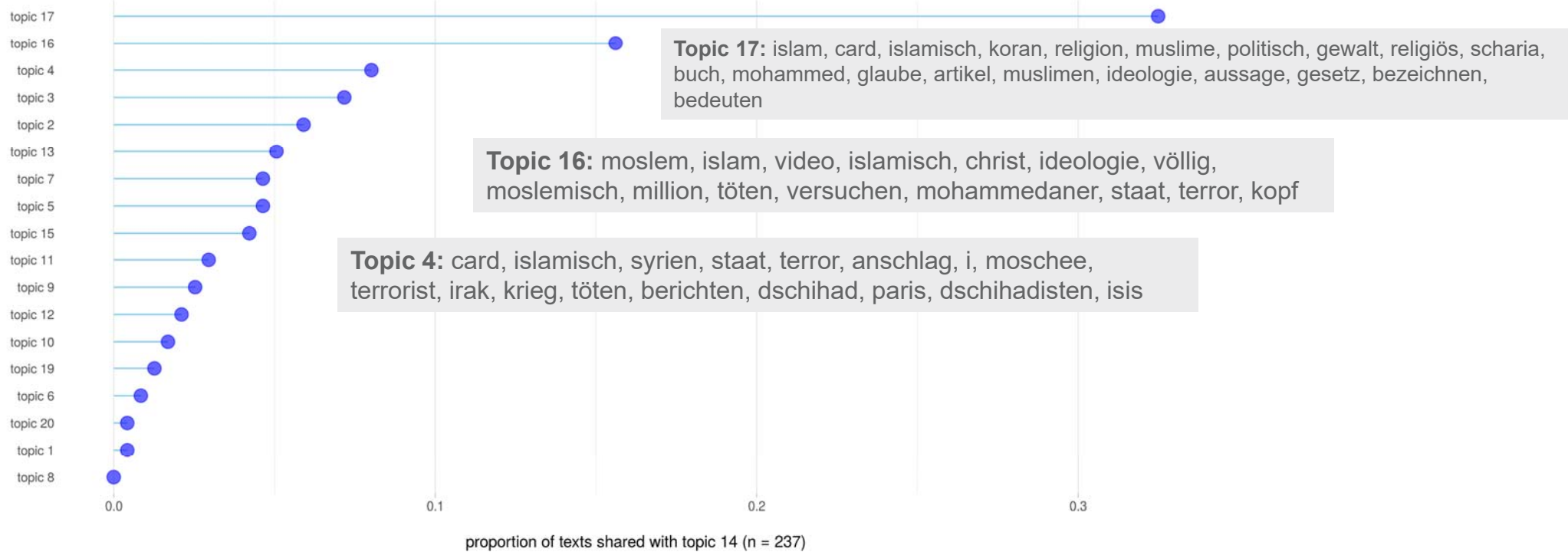
3:151 We will cast terror into the hearts of the Unbelievers, because they have set up gods with Allah, for which He hath not sent down any authority: and their abode shall be the Fire, and evil is the abode of the unjust. [...]"

(Translated with DeepL; PINES_7750)

2) Combination of topics (based in top 3 topics in a text)

Combination of topics

corpus: PI-News/Compact; TM on texts containing '.*Koran.*'



Topic 17: islam, card, islamisch, koran, religion, muslimen, politisch, gewalt, religiös, scharia, buch, mohammed, glaube, artikel, muslimen, ideologie, aussage, gesetz, bezeichnen, bedeuten

Topic 16: moslem, islam, video, islamisch, christ, ideologie, völlig, moslemisch, million, töten, versuchen, mohammedaner, staat, terror, kopf

Topic 4: card, islamisch, syrien, staat, terror, anschlag, i, moschee, terrorist, irak, krieg, töten, berichten, dschihad, paris, dschihadisten, isis

card, allah, koran, mohammed, vers, töten, gott, sure, ungläubige, allahs, prophet, ;, christ, !, glauben, religion, daß, jude, krieg, euer, ungläubig, kämpfen, heilig, gläubige, diejenigen, gesandten, strafe, schlagen, muslim, verbieten

3) Development of topics in texts

Sequential Analysis of topics

- How does a topic develop within a text?
“[D]iscourses and their topics do not come out of the blue.” (Kintsch & Van Dijk 1983)
- Method:
 - texts were separated in 10 equally sized bins (according to the overall number of tokens per text)
 - mean proportion of a topic per bin
 - proportion = number of words in a bin that belong to a specific topic / number of words in bin)
- Results will be shown for topic 14 and topic 4

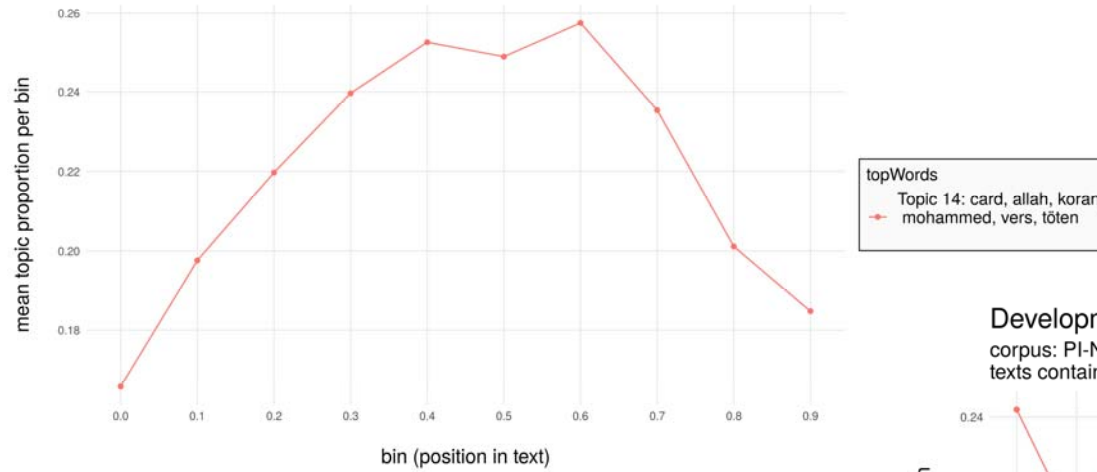
Topic 14 card, allah, koran, mohammed, vers, töten, gott, sure, ungläubige, allahs, prophet, ;, christ, !, glauben, religion, daß, jude, krieg, euer, ungläubig, kämpfen, heilig, gläubige, diejenigen, gesandten, strafe, schlagen, muslim, verbieten

Topic 4 card, islamisch, syrien, staat, terror, anschlag, i, moschee, terrorist, irak, krieg, töten, berichten, dschihad, paris, dschihadisten, isis, ägypten, regierung, westlich, usa, soldat, ziel, weste|westen, kampf,

3) Development of topics in texts

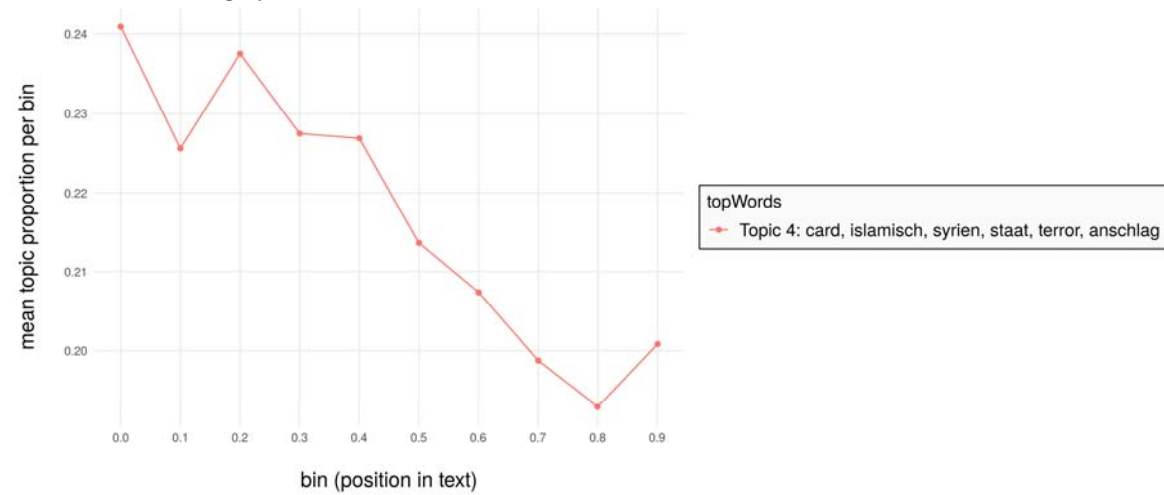
Development of topics in texts

corpus: PI-News/Compact; TM on texts containing ".*Koran."
texts containing topic 14



Development of topics in texts

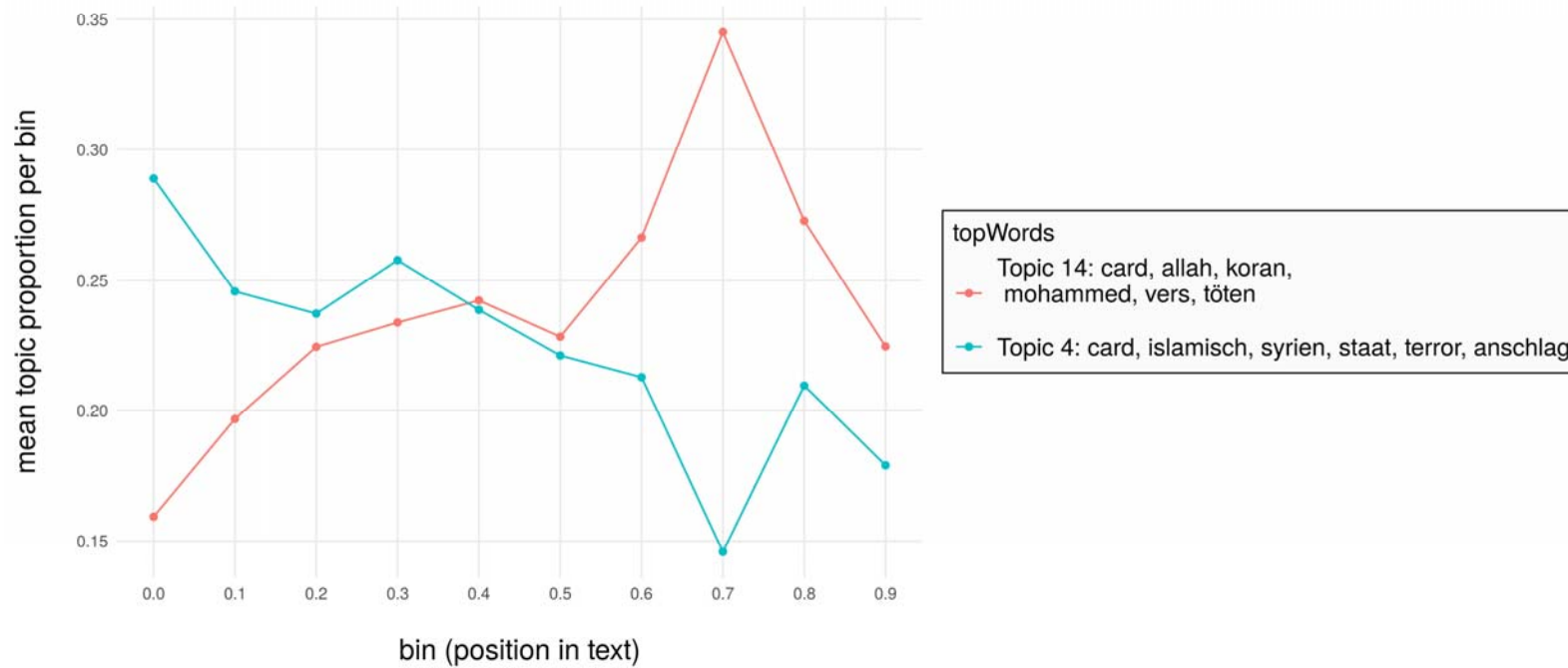
corpus: PI-News/Compact; TM on texts containing ".*Koran."
texts containing topic 4



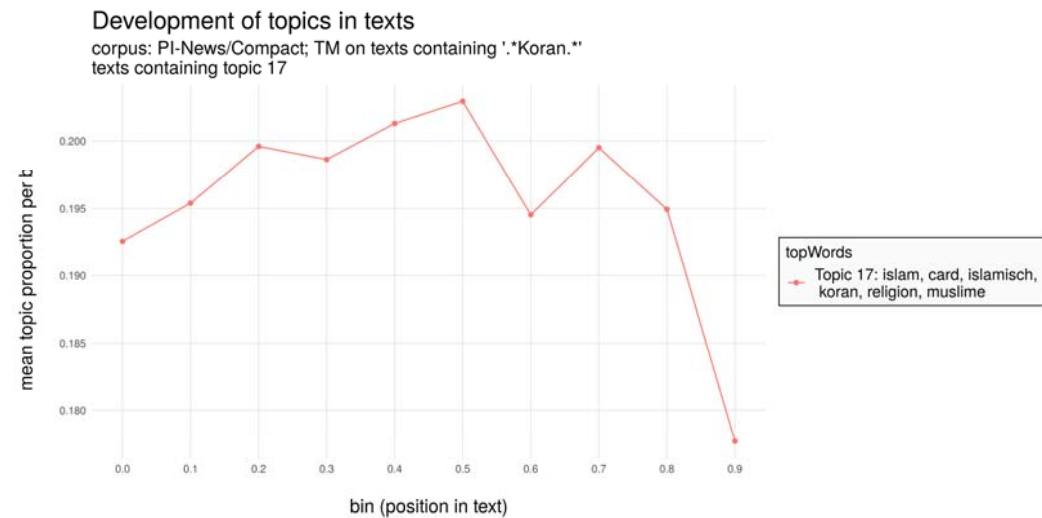
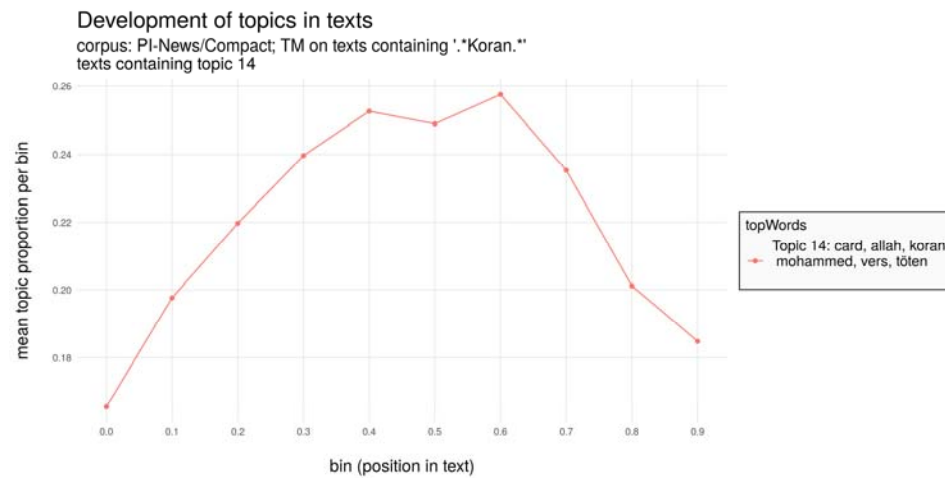
3) Development of topics in texts

Development of topics in texts

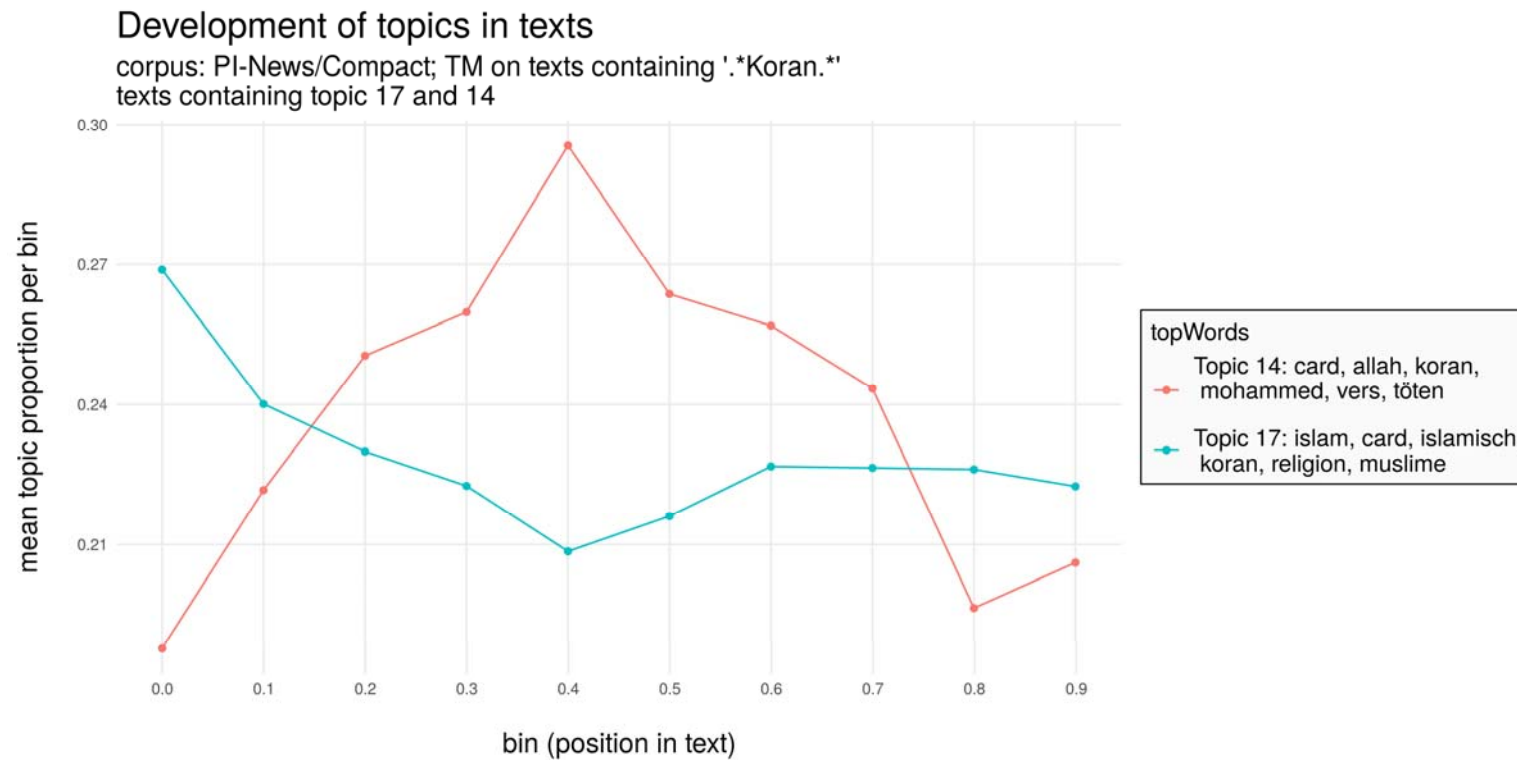
corpus: PI-News/Compact; TM on texts containing '.*Koran.*'
texts containing topic 14 and 4



3) Development of topics in texts



3) Development of topics in texts



Topic 14: card, allah, koran, mohammed, vers, töten, gott, sure, ungläubige, allahs,....

Topic 4: card, islamisch, syrien, staat, terror, anschlag, moschee, terrorist, irak, krieg,....

In den Gebieten , die die islamische Terror-Armee ISIS im Irak erobert hat , wird nun die Scharia 1:1 umgesetzt .

Christen , die noch nicht wie der bedauernswerte Mann auf dem Titelbild abgeschlachtet wurden , müssen dort ab sofort 250 Dollar „ Ungläubigen“-Steuer zahlen .

Im islamischen Rechtssystem wird dies als „ Dschizya “ bezeichnet und betrifft Christen sowie Juden .

Wer diese für irakische Verhältnisse enorm hohe Summe nicht zahlen kann oder will , hat drei Alternativen :

Auswandern , Abkehr vom Christentum oder Tod .

So will die ISIS den Irak christenfrei machen , genauso wie es ihr „ perfektes Vorbild “ Mohammed im Mutterland des Islams , dem heutigen Saudi-Arabien , vollzogen hat .

Welche Idioten wünschen den Moslems hierzulande eigentlich gerade alles Gute zum Ramadan ?

Sind das Volltrottel , suizidär Veranlagte oder völlig Ahnungslose ?

[...]

Die Islamisten führen Schariagerichte ein , verüben Massaker an Zivilisten und richten gefangengenommene Armeeangehörige öffentlich hin .

Tausende Menschen müssen flüchten , um sich zu retten .

Die Extremisten bereiten derzeit eine Offensive auf die Hauptstadt Bagdad vor , wo das Personal internationaler Organisationen und ausländischer Botschaften in aller Eile aus dem Land geflogen wird .

Die Allah-Krieger der ISIS sind gläubige Moslems , genau wie die von Al-Qaida , Boko Haram , Taliban , Hamas , Hizbollah , Muslimbrüder , Al-Shabaab und wie sie sonst noch alle heißen .

Ihr „ Prophet “ und kriegesisches Vorbild Mohammed hat ihnen auf seinem Sterbebett im März 632 auf den Weg gegeben :

„ Mir wurde aufgetragen , alle Männer so lange zu bekämpfen , bis sie sagen , es gibt keine Gottheit außer Allah .

“ Der moslemische Kriegsfürst Saladin , der u. a. Jerusalem eroberte , führte diesen Auftrag pflichtbewusst fort und sagte im Januar 1189 :

„ Ich will mich dann auf dieses Meer begeben und sie bis auf ihre fernen Inseln verfolgen , bis keiner auf der Erdoberfläche übrig ist , der Allah nicht anerkennt .

“ Auch Ayatollah Khomeini , der das moderne Persien in einen barbarischen islamischen Gottesstaat verwandelte , äußerte sich 1979 in diesem Sinne :

„ Wir werden unsere Revolution in die gesamte Welt exportieren , bis der Ruf , Es gibt keine Gottheit außer Gott und Muhammad ist der Gesandte Allahs ‘ überall auf der Welt ertönt .

[...]

PINES_14443

Conclusion & Outlook

Conclusion on evaluative practices in Islamophobic media

- Quran references and citing as evidences for the Islamic violence
- Evaluative practices in a metalingual (e.g., *beating verse*) and in a metapragmatic (e.g., *interpretation*) sense

...on a methodological level

- topic modeling as a method of distant reading
- interpretation of topics on a functional level leads to the identification of practices (e.g., citing and referring)
- combination of topics and their pathway within texts points towards argumentative structures (“course of a discourse”)

...outlook

- Larger test set needed to validate the results further
- comparison with results for other corpora

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