

World War III as Narrative Policy: Computationally Mapping Conspiracy Discourse and Biblical Prophecy

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Abstract

Background. Prophecy-inflected conspiracy narratives increasingly circulate alongside real-time war reporting, shaping public interpretation of armed conflict and, in some cases, influencing civic mobilization and policy pressures. The source text for analysis is my blog post, *What are/How do the Illuminati's 14 Stages of World War III Align with Biblical Prophecy?* (Sangwa, 2024; hereafter, the source text), which asserts an “Illuminati” blueprint for “World War III” and aligns purported stages with biblical prophecy (Ezekiel 38–39), embedding contemporary conflicts into an eschatological script. **Problem.** Such narratives can function as self-sealing epistemic systems that are resistant to correction, may intensify outgroup hostility, and risk laundering speculative claims through the authority of scripture and selective news citation. **Objectives.** This study (i) develops a novel conceptual lens—Prophetic-Conspiratorial Escalation Cycle (PCEC)—to explain how prophecy templates and conspiracy scripts coupled with crisis information environments; (ii) maps the narrative architecture and actor-frame structure of the source text; and (iii) assesses implications for epistemic justice, conflict communication, and governance. **Research questions.** RQ1: What narrative structures and actors-frame couplings organize the text’s escalation claims? RQ2: How does the text operationalize evidentiary authority (scripture, media, institutions), and what epistemic vulnerabilities does this create? RQ3: What governance and ethical interventions reduce harm without collapsing pluralism? **Methods.** Secondary, multi-method design: (a) computational content analysis of the document (co-occurrence network, salience mapping, escalation heatmap), (b) triangulation with conflict-event and humanitarian reporting infrastructures, and (c) integrative review across political psychology, securitization studies, and social epistemology. **Key findings.** The text’s discourse is dominated by a tight actor core (Israel–Hezbollah–Hamas–Iran) and a staged “globalization” of conflict that syntactically converts contingency into inevitability. The narrative’s evidentiary ecology relies on selective citation while preserving a self-validating interpretive frame. **Implications.** PCEC supports reproducible diagnosis of high-risk war narratives and enables proportionate interventions centered on epistemic justice, platform accountability, and conflict-sensitive religious literacy.

Keywords: conspiracy theories; apocalypticism; Christian Zionism; narrative policy framework; securitization; epistemic injustice; conflict communication

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background Context: Large-scale conflicts generate not only humanitarian and strategic shocks but also epistemic shocks: accelerated information flows, contested causal attributions, and heightened demand for meaning (Zarocostas, 2020; Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). In such environments, narrative forms that promise explanatory totality—especially those combining sacred teleology with geopolitical agency—gain traction. Within contemporary Christian counter-publics, a recurring interpretive pattern is to read geopolitical crises through an integrated frame of elite coordination, monetary governance, and expanding digital surveillance, often narrated as eschatologically meaningful (Sangwa, 2025). Scholarship in political psychology and political communication shows that conspiracy beliefs can be attractive when they appear to satisfy epistemic, existential, and social motives (e.g., need for certainty, control, and group identity) (Douglas et al., 2017; Douglas et al., 2019). Meanwhile, conflict data infrastructures (e.g., UN humanitarian reporting and event-based conflict datasets) demonstrate that war contexts are empirically complex and rapidly evolving, producing informational ambiguity that can be narratively exploited (UN-OCHA, 2024; ACLED, 2025; Raleigh et al., 2010).

The source text is best approached not as a predictive geopolitical model but as a culturally situated interpretive device that binds current events to a predetermined end-times trajectory. This interpretive binding resembles what Barkun describes as modern conspiracism's "improvisational" synthesis of disparate claims into an overarching hidden-order explanation (Barkun, 2013).

1.2. Problem Statement: The core problem is not religious eschatology per se, nor the moral seriousness with which communities read sacred texts, but the epistemic and civic risk that arises when (i) prophecy is treated as an empirical forecasting engine, (ii) conspiracy scripts are treated as actionable intelligence, and (iii) selective real-world reporting is used as retroactive "proof" of a pre-committed master narrative. The source document exemplifies this risk by asserting a staged "World War III" script, linking it to Ezekiel 38–39, and presenting current conflicts as already fulfilling early "stages." This study also engages prior work that frames global-governance narratives in explicitly spiritual terms, treating them as interpretive 'operating systems' that shape how audiences classify authority, deception, and moral agency (Sangwa & Mutabazi, 2025).

Conspiracy narratives are widely understood to be self-sealing: counterevidence can be reclassified as further evidence of concealment, making correction difficult and sometimes counterproductive (Sunstein & Vermeule, 2009). In war settings, self-sealing narratives may harden social polarization, intensify moral exclusion, and legitimize catastrophic escalation as "inevitable" or even "necessary." The urgency is amplified by the documented scale and volatility of the region's violence and humanitarian crisis reporting systems (UN-OCHA, 2024; ACLED, 2025).

1.3. Research Objective: General objective (SMART): To develop and validate, through secondary multi-method analysis, a reproducible framework for identifying and evaluating prophecy–conspiracy war narratives and their governance implications within 12 months of publication.

Specific objectives: To computationally map the source text's actor–frame structure and escalation logic using transparent, replicable content-analytic techniques. To triangulate the text's evidentiary posture with authoritative conflict-reporting infrastructures (UN-OCHA, 2024; ACLED, 2025). To propose a governance and civic-response toolkit grounded in epistemic justice and conflict-sensitive communication, with clearly defined stakeholder responsibilities.

1.4. Research Questions and Hypotheses: RQ1. What narrative structures and actor–frame couplings organize the text's staged escalation claims? **H1.** The text will exhibit a concentrated actor core and a staged expansion that converts contingent geopolitical dynamics into a linear inevitability. **RQ2.** How does the text construct "evidence" (scripture, media citations, institutional references), and what epistemic vulnerabilities follow? **H2.** The text will rely on selective citation and interpretive closure (self-sealing logic), increasing vulnerability to misinformation persistence. **RQ3.** What interventions reduce harm while respecting religious pluralism and civil liberties? **H3.** Interventions centered on epistemic justice, source transparency, and platform friction (rather than viewpoint suppression) will be normatively preferable and practically more sustainable.

1.5. Contribution: This paper contributes a novel, interdisciplinary framework—Prophetic–Conspiratorial Escalation Cycle (PCEC)—that unifies narrative policy theory, securitization studies, and social epistemology to explain how prophecy templates and conspiracy scripts become socially operational during war. It also provides

reproducible document-level analytics that can be extended to larger corpora and informs policy design that avoids both naïve dismissal and heavy-handed censorship.

2. Theoretical & Conceptual Framework

2.1. Narrative Policy Framework (NPF): NPF treats narratives as empirical objects with identifiable structures (settings, characters, plots, morals) that can be systematically studied and linked to policy processes (Jones & McBeth, 2010). The source text is a paradigmatic NPF object: it assigns heroes/victims (Israel, “God’s people”), villains (Illuminati, proxy groups), and a plot that escalates from local violence to global war, ending in providential resolution. The philosophical advantage of NPF here is that it avoids the crude dichotomy of “true vs. false belief” and instead examines how narratives perform political work: stabilizing uncertainty, distributing blame, and motivating action. Yet NPF alone is insufficient because it can under-theorize how narratives become *epistemically insulated* and morally totalizing during crises.

2.2. Securitization Theory: Securitization theory (Copenhagen School) explains how issues become framed as existential threats that justify extraordinary measures (Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998). In prophecy–conspiracy narratives, securitization is doubled: the threat is not only military but cosmic. This sacralized securitization can collapse deliberative norms by treating disagreement as complicity and compromise as betrayal. Ethically, securitization warns us that threat talk is not a neutral description; it is a political act with distributive consequences. The source text’s rhetoric risks converting complex conflicts into moral binaries and foreclosing pluralistic interpretation.

2.3. Social Epistemology and Epistemic Injustice: Fricker’s theory of epistemic injustice highlights how power shapes who is treated as a credible knower and

how interpretive resources are distributed (Fricker, 2007). Prophetic–conspiratorial texts can produce epistemic injustice in at least two ways. First, they can enact testimonial injustice by discounting institutional or journalistic sources as inherently corrupt. Second, they can enact hermeneutical injustice by offering a totalizing interpretive schema that crowds out more adequate explanatory vocabularies (e.g., international law, political economy, conflict history), especially for lay audiences. This epistemic frame aligns with political-psychology findings that conspiracy beliefs can flourish in “information-limited” environments and become resistant to correction (Douglas et al., 2019; Sunstein & Vermeule, 2009).

Conceptual Model and Propositions: Prophetic–Conspiratorial Escalation Cycle (PCEC). PCEC theorizes how macro-shocks (war, displacement, media saturation) generate epistemic vulnerability; vulnerability enables narrative coupling between prophecy templates and conspiracy scripts; coupling drives mobilization and algorithmic amplification; amplification deepens counter-knowledge ecologies; downstream risks (radicalization, policy distortion) feed back into vulnerability. **Propositions (pathways):** P1: Higher crisis intensity and uncertainty increase demand for teleological narratives and the uptake of self-sealing explanations. P2: Coupling sacred authority with staged geopolitical scripts increases narrative resilience against disconfirmation. P3: Algorithmic attention dynamics amplify high-arousal “inevitability” frames, accelerating diffusion (Vosoughi, et al., 2018; Pennycook et al., 2021). P4: Epistemic-justice interventions (source transparency, interpretive pluralism, dialogic religious literacy) reduce harm more effectively than blunt suppression (Lewandowsky et al., 2020; Lewandowsky & van der Linden, 2021).

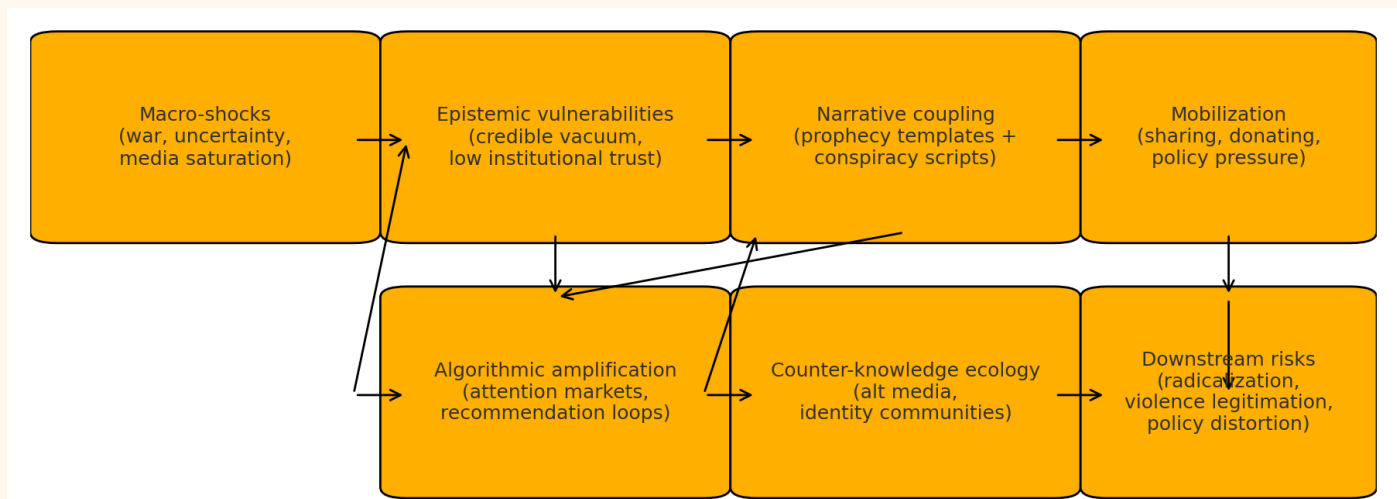


Figure 1 operationalizes these propositions visually (download link below).

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design: A **secondary multi-method** design is optimal because the object of study is a publicly available text embedded in broader information ecologies. The study combines (i) computational text analysis (quantitative), (ii) interpretive narrative analysis (qualitative), and (iii) documentary triangulation with authoritative conflict reporting (policy/data synthesis). This approach is aligned with NPF’s call for systematic narrative study while meeting social-epistemology’s demand for reflexive attention to evidence standards.

3.2. Data Sources: (A) **Primary document (unit of analysis):** the source text (Sangwa, 2024). (B). **Authoritative conflict-reporting infrastructures (triangulation):** [1] UN-OCHA casualty reporting architecture and hostilities updates for the occupied Palestinian territory (methodological notes and verification posture) (UN-OCHA, 2024); [2] ACLED conflict summaries and analytical products (event-based approach) (ACLED, 2025). (C) Peer-reviewed scholarship and foundational works: political psychology of conspiracy theories (Douglas et al., 2017; Jones & McBeth, 2010); securitization (Buzan et al., 1998); social epistemology/epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007); conspiracism as cultural form (Barkun, 2013). As contextual literature, I also draw on my earlier conceptual analyses of prophecy-inflected governance narratives and spiritualized interpretations of global order (Sangwa, 2025; Sangwa & Mutabazi, 2025). These works are used here to

clarify discourse patterns and theological framing, not as evidentiary verification for conflict events or humanitarian statistics.

3.3. Analytical Techniques: Computational analysis used transparent, document-level methods: sentence segmentation; actor keyword extraction; sentence-window co-occurrence network analysis; and stage-text “escalation mapping” via category-based keyword hits. These techniques are deliberately conservative: they do not infer hidden mental states, only observable discourse structure.

3.4. Reproducibility: All figures are generated from the uploaded document’s extracted text using a deterministic pipeline (fixed keyword lists; fixed co-occurrence window). Data availability is constrained to an archived copy of the source text (Sangwa, 2024) and the cited public sources. Limitations include single-document scope and keyword-method sensitivity (mitigated by explicit dictionaries and reporting of sentence counts). The approach is readily extensible to multi-document corpora and multilingual analysis.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. RQ1 — Narrative Architecture and Actor–Frame Coupling: The source text organizes events through a staged-teleological plot: an initiating “trigger,” sequential escalations, and an ultimate global conflagration culminating in providential resolution. Within NPF terms, the plot functions as a policy-relevant morality tale: it implies that contemporary actors are moving along a

predetermined script rather than navigating contingent strategic tradeoffs.

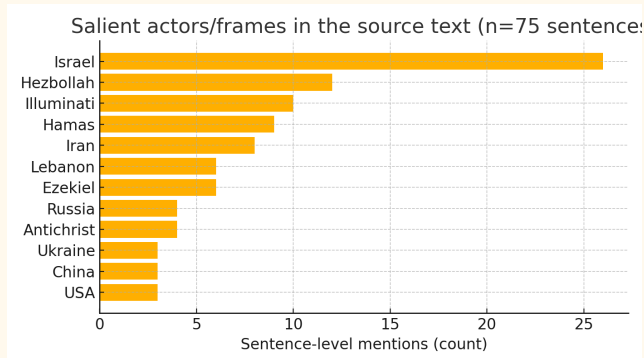


Figure 2 (actor salience) shows that the text is dominated by a compact set of actors and frames. “Israel” is the central node in the discourse, followed by “Hezbollah,” “Illuminati,” “Hamas,” and “Iran,” with “Russia,” “Ukraine,” “China,” and “NATO” appearing later as the narrative globalizes. This is structurally important: the text does not begin globally; it *becomes* global by rhetorical design, which is how “World War” framing is narratively manufactured.

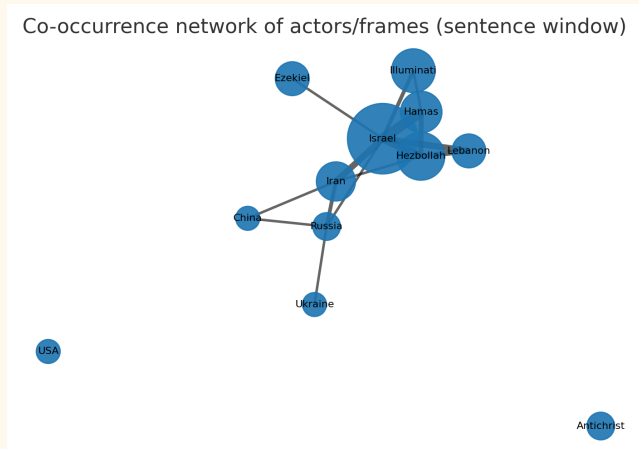


Figure 3 (co-occurrence network) visualizes the document’s sentence-level architecture: Israel is positioned as the hub connecting Middle East conflict actors to larger bloc politics. Co-occurrence ties between “Illuminati,” “Ezekiel,” and contemporary actors signal the text’s core interpretive move—binding scripture and conspiracy into a single explanatory engine.

Philosophically, this coupling performs a kind of epistemic compression: it reduces complex causal space (history, institutions, material constraints) into a moral-metaphysical plot. The cost of compression is explanatory overconfidence. The benefit—psychologically and socially—is meaning under uncertainty, consistent

with the motive-based account of conspiracy belief uptake (Douglas et al., 2017).

4.2. RQ2 — Evidence, Verification, and Self-Sealing Dynamics: The text interleaves scriptural reference (Ezekiel 38–39), media citations, and institutional-sounding claims (e.g., war declarations, UN resolutions) to create a composite authority effect. This is a recognizable mechanism in conspiracist discourse: selective incorporation of mainstream reference points without adopting mainstream standards of falsifiability.

Two verification-sensitive issues illustrate why triangulation matters. First, the text asserts a formal “war declaration” via Israel’s invocation of Article 40; this is substantively discussed in legal analysis and contemporaneous reporting (Jerusalem Post coverage (Jerusalem Post, 2023); West Point Lieber Institute analysis contextualizing Article 40 invocation (Farley, 2024). Second, the text claims events such as the killing of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah; sources indicate that such reporting exists in official U.S. documentation and contemporaneous accounts (U.S. Government publishing record (White House, 2024); additional reporting (Times of Israel, 2024). These examples show that a document may contain both verifiable and speculative elements, enabling rhetorical “credibility transfer” from the verifiable to the non-verifiable.

UN-OCHA explicitly distinguishes between independently verified casualty data and reported figures in rapidly evolving hostilities, underscoring epistemic humility as an institutional practice under uncertainty (UN-OCHA, 2024). By contrast, the source text’s staged script posture treats uncertainty as temporary noise within an already-known arc. This difference is not merely technical—it is ethical. Institutional verification regimes embody a norm: when stakes are high, claims must remain proportional to evidence.

From Sunstein and Vermeule’s perspective, the text exhibits features of self-sealing conspiracy logic: the explanatory system is protected against disconfirmation because counterevidence can be recorded as deception or spiritual blindness (Sunstein & Vermeule, 2009). Fricker’s lens adds that such systems can injure epistemic agency by delegitimizing shared standards of knowing and relocating credibility to in-group interpretive authority (Fricker, 2007).

4.3. RQ3 — Governance, Ethics, and Interventions Without Anti-Religious Bias: The governance question is delicate: democratic societies must distinguish between (i) protected religious expression and (ii) high-risk misinformation dynamics that can escalate

hatred or legitimate violence. PCEC recommends proportionate, epistemically just interventions.

At the platform and media layer, evidence from conspiracy theory research suggests that direct “myth-busting” alone can be insufficient and sometimes counterproductive (Nyhan & Reifler, 2010; Lewandowsky et al., 2020), especially when beliefs are identity-protective (Douglas et al., 2019). A more defensible approach is procedural friction and provenance: clearer source labeling, context panels, and reducing algorithmic rewards for high-arousal “inevitability” frames. This approach targets *distribution dynamics* rather than *viewpoint suppression*, protecting pluralism while reducing harm.

At the civic and educational layer, conflict-sensitive religious literacy is essential. Prophetic traditions are internally diverse; many theologians and communities interpret apocalyptic texts non-literalistically or ethically rather than as predictive timetables (Bauckham, 1993; Collins, 1998). A policy posture that treats prophecy belief as inherently irrational risks epistemic injustice and social backlash. Fricker’s framework implies that governance should expand interpretive resources rather than stigmatize knowers (Fricker, 2007).

At the security layer, securitization theory warns that existential threat framing tends to legitimate exceptionalism and erode deliberative restraint (Buzan et al., 1998). Prophetic–conspiratorial narratives can securitize entire peoples as cosmic enemies, intensifying moral exclusion. Therefore, risk monitoring should focus on *dehumanizing language, calls for violence, and coordination signals*—not theological content as such.

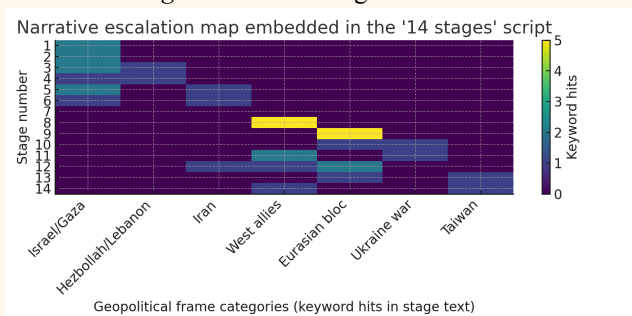


Figure 4 (stage escalation map) demonstrates how the text’s “14 stages” encode an intentional expansion from localized conflict to global blocs and nuclear war imaginaries. The analytical point is not whether these “stages” will occur; it is that the form of staging itself is a diffusion-optimized device: it invites audiences to interpret news as “checkpoints” of inevitability, strengthening commitment.

Finally, authoritative conflict reporting systems provide an epistemic alternative: they foreground uncertainty, verification, and methodological transparency (UN-OCHA, 2024; ACLED, 2025). Policy can elevate these norms through public communication partnerships and standards for influential communicators (including faith-based ones) that emphasize humility, provenance, and the difference between moral interpretation and empirical prediction.

5. Conclusion & Recommendations

5.1. Conclusion: This study reframed the original blog article as a case of prophetic–conspiratorial geopolitics: a narrative technology that couples sacred teleology with conspiracy staging to render contingent war dynamics as inevitable historical necessity. Using a novel framework—Prophetic–Conspiratorial Escalation Cycle (PCEC)—and reproducible document analytics, we showed how the text concentrates agency in a small set of actors, globalizes conflict through staged expansion, and constructs a self-reinforcing evidentiary ecology by blending scripture, selective media citation, and institutional references.

Philosophically, the central tension is between meaning-making and knowledge-making. Religious interpretation can be ethically generative; conspiratorial certainty under crisis can be epistemically corrosive. The task for scholarship and governance is not to extinguish metaphysical hope but to protect the civic conditions of shared inquiry—especially when war amplifies fear, grief, and moral injury.

5.2. Recommendations

For **academia**, prioritize cross-disciplinary measurement of prophecy–conspiracy coupling using NPF-informed corpora, linking narrative features to real-world outcomes (polarization, dehumanization, donation flows). Extend PCEC to multilingual contexts and platform-specific diffusion pathways.

For **governance bodies**, adopt proportionate transparency regulation: standardized provenance labels for high-reach geopolitical claims; rapid public briefings that model epistemic humility; and partnerships with humanitarian data infrastructures that clearly separate verified from reported figures (UN-OCHA methods (UN-OCHA, 2024).

For the **private sector (platforms/media)**, implement friction-based interventions: downrank “inevitability checklists” tied to violent escalation, add

context panels that distinguish theological claims from empirical forecasts, and support independent auditing of recommendation systems during major conflicts.

For **philanthropic institutions**, fund epistemic resilience: interfaith media literacy, local peacebuilding communicators, and independent verification journalism in conflict zones.

For **civil society and faith communities**, develop internal norms of responsible interpretation: explicitly label speculative prophecy interpretations as theological opinions; discourage checklist-style “stage tracking”; and elevate ethical readings that emphasize human dignity and the tragedy of violence rather than its sacralization.

5.3. Study Limitations: The analysis is based on a single document and keyword-based computational methods; generalizability is therefore limited. The mitigation strategy was theoretical triangulation across multiple research traditions and anchoring contextual claims to authoritative reporting infrastructures (UN-OCHA; ACLED). Future research should scale to multi-document corpora across platforms, incorporate richer NLP (topic models, stance detection), and test causal mechanisms using quasi-experimental designs around platform policy shifts.

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