Islamophobia Discourse via Online Rumors in Korea: Focusing on the Rumor "How Lebanon, which was a Christian Country, became an Islamic Country?" and the "Taharrush Game"[1]

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore the current status of the phenomena of online Islamophobia in Korea and how hate rumours affect internet users. The paper analyses Islamophobic information that flows online in Korean society with two particular rumors as examples, "Taharrush Game" and "How Lebanon, which was a Christian Country, became an Islamic Country?" To identify Islamophobic fake news in Korea, the study reviewed previous cases of fake news in Korea and examined the processes of creation and dissemination of Islamophobic fake news through a review of the literature. Moreover, using the survey method and examining online postings, this paper analyzed the current situation of Islamophobic disinformation in South Korea.

Keywords: Islamophobia in Korea, Online rumor, Fake news, Image of Islam in Korea, Image of Muslims in Korea

Introduction

> "We must be alert to Islam, and we should not receive (Muslim) refugees. When they have powers, they will try to swallow (our) country."

> "When Korean traditions and laws are at odds with Islamic doctrines, what would they (Muslims in Korea) choose? They will choose religion. That is why I am against them."

These sentences were taken from blog postings displaying hateful sentiments against Muslims (Yemeni refugees specifically) in Korea.[3] In Korean society, Islamic issues are talked about in everyday life as well as in online spaces.[4] However, Korean society has embraced Islamic culture more positively in the past in comparison to our present time. For example, the historical records of the Koryŏ Dynasty (918–1392) and the Chosŏn Dynasty (1392–1897) show that Muslims' diversity was respected in ancient Korean societies.[5] However, as the Confucian culture gradually strengthened, the perception of society toward Muslims changed. Eventually, in 1427, during the reign of King Sejong, the conducting of Islamic rituals and wearing of traditional dress were prohibited by royal decree. Since that point Muslim culture in Chosŏn society began to fade.[6]

Islam was re-introduced in Korean society during the Korean War in the early 1950s, when the Turkish military joined the United Nations coalition and formed the first generation of contemporary Korean Muslims. In 1955, the Korea Islamic Society was founded. Around two decades later, the first mosque was built in Seoul in 1976.[7] Moreover, the economic relationship has been active between the two worlds since the 1970s; Korea was a primary beneficiary of oil money from Middle Eastern countries, including Saudi Arabia and Libya, especially in the 1970s and 1980s. When Korea achieved economic development in the 1990s, oil-producing Middle Eastern nations became the country's main trading partners and still are today.[8]

The Development of Islamophobic Discourse in Korea: Who and Why

Korean society started to become more aware of Islam and Muslims around the year 2000 when the concept of a multicultural society was first introduced.[9] A fully-fledged Islamophobic discourse began with the 18th presidential election in 2012, and the situation escalated during the period of the 2016 general elections when Islam-hate statements were directly expressed and demonstrated by public gatherings or marches. In the 18th presidential election in 2012, *Kidok chayu t'ongil dang* 기독자유통일당 (Christian Liberal Party) used the "anti-Islam" movement

as the party's essential slogan.[10] It also took the lead in the movement against creating a halal food complex[11] within the Korea national food cluster project.[12]

Islamophobic discourse has not diminished or weakened, but rather has been further strengthened due to the influx of more than 500 Yemeni refugees who entered Cheju-do, the southern island of Korea, in the first five months of 2018. Muslims emerged as a new social problem for Korean society. It is noteworthy that the number of signatures of the petition seeking the abolition of the refugee system and withdrawal of visa-free entry reached to 714, 875 within a month on the online petition board of Ch'ŏng'wadae.[13] This remains the highest number of signatures yet received by a government petition. In addition to that, almost 6,278 posts expressing anxiety, hatred, and fear toward (Yemeni) refugees were uploaded from June to November of 2018. These numbers indicate the explosive nature of adverse reactions against the sudden influx of Yemeni refugees. The reason for people's reactions were mainly because they were Muslims. According to Sin Yewŏn and Ma Tonghun, the main reason for Koreans being offended was not the actual status of the Yemenis as refugees, but the fact that they were from the Islamic country of Yemen.[14]

This Islamophobic reaction could not have emerged in the public discourse without sources deliberately invoking hatred or phobia. Islam-focused misinformation spread in public discourses has been effectively disseminating negative images of Islam and Muslims to the public by presenting videos or photographs of examples of the crimes of Muslim immigrants in Europe. Considering the fierce opposition from public opinion due to rumors of Yemeni refugees, it can be presumed that this is a deliberate frame formation for Muslims and Islamic culture despite its concrete existence in Korean society, all in order to provoke negative opinions against the Yemenis for specific reasons.

This research hypothesizes that there might be a producer of Islamophobic rumors in Korea for a particular reason. If there is a source, then, we are led to the question of: where is the source of such rumors in Korean online society? Various studies on Islamophobia in Korea point towards right-wing Protestantism.[15] In particular, *Hankyoreh* 한겨레, one of the major daily newspapers in Korea, reported that the Esther Prayer Movement Headquarters (EPMH), a far-right fundamental Protestant Christian group, has been a producer and a disseminator of the misinformation. The online content gave birth to the erroneous news articles or misinformation that seeks to provoke the public's hatred against specific targets,[16] including Korean social minorities such as Muslims, refugees, and LGBT persons. Fundamental Protestant Christians and far-right political groups have been sharing these rumors. Some of them were delivered in the form of formal news articles by Christian newspaper platforms, and as these were viewed as

more legitimate and trustworthy, people would accept these hate codes without any further examination.[17]

In the last five years, unsubstantiated rumors, such as the conspiracy theory of a Muslim invasion of Korean society have been shared continuously, and erroneous news has also been reported on specific news platforms—especially Protestant Christian news channels—creating anti-Islamic discourse. Recently, the Yemeni refugee issue went beyond the existing anti-Islamic discourse, such as criticizing patriarchal Muslim social practices of circumcision, early marriage, polygamy, and hijab; and some have created images of Muslim men as potential sex offenders.[18] Ultimately, for those who believe the Islamophobic rumors, Muslims have come to represent an image of invaders who threaten society and Muslim men who threaten Korean women.

This paper aims to research Korean Islamophobic misinformation transmitted in various forms to the sphere of online public discourse and its formation of fear and disgust for Islam, its culture, and Muslims in the Korean online public. To that end, this research will examine how Korean creators of online Islamophobic rumors or fake news fabricate posts with misinformation. This study focuses on two rumors, "Taharrush Game," and "How Lebanon, which was a Christian Country, became an Islamic Country?" that were fabricated to promote anti-Islamic online discourse.

To grasp the actual extent of Islamophobia online, this research surveyed 204 people who randomly used social network services to estimate the impact of two rumors. Simultaneously, using NAVER,[19] the most used search portal website in Korea, the researcher searched entire blogs and posts of the internet communities (which were open access), with the keywords "Taharrush" and "Christian Country Lebanon." To see how the delivery of rumors manipulates stories, the author reviewed the posting dates, the videos or photos shared, and the words and expressions of the posts and comments.

Islamophobia

A definition of Islamophobia as an academic concept was introduced in 1997 when the Runnymede Trust, a British think tank, published the report "Islamophobia: A Challenge For Us All."[20] The authors of the report refer to Islamophobia to as "unfounded hostility towards Islam, and practical consequences of such hostility in unfair discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities, and to the exclusion of Muslims from mainstream political and social affairs."[21]

In order to define Islamophobia in a specific country or society, the target of the phobia needs to be discussed first: whether it is against Islam as a religion or Muslims as its people or both. Korean researchers defined Islamophobia from

different point of view, either as a type of xenophobia or racism; the hatred against Muslims as others, not the religion itself.[22] However, defining Islamophobia remains as a matter of debate, especially in Korea, because the concept of Muslim and Islam is used interchangeably at times. In this research, the term Islamophobia is defined as an embraced stereotype or prejudice against Muslims or Islam and denying acceptance to them or their religion as a part of society.

Fake news and Online Rumors

The concept of fake news in the twenty-first century has broadened the definition to include false stories spreading on social media[23] or news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false and could mislead readers.[24] As Allcott and Gentzkow argue, it may be derived from conspiracy theories in the form of the news article, so that it is difficult to verify as true or false, or as a satire.[25] This type of misleading news report contains content that promotes hatred against specific individuals or groups, claiming opposite or different opinions through false incitement to aggravate the conflict between ideologies, religions, genders, and generations within society. In the end, fake news reinforces abnormal communication that lowers societal trust in general.[26]

Zhou and Zafarani tried to compare concepts related to fake news by reviewing existing research based on the three filters; a) authenticity, b) intention, and c) whether the information is news or not. When these filters are applied, information that contains false authenticity and harmful intention, but without the form of a news report, can be defined as "disinformation." However, because of the three filters' ambiguity,[27] erroneous news reports or unsubstantiated rumors[28] can be defined as "disinformation" when the contents carry a bad intention. In this research, we will consider Islamophobic online rumors and fake news in the range between misinformation and disinformation based on its intention within the context.

Fake news and rumors in Korean society

Korea has experienced several fake news or rumor cases, and some even caused mass demonstrations due to public fear. *Donga ilbo*'s 동아일보 1945 false report case is one example. The Moscow conference of foreign ministers between the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union, held to negotiate agreements on the post-war settlement of Japanese occupied territories after World War II, occurred in December 1945. *Donga ilbo*, a right-wing daily newspaper in Korea, reported this conference under the headline, "The Soviet Union insists on trusteeship (of Korea), and the U.S. insists on immediate independence."[29] Given

that the main point of the meeting focused more on the establishment of the democratic provisional government the U.S. proposed and was then agreed by three parties,[30] this case is considered as an attempt to disseminate the anti-trusteeship[31] discourse.[32] The right-wing went on to use it consciously as a bit of anti-communist ideology rather than for its nationalistic aspect.[33] This news report brought mass demonstrations, and people went on strike four days after the report.[34] Eventually, the transmission of dichotomous ideologies became one of the catalysts that intensified the conflict between the country's anti-trusteeship and pro-trusteeship debate by the external powers.[35] This incident is an example of how politically manipulated newspaper articles form social ideology and can influence public opinion.

Secondly, the rumor related to the 5.18 Kwangju Uprising also shows how rumors can be used for domestic political ideological conflicts. There have been various arguments regarding this armed conflict between the military government and Kwangju citizens, depending on the difference of one's political ideology. Rumors of North Korean military involvement—one of the most trans-mitted stories—can be regarded as an instance of how Korea's anti-communist sentiment had been manipulated. Kim Hŭisong argued that this rumor connected a distorted North Korean content to the 5.18 incident to stimulate a "Red Complex," through concealment of facts and distortion of memory based on the politics of a divided country.[36]

At the same time, Kim Hŭisong argued that the news articles published during the incident were fake or fabricated news because media outlets removed some part of articles or fabricated false news forcibly by the government, while others even issued these kinds of articles voluntarily.[37]

Such politically distorted news reports before the development of the Internet and social media do not show significant differences from recent online erroneous news reports. The difference is that it became easier and faster to create fake news based on unsubstantiated rumors to stimulate people's anxiety about North Korea or another form of colonialism. This phenomenon appeared in a similar form in the subsequent cases such as American mad-cow disease,[38] Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), and even COVID 19, stimulating people's anxiety.

Islamophobia and Islamophobic fake news or rumors in Korea

Social issues related to discrimination, prejudice, refusal, the despised, and ridicule are deeply rooted in any society, and these issues have stood out through the expressions of hatred in public discourses with various perspectives in Korean

society.[39] Ku Kiyŏn's analysis about the change of social sentiments regarding words related to Islam from 2013 to 2016 indicated that the frequency of using the word "Hyŏmo (phobia/hatred)" had risen through the period between 2016 and 2017 in Korea. This word has been used on gender issues between men and women and minority issues such as sexual minorities, Chinese immigrants, the disabled, and Islam. The analysis indicated that negative sentiment of the word "Islam" had also increased during the same period.[40]

Similar research conducted by Kim Suwan, about Koreans' images of Arabs and Islam, showed that in the recent history of Korean society with Islam, the most vital image about "Arab and Islam" for Koreans was "Terror, War, Conflict zone" (75%), which has negative connotations.[41] Citing Boulding's theory, Kim Suwan argued that when a particular view of an object is formed, this perceived image might replace reality. Even though the second-most robust image about Islam was a positive image such as "Sincere Islamic religious life, devout faith, strong religious piety" (71%),[42] negative perceptions about Islam cannot be ignored.

After the Yemeni refugee crisis in 2018, public awareness surveys on refugees and Muslim refugees were conducted by some newspapers and institutions between 2018 and 2019. The survey results revealed that Koreans have negative sentiments against Muslim refugees more than the religion; the core of the hatred tends to lean towards the Muslims rather than Islam. For example, a survey by *Jungang Ilbo* on Islamophobia in Korea (conducted on 1 and 2 August 2018), showed that people's negative response to refugees was 44.7% in general; however toward Muslim refugees specifically, the negative response rose to 66.6%.[43] Similarly, a survey by the Asan Institute for Policy Studies Institute (conducted 4–24 December 2019) also showed that Korean people's perception about Middle Eastern immigrants was the most negative (70.9%) among five regions (Middle East, Africa, Latin America, East Asia, Southeast Asia, Europe, and North America).[44]

Ku Kiyŏn indicated that in spreading and increasing fears and negative images against Islam and Muslims, people receive it primarily through indirect methods.[45] This raises an important need that will be covered in this paper—a discussion into the leading agents creating and spreading the negative images of Islam and Muslims.

Korean far-right fundamental Protestantism and hatred

A negative perspective against Islam in Korea started from the 9/11 terror incident in the USA. However, it has not been long since Korean society started to regard Islam as part of daily life. As Muslim laborers or tourists became more visible in

the public area, Korean society began to discern them. In the labour market, some people in the field regard them as rivals for work and raised voices in opposition to accepting Muslim labourers.[46]

Meanwhile, following 9/11, Korean society experienced a few Muslim-perpetrated terror incidents against its nationals outside of the country. Kim Sŏnil,[47] a Korean employer in an American military supply contract firm in Iraq, was kidnapped at the end of May 2004 by an Iraqi militia—Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad—which later became part of ISIL. The negotiation between the Korean government and the Jihadist group failed, and ultimately, they beheaded him and spread the process of his execution scene online.[48] This incident, followed by the abduction of the short-term missionary work team of Saemmul church by the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2007, was enough reason to startle Korean society. Furthermore, it became a trigger of Islam's image to Koreans as jihadists who kidnap and kill non-Muslims.

Shortly after the Saemmul church incident, anti-Islamic sentiment started to rise in late 2008. According to Yi Chin'gu, expressions such as "Islamic Tsunami" or "domestic penetration of Islam" were used, which created an anti-Islamic sentiment that quickly picked up momentum. There were also rumors spread between 2008–2009 by Protestant Christian newsletters.[49]

Various studies on Korean Islamophobia indicate that the hate speeches are mainly formulated by Korean Protestant churches. Ku Kiyŏn (2018), Yi Chin'gu (2011), Kim Tongmun (2016), Pak Chongsu (2017), Sŏng Shinhyŏng (2020), and Pae Tŏkman (2020) all conducted research that link Islamophobia to Korean Protestant Christianity. This, of course, does not mean that all Korean Protestant denominations are responsible for producing hatred. Scholars refer to some particular Protestant churches as agents of hatred production, and some of them identified the churches' character as "conservative" or "fundamentalist."[50]

"Protestantism" is the most comprehensive expression to represent these churches' character, and a more specific expression of "conservative Christianity/Protestantism" is used sometimes, while the most frequently mentioned term is "fundamentalist."[51] Scholars pointed out that Korean Protestantism justifies its hatred using expressions such as "what is written in the Bible," "a common sense in a society," or "freedom of expression."[52] Furthermore, Kang Inch'ŏl defined specifically politicalized conservative Protestants as a "Protestant right" who utilize the politics of hatred.[53]

Historically Protestant Christianity grew along with modern Korean history since the Japanese colonization period, depending enormously on American Protestantism.[54] With Korean society's growth, the Korean Protestant churches have shown a thorough conformity to the values of nationalism, and they have

also been pursuing the absolute value of the homogenous state, which does not tolerate an "other." Eventually, some Protestants in Korea attempted to justify themselves by defining "the others" as "evil." In the past, "the others" were referred to as communists, socialists, North Koreans, and pro-North Koreans, and recently the target changed to Muslims and Islam, feminists, and members of the LGBT community.[55]

Korean society's far-right discourses have been created, distributed, and spread by far-right cable TV channels or newspapers. There also are far-right civic groups such as *Han'guk chayu ch'ongyŏnmaeng* (Korea Freedom Federation), or *Taehanmin'guk ŏbŏi yŏnhap* (Korea Parent Federation), and there are far-right online communities such as *Ilgan besŭt'ŭ* (daily best). However, Kim Chinho indicated that Korea's center of far-right politics is in the right-wing Protestant churches led by the Korean Christian Federation and Protestant far-right civic groups such as the EPMH.[56] Yi Chisŏng also pointed out that Korean far-right Protestant groups produce hate sentiments against pro-North Koreans and homosexuals[57] by using this hatred as an ethical standard of judgement.[58] Underneath the hate politics, a sense of anxiety and fear arose due to the stagnation of their religious influence, the decline in public confidence in Protestants, and the spread of anti-Protestant feelings in Korean society. Accordingly, they are trying to confirm and strengthen their presence by proposing virtual enemies.[59]

Islamophobic fake news or rumors in Korea

Now, let us investigate the anti-Islamic rumors or fake news in Korea. Who creates the Islamophobic public discourse? What kind of image has been created about Islam or Muslims in Korea recently?

The most famous anti-Islam rumor appeared around 2007 when the report, "Eight steps of Islamization strategy," which claimed to have referenced *The World Fact Book* (2007) by the CIA,[60] was spread in the domestic Protestant community in the form of video or text. The report dealt with an Islamization strategy toward the world in general. A derivative, "The Islamization Strategy of Korean Society," was spread within Korean churches. The basis of these rumors, including its main reference (CIA's *The World Fact Book*), turned out to be groundless or fabricated.[61] The "Islamic Tsunami" threat was spread in the Protestant community between 2007–2008. Both rumors firmly insist that there is a Muslim structured strategy to Islamize the world and Korea,[62] in particular. The general strategies of Islamization is based on the percentage of Muslim in a target country as follows: at stage 1, when the Muslim population in the country is around 1%, they (Muslims) stake out and disguise themselves as a peace-loving group.

At stage 2, when the Muslim population in the country increases slightly to 2~3%, the inmates in prison are intensively converted to Islam. At stage 3, when the country's Muslim population exceeds 5%, a full-fledged strategy to increase the Muslim populations begins.

At stage 4, when the Muslim population in the country is more than 20%, they start riots and disturbances and attacks on churches. At stage 5, when the country's Muslim population is more than 40%, widespread massacres are committed and frequent terrorism occurs.

At stage 6, when the Muslim population in the country is more than 60%, they oppress Christianity and other religions without any restraint. At stage 7, when the Muslim population in the country is more than 80%, state-led mass racial cleansing and massacres are committed. At stage 8, when the Muslim population in the country reaches 100%, they implement a theocratic unity system and Islamic law takes priority to the constitution.[63]

Here we can raise various questions about these rumors; who exactly are those "Muslims" who try to Islamize the world and Korea? Is there any specific group of Muslims? If so, why did the rumor sources not indicate the group's name or institutions?

Kim Tongmun posited that the real source of the CIA's *The World Fact Book* rumor is hardly identifiable, however someone who addressed this strategy primally was Pastor Yi Mansŏk.[64] Yi Chin'gu also referred to Pastor Yi as a person playing a pivotal role in spreading Islamophobia and the demonization of Islam. The pastor is the head of the Korean Iranian mission church and is leading the Islamic response movement called "Halt Islamization Movement, 4HIM." He argues that Islam and Muhammad are not peaceful as Muslims insist and that the purpose of Islamic forces is to unify the world into an Islamic world by any means necessary, such as lies, violence, murder, and terror. His main argument is that countermeasures against Islamic forces must be prepared in Korea before society regrets it as is the case with European countries[65] that accepted Muslim migrants and refugees earlier. Even though it is not possible to paint him as the main agent who created Islamophobic sentiments with academic references, his argument seems to be related to pervasive anti-Islamic rumors trying to warn of Muslims' strategy towards Korean society.

Further to this, the primary producer of Islamophobic rumors seems to have been exposed recently to the public. *Hankyoreh*, in October 2018, released articles focusing on fake news that provoke hatred against LGBT people and refugees with the title "Esther, the Name of the 'Fake News Factory' for Homosexual • Refugee hatred."[66]

According to this article, since the Yemeni refugee issue was raised, many fake news articles were transmitted through social network services, for example, "92% of sexual violence in Sweden is caused by Islamic refugees and half of the victims are children," or "The sexual crime rate of Afghan immigrants is 79 times higher than that of the nationals." The source of those pieces was EPMH, a Christian right-wing movement group founded in 2007. Under the name of their media mission, the news report says that so-called "internet warriors" work on creating online public opinions against LGBT individuals, North Korea, and certain leftist politicians. During the specific period of 1–19 September 2018, disinformation that EPMH and other creators produced was shared in more than 20 YouTube channels with more than 1.37 million views.[67]

A more severe problem regarding the fake news is that the prominent Christian newspaper or radio platforms such as *Kŭktong pangsong* (radio station), *Kungmin ilbo* (daily newspaper), or *Kidok ilbo* (Christian Daily) publish articles based on biased foreign articles without any fact checks. What makes this problem worse is that these medias have a significant influence on the Korean churches. *Nyusŭ aen choi* (News and Joy) newspaper[68] reported that this media edited foreign articles to appear differently from the original purpose, or selected biased views from the original articles. These articles are then used by conservative Christianity to provoke anti-Islam or anti-homosexuality sentiments after distortion of the facts and fabrication of the stories.[69] If these articles are created on purpose, these can be categorized as maliciously false news, which is a worse case of fake news than rumors or misinformation according the Zhou and Zafarani's comparison.

Examining two samples: "How Lebanon, a Christian Country, became an Islamic Country?" and "Taharrush Game"

In order to distinguish Islamophobic disinformation and its circulation in the Korean online world from the perspective of the receivers of these rumors, two samples—"Taharrush Game" and "How Lebanon, which was a Christian Country, became an Islamic Country?"—will be analyzed for how the online content is utilized to stimulate people's hatred or fear against Islam and Muslims.

Analysis of the internet contents

This research examined blogs and online community postings on the NAVER website, the most used online search portal during the last ten years in Korea, to analyze the rumors or fake news content. The keywords used to search were "kidokkyo kukka (a Christian country)" with "Lebanon" and "t'aharushi." The

period of the examination of NAVER was December 31, 2020 to January 6, 2021. The data collection was performed as follows: the researcher searched every accessible posting for each rumor and visited each of them to check the posting's title, text, and comments. When it came to the "Lebanon" keyword, the search was conducted manually through the NAVER search, because there were many unrelated postings on the result page. The researcher searched on the NAVER website directly and checked the results from both community postings and blog postings.

In the case of "Taharrushi" case, due to the massive data result, the researcher used TEXTOM text mining program to sort meaningful postings in the internet community and blogs. TEXTOM is a big data analysis program, and it provides data collection, morphological analysis, and data analysis such as text-mining. As a research sample, there were 167 blog and community postings of the "Lebanon" rumor, and there were 265 postings of the "Taharrush" rumor.

In order to analyze the contents of the postings and the rumors, the researcher utilized the critical discourse analysis of Fairclough and transnational perspectives from the online sphere. The two tools of the analysis recommend that media discourse be conducted not only by the text but also audio-visual content. Media texts[70] are indicators of social and cultural change. Fairclough advocates a critical discourse analysis that examines the relationship between the three dimensions of communication cases: text, discourse practice, and sociocultural practices. Among them, for text analysis, he pays attention to expressions absent in the text, the categories of participants, and the formation of the participants' identity and relationships.[71]

The perspectives from the online sphere explain that open online discourse takes the form of a web sphere, a collection of similar content defined by a common theme. It is converted into a discourse context that can be distinguished from other subjects. The creation of this web sphere is promoted in economic, social, political and cultural development that stimulates and arouses people's attention because of its unusualness. In addition, according to Nguyen, the research topic of this open online discourse is not limited to a specific type of online platform and can deal with various formats such as blogs and social media networks, and it includes not only text but also audio-visual materials.[72]

Referring to the two samples as either "rumor" or "fake news" seems unclear, because it has both forms of disinformation. In the "Taharrush Game" case, the "fact" is based on an actual news article, and it spreads as rumors in online communities. For this reason, the two samples also will be referred to as "disinformation."

"How Lebanon, which was a Christian Country, became an Islamic Country?"

The rumor "How Lebanon, which was a Christian Country, became an Islamic Country?" was chosen for two reasons. First, it is a form of testimony video, making people trust the content more effortlessly compared to images or writings. Second, the message and timing of this video's transmission coincided with the 2018 Yemeni refugee issue. According to the blog and community posting research, the women in the video pointed exactly at the Muslim refugees (outsiders), and this video was posted online during June and July of 2018.

The original video was posted on YouTube on 4 August 2016, in the *Yetchŏk kŭ sŏnhan kil* (The old pathway)[73] channel with the title *"Kidokkyo kukka rebanon ŭn ŏttŏk'e Isŭllam kukkaga toeŏnnŭn'ga?* (How Lebanon, a Christian Country became an Islam Country?)"[74] The video was also uploaded on another extreme-right YouTube channel *GMW Union*, on 8 August 2016 with the title *"Kwanyong tamunhwa p'oyong tayangsŏng i ŏttŏk'e han nara rŭl Isŭllam hwa shik'inŭn'ga?* (How tolerance, multicultural inclusion, and diversity could Islamize one country?)" The titles—especially the latter—reveals a dichotomy between Christians and Muslims. Most of the postings copied the original title of the channel, "The old pathway," however, some people shared the exact contents with more negative titles such as "The story of a country that was destroyed by receiving Islam refugees,"[75] "The end of the Christian state which hosts Islam refugees,"[76] "Cancer cells more threatening than North Korea, Muslims."[77] Superficially, this is a video of one Lebanese Christian woman's testimony about her childhood during the Lebanese civil war. However, we can watch the video from a different perspective if we know about her and the show. Her name is Brigette Gabriel, and she is the founder of ACT! for America, which is a U.S. based anti-Muslim advocacy group.[78] Even though this information is displayed in Korean on the screen briefly, without researching

Picture 1   A captured image from the YouTube channel "The old pathway."

her background, it is not easy for Korean YouTube users to acknowledge the hidden fact that she is one of the most prominent anti-Muslim activists in America, appearing on the Jim Bakkers show, a Christian show. Eventually, this video makes people perceive it as a testimony of a victim or a survivor of the war between local Christians and Muslims who destroyed her country.

The Korean subtitle on the screen played a significant role, as it makes receivers of the content able to read and understand what is written on the screen literally. The problem is that the subtitles are modified and simplified, and it does not deliver the original story fully in some sentences. The main plot of the story in the Korean subtitles is that Lebanon, the only Christian country in the Middle East accepting Palestinian refugees in the early 1970s with hospitality, saw an influx of Muslims (Palestinians), which caused a civil war. The cause of misunderstanding starts with the first sentence, "I was born in Lebanon, which used to be the only majority Christian country in the Middle East." This is different from the Korean subtitle, which states: "I was born in Lebanon, which was the only Christian country[79] of the Middle East." Similar incorrectness can be found in other translations into Korean, or they delete some content of the original sentences and made complicated sentences simple and easy to read. The misleading interpretation of this story was found in many postings in NAVER blogs and communities. In some postings, people even compose the explanation or comments adding the wrong information or exaggerating Muslims' negative images. Here are some examples of what people who deliver the postings or add comments to the online community or blogs write:

> "Originally, Lebanon was a Christian state. The Muslim zombies in the Middle East have eaten Lebanon, killed Lebanese, and became refugees again, drifting across a prosperous country" (831 views, real estate community).[80]

> "Lebanon was a Christian country, but Yemenis flooded into the country and slaughtered a few million people and Islamized it" (3,499 views, shopping community).[81]

> "1. Lebanon, which was originally a rich and wealthy Christion country 2. Seeing this, nearby Muslim beggars flocked 3. Lebanese fed them and offered them a place to sleep because they pity them 4. Muslims shot and slaughtered Christians because they do not believe in Allah shouting out Allahu Akbar 5. Eventually, Lebanon collapsed" (4.2 k views, fashion community).[82]

> "Lebanon was a beautiful and peaceful Christian country. However, the political leaders naively accepted Islam refugees in the name of practising love, and the country fell into a civil war, and Beirut has once become newsworthy in the world with terror and slaughter" (A Christian blog).[83]
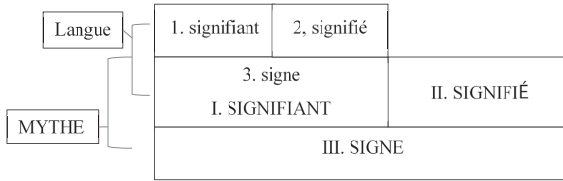
Figure 1   Semiotic System of *Mythologies* by Barthes

Source: Roland Barthes, *Hyŏndae ŭi shinhwa*, p. 272.

The mythologies of Barthes may be applied to analysing this content. In Barthes' *Mythologies*, the system of semiotics is divided into two stages, showing how myths reproduce their meanings in the second semantic action. As seen in figure 1, the signification between *signifié* (image) and *significant* (meaning) in the primitive stage produces the *signe*, as Saussure defined. However, Barthes moves forward from here, making this sign as a signifier in the mythical signification. He puts this sign in the first stage as *SIGNIFIANT* (just a form for second signification) and tried to grasp the mythical meaning by condensing various concepts corresponding to the form.[84]

The Korean subtitle's storytelling with images could be applied to an external manifestation (*signe*) on the language level. It leads the readers to reach further to the meta-language level forming *SIGNIFIÉ*, emphasising themselves as Lebanese (or Lebanese Christians) and Yemeni refugees as Muslims (including Palestinian refugees) who invaded their country. As seen in the above samples, this rumor attaches fear to the Muslim refugees. It also relates to the results of the public opinion surveys by the many institutions outlined in the previous section.

It is not easy to determine whether the writers of the postings or comments intended to mislead people with provocative expressions. However, the posts or comments' timing implies that these postings might be intended, because among 57 postings on NAVER communities, for example, 26 of them were posted in the period between 16–29 June 2018, within two weeks since the Yemeni refugee issue intensified in Korean society. In this case, it could be proposed that this rumor's transmission was aimed at forming public opinion against accepting Muslim refugees.

"Taharrush Game"

This rumor could be categorized as fabricated disinformation or misinformation based on fact, specifically cases of mass sexual harassment in Egypt in 2010 and in Cologne in 2015. According to Abdelmonem, Bavelaar, Wynne-Hughes and Galán, the media coverage about the mass sexual assault in Cologne in 2015 connected the news to the Egyptian case, a collection of sexual harassment assaults and rapes

during the protest in 2010. By doing so, Middle Eastern and North African refugees were broadly held responsible for the sexual harassments in European countries. Furthermore, the term *taharrush* has been reported in the media without proper translation of its meaning into English or Korean, causing another problem. *The Daily Mail* defined *taharrush* (*gamea*) as "collective harassment," "the Arabic gang-rape phenomenon," and "the *taharrush* game."[85] Using the pronunciation of the original language without translating it affects the connection of the word with the region where the language is used. Therefore, this Arabic word might emphasize cultural links to the region and the religion there.

Abdelmonem, Bavelaar, Wynne-Hughes and Galán's research also explained the framing of sexual harassment in Europe by using *taharrush* as below, and these framed contents were also applied to the Korean Islamophobic discourse without filtering.

The media coverage aimed to distinguish European culture and society from Middle Eastern/North African/Arab/Muslim migrants and refugees. It did so by essentializing the variegated meanings encapsulated in these terms and deploying them as synonyms for collective assaults or gang rapes. In so doing, it presented those meanings as multiple references for a singular idea of collective sexual violence intrinsic to societies and cultures in the Middle East and North Africa that are now perceived as invading European society.[86]

In Korea, the issue was also published in news articles; for example, in January 2016, the *Donga ilbo* published an article with the title, "Mass sexual harassment in Cologne originated from the bad Islamic custom of 'Taharrush'."[87] Two years later, in June 2018, *Insight* published an article, "Collective sexual assault 'Taharrush' among Islam refugees," that expressed concern that Korean women might be the targets of such crimes if the government allows (Muslim) refugees into the country.[88] The number of community postings from 2011 until 2020 was 260 related to *taharrush*, and according to the TEXTOM data collection, 240 postings

Picture 2   A screenshot from one of the postings in the internet community.

Source: "Chiptan kanggan nori—t'aharushi," 27 June, 2018, https://cafe.naver.com/dieselmania/15905074.

were created between 2016–2018, 180 of which were created around the time when the Yemeni crisis occurred. The content of these postings convey the seriousness of the European countries' situation or add an expression of *kkŭmt-chik'an* (terrible) to intensify the negative meaning they want to deliver. Concern or worry about their children's safety from the *taharrush* crime also grew in the virtualcommunity of mothers/parents, so-called *mamk'ap'e* (mom café, online community of mothers in Korea). Samples are as follows:

> "'Taharrush' is a game of mass sexual assault by Muslim refugees. It is terrible!! Please take a look at the link below!" (Cosmetic community);[89]

> "This 'Taharrush' originated from Egypt, and it is said that they call it as a game … In Islam, it is said that to rape a woman (especially a non-Muslim women) is allowed … In their culture, where early marriage is common, are not kindergarten girls … women who can have sex with them? A non-Muslim girl …" (7,842 views, mom café);[90]

> "This is a scene of 'Taharrush, an Islamic gang rape game that frequently occurs in Europe. Islamic refugees move around in groups in public places, catching women passing by and gangbanging them. Muslims are not ashamed of committing terrible sins. Because their doctrine teaches that they should punish women who wander around in indecent clothes by rape." (a personal blog)[91]

As seen above, the content's wording is extreme and provocative to make people, especially women and parents of girls, fear (male) Muslim refugees. The *taharrush* rumor attempts to instill the idea that sexual harassment from Muslim men is realistic.

Effect of the online Islamophobic discourses on Korean people

A survey about Islamophobia in Korea for this research was conducted to determine the degree of Islamophobia and the impact of anti-Islam rumors in Korean online society. The survey was conducted via an online panel service in the open survey (the survey has appeared openly on the survey website), on 11 January 2021. The total number of participants was 204, 119 men and 85 women. The age group consists of 13.7% in their 20s, 30.8% in their 30s, 27% in their 40s, 21.6% in their 50s, and 3% in their 60s and older. The proportion of religions among participants was 56.4% non-religious, 17.2% Protestant, 14.7% Buddhist, 11.3% Catholic, and 0.5% others.

To the question, "How do you access the news to know about major issues in Korea or the reaction of other people about the issue online?" 77% of the

participants answered that they use the portal website such as NAVER or DAUM, and 10.8% answered that they use YouTube. Regarding Islamophobic discourse, participants thought that the degree of Islamophobic public discourse online is bad: 69.1% say that it is bad, and 28.4% say it is neither good (lower) nor bad (higher), and 2.5% say that it is good. Regarding attitudes toward the negative information about Islam or Muslims, 35.8% of participants answered that they accepted the content as it is, 38.7% answered that they had never doubted the facts, and 14.2% said that they always doubt the contents, whether it is biased to one side or not, and 11.3% said that they just read it out of curiosity.

Interestingly, a different result was found about the image of Islam and Muslims. As seen in Table 1, Muslims' negative image (55.4%) is higher than Islam's image (43.6%). However, it does not connect to the difference in the positive image of both of the concepts.

This result is consistent with the previous surveys' results by other institutions in the previous section.[92] In those surveys, in response to Islam, the negative images and the positive images coexisted; however, negative perceptions were higher in response to Muslim refugees than refugees in general. In other words, the image of Islam as a religion and Muslims as believers are divided; the image of Muslims is more negative than the image of Islam, the religion itself.

Furthermore, Islam and Muslims' images were more negative and "very negative" when participants have had a chance to closely contact Islamic culture or Muslims, as seen in Table 2 and Table 3. Regarding Islam's image, the percentage of the negative image among the participants without previous contact with Muslims or Islam was 44%, higher than 41.6% among those who have experience of Muslims or Islam. The percentage of negative image rises about Muslims, 57.7% without the experiences and 44.5% with experiences.

Among the sample, only 17.6% answered that they had experience with Islam or Muslims. If we go back to the result of the data, people who did not have experience with Islam or Muslims were probably influenced by online public perceptions and formed a negative image of Islam or Muslims. When people encounter a new concept that they have never experienced before, in other words,

Table 1   Image of Islam and Muslims (%)

	Very Negative	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Very Positive
Image of Islam	15.2	28.4	53.4	2.5	0.5
Image of Muslims	20.1	35.3	41.2	2.5	1

Table 2   Image of Islam and previous experience of Islam or Muslims (%)

Image of Islam	Very Negative	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Very Positive
With previous experiences	8.3	33.3	52.8	5.6	0
Without previous experiences	16.7	27.3	53.6	1.8	0.6

Table 3   Image of Muslims and previous experiences of Islam or Muslims (%)

Image of Muslims	Very Negative	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Very Positive
With previous experiences	13.9	30.6	47.2	5.6	2.8
Without previous experiences	21.4	36.3	39.9	1.8	0.6

without knowing the reality, they tend to create an image of what they have heard or learned.[93] In this respect, Lippman's "picture in the head" theory could be applied; the mass media and the actual events or objects of the world are conveyed in a simplified format, which significantly impacts on public perception and image formation.[94]

Then how do Islamophobic rumors affect personal opinions about Islam or Muslims? I will use the two sample cases here. The participant's experience of the two rumors was different; the "Taharrush" rumor seems to be spread and consumed more (44.1%) than "How Lebanon, which was a Christian Country, became an Islamic Country? (hereafter 'Lebanon')" rumor (21.1%). In the "Taharrush" rumor, the participants who had already heard about the rumor showed a higher percentage, especially negative sentiments towards the image of Muslims.

By gender, in both case samples, the result showed that the rumors had more influence on females. As Table 6 and 7 shows, 83.5% of females answered that their personal opinion on Muslims changed negatively after hearing the "Taharrush" rumor, and 56.5% in the case of the "Lebanon" rumor. Both percentages are higher than that of the males, 75.6% and 45.4% for each sample.

Regarding religion, there are few remarkable differences in religious affiliation. However, a higher percentage of Protestant or Catholic Christians had read or watched the two samples as seen in Table 8 and Table 9. 62.9% of Protestant Christians had heard the "Taharrush" rumor, and this percentage is almost opposite to the participants with other religions including non-religious people. In regards to the "Lebanon" rumor, the percentage of prior contact with the rumor

Table 4   Image of Islam and previous experience of "Taharrush" rumor (%)

Image of Islam	Very Negative	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Very Positive
Learnt about "Taharrush" rumor	21.1	27.8	48.9	2.2	0
Didn't learn about "Taharrush" rumor	10.5	28.9	57	2.6	0.9

Table 5   Image of Muslims and previous experience of the "Taharrush" rumor (%)

Image of Muslims	Very Negative	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Very Positive
Learnt about "Taharrush" rumor	25.6	36.7	37.8	0	0
Didn't learn about "Taharrush" rumor	15.8	34.2	43.9	4.4	1.8

Table 6   Change of personal opinion about Muslims after hearing the "Taharrush" rumor (%)

Change of personal opinion	Very Negative	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Very Positive
Male	52.9	22.7	20.2	4.2	0
Female	61.2	22.4	12.9	3.5	0
Total	**56.4**	**22.5**	**17.2**	**3.9**	**0**

Table 7   Change of personal opinion about Muslims after hearing the "Lebanon" rumor (%)

Change of personal opinion	Very Negative	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Very Positive
Male	22.7	22.7	39.5	14.3	0.8
Female	35.3	21.2	38.8	4.7	0
Total	**27.9**	**22.1**	**39.2**	**10.3**	**0.5**

Table 8   Prior experience of the "Lebanon" rumor and religion (%)

	Learnt about "Lebanon" rumor	Didn't learn about "Lebanon" rumor
Non-religious	13.9	86.1
Buddhism	16.7	83.3
Protestant	34.3	65.7
Catholic	43.5	56.5
Other	0	100

Table 9   Prior experience of the "Taharrush" rumor and religion (%)

	Learnt about "Taharrush" rumor	Didn't learn about "Taharrush" rumor
Non-religious	41.7	58.3
Buddhism	40	60
Protestant	62.9	37.1
Catholic	34.8	65.2
Other	0	100

is higher among Catholics (43.5%) and Protestants (34.3%). These results imply that this kind of rumor is transmitted among Christian communities more than the general public online spaces.

The results of the survey on Islamophobic discourse in Korea are as follows. The general image of Islam and the image of Muslims by Korean internet users are slightly different; in the case of Islam's image, the percentage of people with neutral opinions is the highest, and in the case of the image of Muslims, negative opinions are the highest. Both sides have less than 3.5% of a favourable opinion, and this result could be analyzed to conclude that the image of Muslims or Islam in Korea cannot be said to be positive, however, the perception of Muslims alone is more negative.

When it comes to the impact of previous experiences with Muslims or Islamic culture on the image of Muslim or Islam, negative opinions were higher when there was no prior experience. When people have no prior experience, the likelihood of having a negative image is higher than having a positive image.

The rumors related to *taharrush* were transmitted and consumed widely, and its influence was found to be more effective. Participants who encountered

the "Taharrush" rumor tended to have more negative perceptions about Islam or Muslims. When it comes to gender differences, both samples showed higher negative opinions from women, suggesting that women are more affected by these rumors.

Conclusion

This study examines the current status and content of two rumors related to Islam or Muslims, "Taharrush Game" and "How Lebanon, which was a Christian Country, became an Islamic Country?," and the impact of online disinformation or misinformation in the form of rumors or fake news on Korean society. Online hate speech in Korea is prevalent these days, and hatred against Islam or Muslims especially has become a significant phenomenon in Korean society.

The main findings of research showed that the general assumption about people's perception of Islam or Muslims in Korean society tends toward negativity. This negativity could be analyzed to be affected by provocative and sensational online rumors about Islam or Muslims and by disinformation published in newspaper format in some online media outlets. This disinformation, which is conveyed by connecting past incidents and claiming to be "facts," planted negative images online in the minds of Korean people who do not have many opportunities to encounter Islamic culture or Muslims in their daily life. The disinformation further stimulates their anxiety and even hatred of Islam and Muslims.

The Islamophobic discourses were produced mainly in the right-wing Protestant sects with a fundamentalist orientation, substituting their hatred against North Korea or homosexuality with Islamophobia. These rumors are transmitted via online communities and blogs in various ways to lead public discourse towards a specific direction; some were delivered without modification of the original content, and some were shared in the form of a collection of related information, and some others were shared with more provocative modifications adding groundless rumors. The "Taharrush" rumor seemed to have more impact compared to the "Lebanon" rumor; it was transmitted more than the former, considering the percentage of who was exposed to the rumor according to the survey. This Islamophobic disinformation frames Muslim men as perpetrators of crimes under Islam, the hostile religion, particularly by creating images of patriarchalism and selectively using anti-Islamist reports originating in Europe. The content of the rumors is provocative and frank, threatening that Muslims will harm the country. For example, the "Taharrush" rumor affects the Korean community, making the receivers worry that frequent sexual harassment might occur in Korea and harm Korean women, even little girls. In the case of the

"Lebanon" rumor, it had less impact compared to the other. However, both rumors affected Korean society, contributing to the spread of Islamophobia in society.

The effect of prior experience with Muslims or Islamic culture on general perception is a little less pessimistic than those who have no experience. However, it does not change the result positively due to the small percentage of the sample (17.6%) in the survey. Thus, it can be concluded that previous experience or contact with Islamic culture or Muslims does not help to lead people's perception toward an optimistic view.

This research has some limitations because the rumors' political purpose has not been analyzed. Here, I focused more on the two rumors' content. The numbers and variety of participants in the survey and the variety of the survey questions was not enough to generalize to the current situation. However, this research might be utilized as a baseline study to examine the relations between Islamophobic rumors and Korean online users' perceptions.

Notes

1. This research was supported by the Asia Research Foundation Grant funded by the Seoul National University Asia Center.
2. Email: kyungsoo0104@gmail.com
3. The author searched news and community postings and blog posts on two rumors to be addressed in this paper, using NAVER which is the most used portal search websites in Korea.
4. Tongmun Kim, "Isŭllam p'obia, chojang in'ga shilch'e in'ga?," *Chinbo p'yŏngnon* 67 (2016): 138–139.
5. Hyŏnmin Kim a, "Han'guk ŭi Isŭllamsa②… Koryŏ, haesang • yuksang t'onghae kyoryu," *At'ŭllasŭ*, 21 April, 2020, http://www.atlasnews.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=2018; Hyŏnmin Kim b, "Han'guk ŭi Isŭllamsa③… Chosŏn ch'ogi en kungjung chohoe ch'amsŏk," *At'ŭllasŭ*, 22 April, 2020, http://www.atlasnews.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=2021.
6. Hee-Soo Lee. "Islam in Korea History, Present Situation and Future Prospect," *Korea Journal of Islamic Culture* 1.1 (1997): 28.
7. Hyŏnmin Kim c. "Han'guk ŭi Isŭllamsa④… It'aewŏn e Sŏul chungang sŏngwŏn kŏllip," *At'ŭllasŭ*, 23 April, 2020, http://www.atlasnews.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=2026.
8. Ikran Eum, "Korea's Response to Islam and Islamophobia," *Korea Observer* (2017 October): 827.
9. Since 2000, multiculturalism in Korean society has gradually emerged as a realistic agenda when the number of rural men's marriages with foreign women started to rise. The term 'multicultural' began to be used in earnest around 2005. Since 2006, the Korean government has begun promoting various policies in preparation for a "multicultural society." (Yŏngmin Pak. "Han'guk ŭi tamunhwa chuŭi chedohwa wa tamunhwa chŏngch'aek kwaje," *Kŭllobŏl chŏngch'i yŏn'gu* 7.2 (2014), p. 68.
10. According to Pak Chongsu, in addition to the Christian Liberal Party, there are more than 13 groups related to Islamophobic protests or leading the protest. These groups are Protestant conservative groups that actively campaigned against the creation of Halal food complex by the government. Chongsu Pak, "Han'guk sahoe ŭi Isŭllam hyŏmo hyŏnsang kwa chaengjŏm," *Chonggyo munhwa yŏn'gu* 29 (2017), pp. 58–59.

11. In 2015 March, President Pak Kŭnhye signed a memorandum of understanding for halal food cooperation at a meeting with the Crown Prince of the UAE, which paved the way for Korean companies to enter the halal food market. In the cooperation, it was decided to create a 'Halal Food Theme Park' in Iksan in Jŏllabukto. (Chunhyŏng Chŏng, "Han'guk-UAE, 'hallal shikp'um' hyŏmnyŏk yanghae kaksŏ ch'egyŏl," *SBS News*, 06 March, 2015. https://news.sbs.co.kr/news/endPage.do?news_id=N1002866121&plink=COPYPASTE&cooper=SBSNWSEND).

12. Chongsu Pak. "Han'guk sahoe ŭi Isŭllam hyŏmo," pp. 57–58.

13. Ch'ŏngwadae kungmin ch'ŏngwŏn. "Chejudo pulbŏb nanmin shinch'ŏng munje e ttarŭn nanminbŏp musajŭng ipkuk, nanmin shinch'ŏnghŏ ka p'yeji/kaehŏn ch'ŏngwŏn hamnid," 13 June, 2018, https://www1.president.go.kr/petitions/269548.

14. Yewŏn Sin and Tonghun Ma. "Kungnae midiŏ e chaehyŏn toen yemen nanmin ŭi yangmyŏn. midiŏ kyŏngje wa munhwa," *Midiŏ wa kyŏngje munhwa* 17.2 (2019): 32–33.

15. Chongsu Pak. "Han'guk sahoe ŭi Isŭllam hyŏmo"; Tongmun Kim. "Isŭllamp'obia, chojang in'ga"; Ikran Eum. "Korea's Response,"; Chin'gu Yi. "Tamunhwa shidae Han'guk kaeshin'gyo ŭi Isŭllam inshik: Isŭllam p'obia rŭl chungshim ŭro," *Chonggyo munhwa pip'yŏng* 19 (2011); Gi Yeon Koo (Ku Kiyŏn), "Islamophobia and the Politics of Representation of Islam in Korea," *Journal of Korean Religions* 9.1 (2018).

16. Hankyoreh. "(Tandok) Tongsŏngae nanmin hyŏmo 'katcha nyusŭ kongjang ' ŭi irŭm, Esŭdŏ *Hankyoreh*, 27 September, 2018, http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society_general/863478.html.

17. Shinhyŏng Sŏng. "Han'guk sahoe ŭi hyŏmo hyŏnsang e taehan punsŏk kwa kidokkyo yullijŏk cheŏn: yemen nanmin isyu rŭl chungshim ŭro," *Sŏn'gyo wa shinhak* 47 (2019): 248–249.

18. Hyesil Chŏng. "Urian ŭi injong chuŭi—chach'ing 'raedik'ŏl p'eminisŭt'ŭ tŭl' kwa posu kaeshin'gyo hyŏmo seryŏk ŭn ŏttŏk'e 'nanmin pandae' ŭi han moksori rŭl naege toeŏnnŭn'ga?," *Yŏsŏng iron* 39 (2018): 208.

19. During the period of 2011–2020, NAVER was marked as being the most use search engine (76.63%) (In "Search Engine" section, the period was set between 2011/01/01–2020/12/31 in http://www.internettrend.co.kr/trendForward.tsp (visit: 2021.01.09)).

20. Chin'gu Yi. "Tamunhwa shidae Han'guk," p. 167.

21. The Runnymede Trust, "Islamophobia-A Challenge for Us All 1997," 4, Last accessed 12 September, 2020, https://www.runnymedetrust.org/companies/17/74/Islamophobia-A-Challenge-for-Us-All.html. The report presented eight critical distinctions between closed-open views of Islam: Monolithic-Diverse, Separate-Interacting, Inferior-Different, Enemy-Partner, Manipulative-Sincere, Criticism of West Rejected-Considered, Discrimination Defended-Criticized, and Islamophobia Seen as Natural-Problematic (The Runnymede Trust, "Islamophobia-A Challenge for Us All 1997," pp. 14–15).

22. Yi Sŏngsu (2019) defined xenophobia; a) "xenophobia" is a concept related to emotion and consciousness based on the belief that "we are different from you" where certain races feel superior or inferior to other races. In other words, the collective cognitive formation that separates us from them forms the basis of the xenophobia phenomenon." b) the sentiment of 'difference' includes the consciousness that 'the others should be excluded' for the sake of maintaining our identity of the community or self-preservation. The exclusion of different races and peoples from us justifies discrimination against the others. (Sŏngsu Yi. "ISIS ihu Arap segye ŭi pyŏnhwa wa Isŭllamop'obia (Islamophobia) hyŏnsang e taehan koch'al," *Isŭllam hak'oe* 29.1 (2019), p. 167). Three main forms of racism are Islamophobia, Romaphobia, and the criminalization of undocumented migrants (asylum seekers). (Fabio Perocco, "Anti-Migrant Islamophobia in Europe. Social Roots, Mechanisms and Actors," REMHU 26.53 (2018), p. 26).

23. Tandoc Jr., Edson C., Zheng Wei Lim, and Richard Ling, "Defining 'Fake News'," *Digital Journalism* 6.2 (2018), p. 138.

24. Hunt Allcott and Matthew Gentzkow, "Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 31.2 (2017), p. 212; Gordon Pennycook, Tyrone D. Cannon, and David G. Rand, "Prior Exposure Increases Perceived Accuracy of Fake News," *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 147.12 (2018), p. 213.

25. Allcott and Gentzkow, "Social Media and Fake News," p. 214.

26. Sŏnhŭi Yang. "Yut'yubŭ chŏnŏllijŭm ŭi shidae, chŏnt'ongjŏk chŏnŏllijŭm ŭi taeŭng hyŏnhwang kwa kwaje," *Sahoe kwahak yŏn'gu* 31.1 (2020), p. 253; Yongsŏk Hwang and Kwŏn Osŏng. "Katcha nyusŭ ŭi kaenyŏmhwa wa kyuje sudan e kwanhan yŏn'gu -int'ŏnet sŏbisŭ saŏpcha ŭi chayul kyuje rŭl chungshim ŭro-," *Ŏllon'kwa pŏp* 16.1 (2017), p. 57.

27. Zhou and Zafarani. "Fake News: A Survey of Research," p. 3.

28. Rumors can be defined as uncertain statements which have spread among people containing stimulating content. It has the characteristic of spreading on a large scale in a short time. The scope is indiscriminate. This paper does not equate rumors and fake news, but tries to approach them with a meaning with close characteristics. Hyŏnchung Yu and Chŏng Hyŏnchu "Iyongja ŭi hwakchŭng p'yŏnhyang kwa sŏltŭk chishik sujun i katcha nyusŭ hŏgusŏng p'andan e mich'i nŭn yŏnghyang," *Han'guk kwanggo PR shirhakh'oe* 13.4 (2020): 133.

29. Hankyoreh 21. "Pant'ak undong, 'tonga' oboga ŏpsŏttamyŏn," 27 January, 2010. http://h21. hani.co.kr/arti/special/special_general/26642.html.

30. Tongmin Kim "Tonga ilbo ŭi shint'ak t'ongch'i waegok podo ŭi yŏn'gu," *Han'guk ŏllon chŏngbo hakpo* 52 (2010), p. 138.

31. Han'gungminjudang, the right-wing party at that time, had already decided to oppose the trusteeship in Korea before the Moscow conference concluded the meeting. (Tongmin Kim "Tonga ilbo ŭi shint'ak t'ongch'i waegok podo ŭi yŏn'gu," p. 145).

32. Hankyoreh 21. "Pant'ak undong,"; Tongmin Kim "Tonga ilbo ŭi shint'ak t'ongch'i waegok podo ŭ yŏn'gu," p. 136.

33. Tongmin Kim. "Tonga ilbo ŭi shint'ak t'ongch'i waegok podo ŭi yŏn'gu," p. 146.

34. Hankyoreh 21. "Pant'ak undong."

35. Han'kuk ilbo. "(Kiŏk'al onŭl) Shint'ak t'ongch'i obosagŏn (12.27)," 27 December, 2017. https://www.hankookilbo.com/News/Read/201712270493472656.

36. Hŭisong Kim. "1980 nyŏn 5 wŏl Kwangju, kŭrigo Pukhan—'Pukhan kaeipsŏl' e taehan, pip'an-jŏk koch'al," *Minju chuŭi wa in'gwŏn* 16.4 (2016), p. 70.

37. Hŭisong Kim. "5•18 kwallyŏn katcha nyusŭ ŭi kiwŏn kwa shilt'ae e kwanhan yŏn'gu," *NGO yŏn'gu* 14.2 (2019), pp. 60, 62.

38. This case occurred in 2008 when the newly established I Myŏngpak government put forward import of US beef as a prerequisite for signing FTA. A rumor about patients of mad cow disease with photos was Transmitted widely online, and people were more influenced by those stimulating rumors than opinions of scientists. This controversy was further amplified as the TV show "PD such'ŏp" produced a program about the danger of the disease, and eventually people protested with a candlelight vigil for 106 days. This incident occurred at the time of transition of the regime from the progressive to the conservative, revealing Korean dichotomous political ideology. (Chinch'ŏl No. "2008nyŏn ch'otpulchip'oerŭl t'onghae pon kwangubyŏng kongp'owa mujiŭi wihŏmsot'ong," *Kyŏngjewa sahoe* 84 (2009), pp. 163–164, 178–179).

39. Hyŏngch'an Ku. "Hyŏmo wa chonggyo munhwa: Han'guk kaeshin'gyo e kwanhan sogo," *Chonggyo munhwa pip'yŏng* 33 (2018), pp. 23–24.

40. Gi Yeon, Koo. "Islamophobia and the Politics," pp. 161–177.

41. Suwan Kim. "Han'gugin ŭi Arap, Isŭllam imiji mit kwallyŏn ŏllon podo inshik yŏn'gu" *Han'guk chungdong hakh'oe nonch'ong* 37.1 (2016), p. 205.

42. Kim. "Han'gugin ŭi Arap," pp. 195, 205.
43. Sŏngun Yu. "Nanmin padado Isŭllam ŭn antwae Han'guk tŏpch'in 'Isŭllam p'obia," *Chungang ilbo*, 5 August, 2018, https://news.joins.com/article/22860819
44. Compared to the negative response about Middle Eastern migrants, negative responses on European and North American migrants were as low as 20%, which shows the dual racism within Korean society. The report argued that the 'Middle Eastern origin' acted as a stigma. Chihyang Chang and Kang Ch'ungku. "Han'gugin ŭi tae chungdong inshik kwa chŏngch'aek-chŏk hamŭi," *Asan chŏngch'aek yŏn'guwŏn* 20 April, 2020.
45. Gi Yeon, Koo. "Islamophobia and the Politics," pp. 161–162.
46. Ikran Eum. "Korea's Response," p. 832.
47. He became a martyr by some Christian groups (the source didn't specify which groups) and his funeral Was held as a pan-Christian funeral. According to Nyusŭ aen choi newspaper, a Christian news platform, the pan-Christian funeral was a sign that his death was closely related to Christianity. In fact, he was found to have worked as a missionary in Baghdad. (Soran Ch'oe. "2004nyŏn isyu' chungdong sŏn'gyo wa Kim Sŏnil ŭi chugŭm," *Nyusŭ aen choi*, 31 December, 2004. http://www.newsnjoy.or.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=10362).
48. Minyŏng Ch'oe. "Kim Sŏnil ssi irak'ŭ p'irap sagŏn chŏnma," *Kyŏnghyang shinmun* 21 June, 2004. http://news.khan.co.kr/kh_news/khan_art_view.html?art_id=200406211818291; Yŏnham nyusŭ, "Yŏnhap paekkwa' Kim Sŏnil ssi napch'i p'isal sagŏn," 29 May, 2015. http://oh.yna.co.kr/publish/2015/05/29/YNO20150526117200039.html.
49. Chin'gu Yi. "Tamunhwa shidae Han'guk", p. 164.
50. In addition, they are referred to using various expressions such as far-right Protestantism, Protestant far-rightism, Protestant right-wing, Christin rights, Protestant conservatives, Evangelical rights, far-right-conservative Protestant, far-right conservative Christian power, Christian right-wing power, Protestant newright, and far-right Protestant mass movement. Kang Inch'ŏl. "Han'guk kaeshin'gyo wa posujŏk shiminundong: kaeshin'gyo up'a wa kŭgu-hyŏmo chŏngch'I rŭl chungshim ŭro," *Inmunhak yŏn'gu* 33 (2020), p. 12.
51. Tŏkman Pae. "Hyŏmo wa Han'guk kyohoe, kŭrigo kŭnbon chuŭi," in *Hyŏmo wa Han'guk kyohoe*, Kwŏn Chisŏng et al. (Seoul: Samin, 2020), pp. 130–131.
52. At the same time, there is an opposite group of people saying that the hatred is from an ignorance and prejudice of the biblical records, and unscrupulous behaviour that violates universal human rights (Hyŏngch'an Ku. "Hyŏmo wa chonggyo munhwa," pp. 15–54.)
53. Inch'ŏl Kang. "Han'kuk kaeshin'gyo wa," p. 12.
54. According to Kang Inch'ŏl, the United States was a the "father country of faith" that brought and nurtured Protestantism, and in another sense, it was also a "saviour" to them (Inch'ŏl Kang. "Hyŏmo wa chonggyo munhwa," p. 18). As such, the influence of the U.S. in Korean Protestants could be considered significant. At the same time, the U.S. flags in the extreme rightist Protestant protest scene in Korea might be explained. See also Chinho Kim. "Han'guk sahoe wa kaeshin'gyo kŭgu chuŭi 1: Sŏron," *Che 3shidae* 85 (2016): 6–15.
55. Chongwŏn Ch'oe. "Han'guk kidokkyo, shimin chonggyo wa chŏngch'i chonggyo sai esŏ" in *Hyŏmo wa Han'guk kyohoe*, Kwŏn Chisŏng et al. (Seoul: Samin), p. 103.
56. Chinho Kim "Han'guk sahoe wa," p. 9.
57. The two concepts were combined to form "chongbukkei" (종북게이), literally meaning "pro-North Korean gay" by the far-right Protestant Christians. It is impossible to define who are "chongbukkei" or if they really exist, and why their existence became a threat to the society. However, this combination doubled the sentiment of hatred and fear against them. Chisŏng Yi. "Hyŏmo ŭi shidae, han'guk kidokkyo ŭi yŏkh'al- kŭgu kaeshin'gyo ŭi chongbukkei hyŏmo rŭl chungshim ŭro" *Kidokkyo sahoe yulli* 42 (2018), pp. 225–226.
58. Chisŏng Yi. "Hyŏmo ŭi shidae, han'guk kidokkyo ŭi yŏkh'al- kŭgu kaeshin'gyo ŭi chongbukkei hyŏmo rŭl Chungshim ŭro," p. 226.
59. Inch'ŏl Kang. "Han'guk kaeshin'gyo wa," p. 16.

60. This "Eight steps of Islamization strategy," does not refer to any contents in the CIA's *The World Fact Book* of 2007. According to Kim Tongmun's fact check article, this is disinformation and the content is Based on the book Slavery, Terrorism, and Islam: The Historical Roots and Contemporary Threat Peter Hammond, which took and used a percentage source from *The World Fact Book* (2007). (Tongmun Kim. "CIA ŭi 'Isŭllam hwa 8 tan'gye chŏllyak' ŭn ŏpta," *K'ŭrisŭch'an t'udei*, 11 December, 2008, http://www.christiantoday.us/14295).

61. Chin'gu Yi. "Tamunhwa shidae Han'guk," pp. 172–174.

62. Along with the rumors, "Korean Islamization strategy 2020" also had been spread since 2008 as form of the news (Christian newspapers), which insists that since 1988 (Seoul Olympic was held in this year), Muslims set the strategy for Islamization of Korea and in 2005 the strategy was specified by Middle Easter Islamic leader's missionary conference. (Tongmun Kim. "CIA ŭi 'Isŭllam hwa 8 tan'gye chŏllyak' ŭn ŏpta").

63. Tongmun Kim. "CIA ŭi 'Isŭllam hwa 8 tan'gye chŏllyak' ŭn ŏpta."

64. Tongmun Kim. "CIA ŭi 'Isŭllam hwa 8 tan'gye chŏllyak' ŭn ŏpta."

65. Chin'gu Yi. "Tamunhwa shidae Han'guk," pp. 177, 183.

66. After the article was published, EPMH filed a lawsuit against Hankyoreh claiming damages and demanding a correction. Eventually, in February 2020, the court ruled against EPMH, the plaintiff. (Hankyoreh. "<Han'gyŏre>' katcha nyusŭ ŭi ppuri rŭl ch'ajasŏ', sonbae sosong sŭngso," 19 February, 2020, http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society_general/928795.html).

67. Hankyoreh. "(Tandok) Tongsŏngae nanmin hyŏmo."

68. It is an Internet newspaper that calls itself a Christian independent press that is not tied to the power of the church or money. This newspaper offers a fact checking section which deals with topics Korean conservative or extreme rightist Christians express hate towards, such as homosexuality, Islam, an refugees. (News and Joy, "Introduction of the media," accessed 25 February, 2021, http://www.newsnjoy.or.kr/com/com-1.html).

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70. Here, Fairclough refers to the traditional media such as newspaper or TV. As far as the online contents are delivering information to the public, the research will imply the analysis tool on the online media.

71. Norman Fairclough, *Taejung maech'e tamhwa punsŏk*, trans. Yi Wŏnp'yo (Seoul: Han'guk munhwasa, 2004), pp. 76–79.

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73. It is the Protestant Christian community which follows new apostolic reformation. ("Yetchŏk kŭ sŏnhan kil" k'ap'e yoju ŭi "hoebok" chiphoe" 08 May, 2013, https://blog.naver.com/yoochinw/130167768818.)

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