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Abstract

This study is a socio-cultural analysis of Islamophobia in South Korea as well as an examination of the representations of Islam by Korean online media. By tracing the development of Islamophobia in Korea, I will attempt to examine how discussions of Islam have both evolved and are currently taking place in Korea. Furthermore, by determining the intricate relationship between Islamophobia and Korean Protestantism, I will identify one of the major drivers of this discourse. While Islamophobia has spread noticeably after a series of terrorist attacks by an armed group calling itself the Islamic State (IS), the rapid spread of Islamophobia can be partly attributed to the general Korean public's limited and distorted understanding of Islam and Muslims. This study aims to combat prejudice and discrimination against Islam and reduce the resultant social conflict by determining the cultural logics behind the images of Islam in Korean society. Judging from the comments on social media and in Korean news articles, Islamophobia can be viewed as an aspect of a larger backlash against multiculturalism. In such discourses, Islam acts as an agent of uncertainty and uncontrollable "liquid fear" (Bauman 2013). This work ultimately proposes that certain steps need to be taken to promote respect for the otherness of Islam in a multicultural, globalized Korean society.

Keywords: Islamophobia, Islam in Korea, big data, media analysis, multiculturalism

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Introduction

“We will stop homosexual, Islamic, and anti-Christian bills from being passed”; “South Korea will become a terrorist state once 300,000 Muslims occupy the Halal food industry complex site of Iksan City”; and “A sharp increase in security threats and sexual assaults of Korean women are expected with the increasing number of Muslims.” These horrific Islamophobic statements are not abusive or slanderous comments posted anonymously online. They derive from promotional leaflets issued by the Christian Liberal Party as part of its campaign during South Korea’s 20th National Assembly elections held in April 2016. Distributed by the Christian Liberal Party to all households in Korea in the form of an electoral roll listing the names and information of candidates, the promotional leaflets were filled with provocative Islamophobic slogans. These leaflets give a frightening glimpse into the problem of Islamophobia in Korea. Besides reflecting the serious nature of this problem, they also disclose the hidden logic and methods of Islamophobia in Korea.¹

This paper aims to examine the construction of negative images of Islam in South Korean society in order to critically unpack their hidden logic and methods. With the appearance of many followers or supporters on social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, social media itself is exerting enormous influence in not only spreading information but also in setting the social-political agenda and forming public opinions on such agendas. In the formation of public opinion, discourses generated online serve as a platform more significant than any other medium. However, at the same time, as online hate issues surface, existing negative public sentiments reflecting racism, anti-multiculturalism, and Islamophobia are created through the online medium.

This paper will utilize big data analysis tools to analyze postings within mainstream and social media, in order to provide a social background to Islamophobia in current Korean society, as well as to examine the politics of contemporary Islamic representation. In particular, it will examine the frames through which Islamic discourses are both produced and consumed by the general public. It will focus on the creation of Islamophobic discourses by the various representatives of Korean Protestantism, who have been the most active agents in producing such discourses. Islamophobia has intensified in the

United States and Europe, triggered by events such as the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the emergence of the so-called Islamic State (IS; also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or ISIS), the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, the influx of refugees from the Middle East, and the ban on hijabs in Europe. The ties of Koreans to Islamic culture are relatively new compared to Europe and the United States, where there has been a long history of interaction with Islamic culture. A greater awareness of Islam and Muslims began to surface around 2000 when the concept of a multicultural society was first introduced to Korean society. Despite the small minority of Muslims in Korean society and the foreign nature of the Islamic religion, negative images and a certain fear of Islam and Muslims among Koreans have been gathering force. As such, this paper will examine how Islamic religion is politically represented and has become a target of hatred.

Islamophobia, as a social phenomenon, goes well beyond negative perceptions and attitudes towards Islam, and is part of a generalized hatred of and discrimination against all social minorities. In February 2017, the National Human Rights Commission of Korea (NHRC) published, “A Study on Hate Speech and its Countermeasures,” targeting hate speech against four groups: women, sexual minorities, persons with disabilities, and immigrants, including Muslims. The report demonstrated the seriousness of hate speech prevalent in Korean society. In a survey of immigrants in Korean, to include Muslims, in answer to the question of whether they have felt fear at becoming the target of hatred in their everyday lives, 52.3 percent answered yes. Half of those immigrants surveyed also said they had experienced online hate speech. Though the percentage of participants who experienced hate speech was much higher among other groups (including women, sexual minorities, and persons with disabilities), this high level of hate towards immigrants, including Muslims, still demands our attention.²

The report also highlighted how hatred against immigrants was mostly directed towards immigrant workers, including Muslims, migrant women involved in international marriage, mixed children of multicultural families, and African Americans. The survey revealed that the public viewed immigrants as “dirty,” “loud,” “smelly,” “uncivilized,” “stupid,” and “lazy” people “obsessed with money” and who needed to be shunned. Meanwhile, Muslims

were perceived as a potential “terrorist group.” Hatred directed at immigrants through slurs such as “go back to your country” needs to be taken seriously as it can incite violence and discriminatory policies (including demands for deportation) for the sake of “preventing crime” and ensuring the “security” of Korean citizens. For such reasons, such expressions of hatred can also be readily viewed as violations of human rights (NHRC 2017, 108). The results of the report by the Human Rights Commission imply that one manifestation of racism and xenophobia regarding immigrants in Korea is Islamophobia, which is also linked to the issue of multiculturalism. The seriousness of this problem lies in the fact that it creates a bias that intensifies discrimination and in that Islamophobia is created, not by a single instigator, but by numerous Islamophobic people who operate behind their Internet screens.

Given the relatively short history of relations between Islamic countries and Korea, how are Islamophobic discourses and understandings of Islam created in Korean society? The main difference between Islamic discourses in Korea and those of Europe or the United States is the fact that in Korea, it is not so much the actual encounters with Muslim immigrants but rather the media that wields greater influence in creating fear and hostility towards Islam. In other words, the Korean people’s awareness of Islam is constructed mostly through the media and the news, not through direct experiences. Given the inordinate power of the media in constructing the image of Islam within Korean society, this study focuses on the following issues: 1) how Islam is represented in Korean media; 2) changes in the awareness of Islam within Korean society after the IS terrorist attacks; and 3) the means through which rumors and irrational fears of Islam and Muslims are created within Korean Protestantism.

In-depth interviews and big data collection were used to generate the data required to analyze how Islam is represented in the Korean media. The in-depth interviews were conducted with 12 Muslims from foreign countries (5 men, 7 women) along with one Korean Imam of a mosque in Korea, and four other Koreans who had converted to Islam. A total of 36 participants, including one Christian pastor and five Christian laypersons (3 men and 2 women), 3 halal cosmetics-related businessmen, 5 Middle East-related Korean businessmen, 4 employees of a large corporation in charge of planning halal cosmetics projects, 3 officials from government agencies related to halal policies,

and 5 journalists for Middle Eastern news services, were interviewed for one to three hours. The number of interviews conducted for each participant varied from one to three. Most of the in-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face while email and online interviews were conducted with one pastor and two journalists. This study is a preliminary ethnographic analysis of the representation of Islam in South Korea using a social insight program—which is a big data analysis program developed by Daumsoft. The program analyzes the big data collected from the internet and social media through a text mining engine to produce insight reports on the results (<http://insight.some.co.kr/searchKeywordMap.html>).

This study also utilized big data programs such as Big Kinds—which is a media-centered big data analytics service, offered by the Korea Press Foundation (<http://www.bigkinds.or.kr>). This paper deliberately excluded the voices of extreme conservative Christian groups that carry out Islamophobic activity through conservative Christian media or anti-Islamic movements. The reason being that because Islamophobia in Korea is a multi-level discourse, focusing on the one-sided extreme discourse of a few conservative Christian groups would cause confusion in the overall logical development of this study. As such, in this paper I excluded some extreme opinions in order to place the focus on the formation of the *average* discourse.

Current Status of Muslims in Korea

Prior to examining how Islam is represented in Korea, the number of Muslims in Korea should be identified. It is estimated that approximately 160,000–200,000 Muslims currently reside in South Korea (An 2015; Kim Dong Mun 2016). However, the precise number of Muslims is unknown. A general view of their breakdown by region of origin is provided in Table 1.

It is estimated that a total of 167,177 Muslim immigrants are currently residing in Korea. These include 158,922 Muslim immigrants to Korea, 5,553 Muslim marriage migrants (as of 2014), and 2,703 naturalized Koreans (An 2015).³ If one includes the 35,000 Korean Muslims and 7,000 second-generation Muslims in the calculation, the total number of Muslims, both born in Korea

Table 1. Estimated Number of Muslim Residents in Korea by Region of Origin as of 2017

Region of origin	Estimated Muslim immigrants in Korea
Middle East (Arab)	8,688
Middle East (non-Arab: Turkey and Iran)	2,822
Central Asia	61,625
South Asia	31,208
Southeast Asia	52,547
Other OIC countries	2,032
Total	158,922

Sources: Adapted from Jang and Choi (2012) and An (2015); Korean Immigration Service (http://www.immigration.go.kr/HP/COM/bbs_003/ListShowData.do?strNbodCd=noti0097&strWrtNo=222&strAnsNo=A&strOrgGbnCd=104000&strRtnURL=IMM_6070&strAllOrgYn=N&strThisPage=3&strFilePath=)

and from foreign countries, is estimated at 210,000. The number of immigrants from Muslim countries is rising alongside the growing number of overall immigrants to Korea.

With the emergence of globalization and Korea's economic boom, the cultural landscape of Seoul, as well as that of the Seoul Central Mosque, have been greatly transformed. This change was marked by a large inflow of migrant laborers into Korean society. As Song writes, "From 1989 through about 2000, migrant Muslim laborers from South and Southeast Asia comprised the largest group of [Seoul Central Mosque] attendees. From around 2000 to 2014, increasing numbers of Southeast Asian migrant laborers moved their Friday prayer places to musallahs and masjids near their workplaces in Seoul and other provincial cities" (Song 2016, 57–58). The Seoul Central Mosque in Itaewon is one of fifteen mosques in Korea. Others are located in various regions such as Busan, Gwangju (Gyeonggi-do), Jeonju, Anyang, Bupyeong, Ansan, Paju, Pocheon, Daegu, Gimpo, Changwon, Daejeon, and Jeju (www.koreaIslam.org). As migrant workers moved their places of worship to regional mosques,

taking their place at the Seoul Central Mosque have been South Asian merchants and college students and tourists from Islamic countries attending the mosque prayers. Into the new millennium, streets near the Seoul Central Mosque became dotted with halal food stores and various Islam-related shops to create a sort of “Muslim Street.” The Seoul Central Mosque has been one of many tourist destinations for the growing number of Muslim tourists to Korea.⁴ This increasing number of mosques in Korea is indicative of the growing Muslim population in Korea (Song 2016). Nevertheless, both Islam and Muslims remain poorly understood by the Korean public.

What’s more, Islamophobia has become more prevalent in Korea since the IS terrorist attacks in 2014. Islamophobia in Korea mostly targets Muslims with foreign citizenship, who represent the majority of the Muslim population of Korea. However, Korean Muslims (Koreans who converted to Islam) are no exception. One thirty-one-year-old Korean Muslim woman said, “Negative perceptions towards Muslims and Islam have intensified especially after the IS terrorist attacks. Because of this, many Korean Muslims tend not to reveal that they are Muslims.”⁵ Living as a Muslim in Korea is hard, and more so for Muslim women. There have been cases where Korean Muslim women are fired for converting to Islam and wearing the hijab in the workplace and many Korean Muslim women find it difficult to wear the hijab at work. Under these circumstances, a better awareness of the issue of Islamophobia and measures to tackle it are urgently needed.

Islamophobia and the Politics of Representation of Islam in the Media

Runnymede Trust, a human rights organization based in Britain, is often credited with introducing the concept of Islamophobia (Yi Chin’gu 2011; Kim Nami 2016; Kim Sŭngmin 2013) to the socio-political lexicon through a research report titled, *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All* (Runnymede Trust 1997). There Islamophobia is defined as “an outlook or world-view involving an unfounded dread and dislike of Muslims, which results in practices of exclusion and discrimination.” Islamophobia is also defined as the “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.” According to the authors of the paper, Islam is often viewed as being inferior to Western culture, a violent political ideology rather than a religion, and a closed culture that does not share values with other cultures (Ibid., 4). The report also identified eight components of Islamophobia along the following lines of inquiry:

- 1) Whether Islam is seen as monolithic and static, or as diverse and dynamic.
 - 2) Whether Islam is seen as other and separate, or as similar and inter-dependent.
 - 3) Whether Islam is seen as inferior, or as different but equal.
 - 4) Whether Islam is seen as an aggressive enemy or as a cooperative partner.
 - 5) Whether Muslims are seen as manipulative or as sincere.
 - 6) Whether Muslim criticisms of the “the West” are rejected or debated.
 - 7) Whether discriminatory behavior against Muslims is defended or opposed.
 - 8) Whether anti-Muslim discourse is seen as natural or as problematic.
- (Ibid., 4)

Under Islamophobic precepts, Islam is defined as a static, monolithic, isolated, inferior, and violent political ideology. Some of these precepts, such as the view that Islam is “closed” to exchanges with the outside world, in turn, justify discriminatory practices by the West against Muslims. Obviously, this is a prejudiced view of Islam that does not account for its internal diversity, progressive nature, long historical interaction with other religions, unique characteristics, or the faith of Muslims. In short, the essentializing and otherizing of Islam cannot be viewed as but a long-standing practice of Orientalism to establish a hierarchical power relationship between the West and Islam (Yi Chin’gu 2011, 170). Seen in this light, Islamophobia in Korean society is different in that it does not arise from a long historical relationship between the West and Islamic culture but from ignorance and prejudice. Despite such differences, Islamophobia in Korean society is similar to that of the West in that Islam is often understood as an isolated, monolithic, and violent political ideology, while the internal pluralism of the Islamic world is not acknowledged. According to Buchowski (2016), who explored the phenomenon of Islamophobia in

Poland from an anthropological perspective, one of the most important underlying factors of European Islamophobia is strong nationalism. Also, in Poland, anti-Islamism has the historical background of Islam's antagonism with Christianity and is caused by the western hemisphere's fear of terrorism. What characteristics does Korean Islamophobia have that differentiate it from its European counterpart?

There have been many studies on Muslim communities within Korean society (An 2008, 2012; Cho et al. 2008; Cho et al. 2009; Chi 2011; Yi and Cho 2012; Song 2014). However, it is difficult to find studies that focus on Islamophobia as a phenomenon. Studies about Muslims conducted by scholars with expertise in the Middle East are mostly about the lifestyles of Muslims in Korea and the lives of Muslim women who immigrated to Korea for marriage and their cultural adaptation processes. Islamophobia, which is becoming a greater issue in Korea, is being studied mostly by Christian scholars (Kim Dong Mun 2011, 2016, 2017; Yi Chin'gu 2011).

Articles or books on Islamophobia published in Korea are also difficult to find. This reflects the lack of comprehensive understanding of Muslims as a minority group within Korean society. In his book, *Kidokkyo wa Isüllam kũmannami pijanũn kongjong wa kaldũng* (Coexistence and conflict in the encounter between Christianity and Islam), Kim Dong Mun (2011) argues that most attitudes towards Islam in Korean society are Islamophobic and that these attitudes are closely entangled with various psychological factors, including racism towards people from Islamic countries, who are perceived to be inferior to Koreans economically. Kim draws attention to the great divide in how Korean society perceives Islam. According to him, Koreans are divided between those who speak up for Islam and those who express fear and hatred of it, in the latter case primarily Christians. This divide, he suggests, is the critical factor preventing a more objective understanding of Islam on the part of the Korean public. Yi Chin'gu (2011), meanwhile, traces the channels through which Islamophobia has spread in Korean churches. By examining the "demonization of Islam" by Korean churches, he argues that the growing Islamophobic sentiments in Korea reflect an overall sense of crisis faced by Korean churches assaulted by multicultural policies. Kim Nami (2016), in

turn, argues that the Islamophobia of Korea's xenophobic Christian communities is the result of the blind adoption of the racist ideology of conservative American churches. Kim Nami also argues that by "underscoring the oppression of Korean women who are married to Muslim men, the Protestant Right occupies, ironically, the position of a feminist critic/activist, effacing sexist and heteropatriarchal practices and expressions prevalent in Korean Protestant Christianity" (Kim Nami 2016, 133–136).

As the keyword "hatred" surfaced as a hot potato in Korean society over the course of two years, 2016 and 2017, two notable academic papers related to the recent appearance of Islamophobia within Korean society were published. "Korea's response to Islam and Islamophobia: Focusing on veiled Muslim women's experiences," by Ikran Eum (2017), examines the vivid responses of Koreans to Islam and the Islamophobia manifest in Korean society through a focus on the veils of Muslim women. Eum explains how "Korean responses toward veiled Muslims seems to be where Islamophobia, ethno-nationalism, and reproduced Orientalism intersect" (Eum 2017, 845) in the process of otherizing Islam. Also worth noting is the thesis by Sang Young Han (2017) dealing with Islamophobia in Korea with a special focus on the appearance of online Islamophobia. By using the securitization theory proposed by Oren Weaver, Han emphasizes that the frame of security largely contributed to building hostility towards Muslims in Korea. Through an analysis of social media outlets, especially Twitter, Han clearly demonstrates how xenophobic Christians are largely responsible for creating and fueling Islamophobic sentiments in Korea.

Various aspects of Islamophobia are affected by the media's representation of Islam in both Western and Korean societies. Scholars have documented the intensification of Islamophobia in many European countries due to the negative and distorted representation of Islam and Muslims by newspapers and television. Anti-Islamist sentiment has also spread rapidly in Western countries since the 9/11 attacks. European media often portrays Islam as a violent religion that is detrimental to world peace and Muslims as terrorists and religious fundamentalists. People's exposure to these prejudices and stereotypical images produced by Western media has contributed to the spread of Islamophobia (Kim Sungmin 2013, 212).

Saeed claims that “Living Islam,” a paper published by Akbar Ahmed in 1993, can be considered one of the most noteworthy academic works to shed light on the representation of Islam and Muslim by the Western media (Saeed 2007, 444). He points out that social views of Muslims began to be established in British society as part of discussions regarding minority groups living within a multicultural society. As the British media “otherized” Muslims and Islam, they became portrayed as entities distinct and incompatible with the West. Saeed indicates that one of the greatest problems with the representation of Islam in the Western media is the monolithic perception of Islam. Another problem is the association of Islam with negative images, such as terrorism, especially since the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Ibid., 454). Such Islamophobia makes its presence all the more felt within social media. After the London terrorist attacks in 2013, Imran Awan analyzed online hatred directed against Muslims on Twitter and Facebook, expressing concern about the growing anti-Muslim sentiments and claiming that these sentiments that are manifested directly as online hate crime should be dealt with more harshly (Awan 2014; 2016). As Oboler (2016) has pointed out, “Within social media, such hate can be normalized creating a risk that such views will also be normalised in wider society” (Oboler 2016, 59). In Poland, anti-Islamic sentiments have also worsened through the Internet, where contemptuous and crude remarks about Muslims are becoming more problematic (Buchowski 2016, 61). In Europe and America, anti-muslim sentiment and online hate speech are a growing problem. Social differences are also politicized through the making and spreading, both online and off, of myths about Islam and Muslims.

How is Islam represented in the Korean media? In Kim Suwan’s news analysis, she notes that compared to the high frequency of events such as IS attacks or hostage crises mentioned by Western media, the majority of Islam-related news articles in *Hankyoreh* and *Chosun Il-bo* contained more emotional content regarding sadness, anger, and sympathy—all designed to appeal to the public. Moreover, she noted that over 80 percent of the articles were written under an episodic news-frame regardless of the political leanings of the newspapers. Her analysis implies that most Korean reports of terrorist attacks or international conflicts focus solely on the conflict itself or on their victims rather than providing an in-depth analysis of their causes (Kim Suwan and Yi

Sanguk 2013; Kim Suwan 2015). Moreover, in her 2016 study on the image of Arabs and Islam as reflected in press reports, Kim Suwan claims that more than 83 percent of Koreans are already aware of the fact that news reports portraying Arabs and Islam negatively outnumber those in which they are portrayed otherwise (2016, 208). According to her analysis, Arabs and Islam in the Korean media are mostly depicted in association with negative images of war, terrorism, and conflict. What is interesting is that the participants of her study perceived Islam-related press reports by the Korean media to be sensationalist and provocative and lacking in fairness, objectivity, and credibility (Ibid., 208–210).

As Kim Dong Mun points out (2016, 190–191), when it comes to Islam-related news reports, the Korean press is too accustomed to following the American press model and too focused on just the “issues” rather than the “lives” of people. The Korean press also tends to regard Muslims and Islamic culture as a monolithic religious bloc. There is a firmly entrenched image of the Islamic world and Muslims in Korea. The Korean media identifies the Islamic world as a land controlled by Islam and equates Muslims to a group of Islamic religious fanatics. In other words, the dominant framing of all Middle East-related news within the Korean press is Islam-based. For instance, when the offender of a shooting in the United States was identified as a Muslim immigrant from Pakistan, the Korean media immediately tried to frame the shooting as an act of “Muslim terrorism” or “Islam terrorism.” Kim states, “All Muslims are not terrorists; however, because of the bias that most of the terrorist attacks are carried out by Muslims, shootings by offenders of other religions are reported as general shootings, whereas shootings by Muslims are portrayed as terrorist attacks” (Kim Dong Mun 2016, 202–204). Kim further states that IS-related reports by the Korean press are written without proper fact-checking and with an over-reliance on outside sources. He argues the public should be alarmed by such practices that promote the spread of ungrounded rumors. In their analysis of the demonization of Muammar al-Gaddafi by the Korean press in coverage of the Libyan conflict, Yi and Kim identify the limitations of the Korean news-gathering system and the convention of relying largely on foreign press for international conflict coverage, especially the Western press (Yi and Kim 2011; Kim Dong Mun 2016). As a result, there is a dominant

pattern by the Korean press of adopting the frames of the American press in the way they define and label events (Yi and Kim 2011, 111). This is particularly significant as news reconstructs reality and has a great impact on either sustaining or promoting a change in social power relations (Ibid., 139). With the escalation of international conflicts, such biased news coverage has led to a bifurcated national consciousness of the “us versus them” mentality, where Islam is demonized and otherized as a monolithic culture. In reporting news regarding Muslims or conflicts involving Islamic culture, Korean media still frames it as a conflict between “good and evil,” eliminating alternative ways of interpreting the news and prompting simplistic public responses. This makes the topic of the representation of Islam in media all the more important.

In her 2016 article, Kim Hyŏnhŭi examines the Internet messages posted online during the Shihwaho murder case, in which an ethnic Korean-Chinese man was convicted of murdering his wife, as well as the Paris terrorist attacks, in order to identify a common string of sentiments, which she identifies as “anti-multicultural.” By analyzing the news coverage of crimes carried out by two groups of subjects who are currently considered to be the most dangerous in Korean society—the Korean-Chinese and Muslims—Kim examines the intensified feelings of anxiety, hostility, and hatred directed against them within Korean society. According to Kim, the public’s perception of the Paris terrorist attacks involved “concern and anxiety regarding the Islamic religion and terrorism and these sentiments, in turn, provide a background for the spread of anti-multiculturalist discourse” (Kim Hyŏnhŭi 2016, 224). This mirrors the argument of this paper, namely, that Islamophobia in Korean society is basically an extension of anti-multiculturalist sentiments. Along these lines, different nationalities and geopolitical spaces, such as China, Korea, and Europe, come together through “anti-multiculturalist sentiments” in Korea’s media and Internet messages to produce and position imaginary enemies, in this case, the Muslims (Ibid., 235–236). In other words, Islamophobia in Korea is closely related to not only an antagonism towards Muslims, but also to an anti-multiculturalism and racism deeply rooted in Korean society.

In the Internet messages posted in response to Korean online news articles and social media, Islam is not only the target of Islamophobia, but also the target of a broader, hostile, and widespread anti-multiculturalist sentiment.

Within these internet messages and search results, Islam functions as “liquid fear” (Bauman 2009) marked by uncertainty and uncontrollability. According to Bauman, this fear is not merely an emotional and personal matter, but rather, is both the cause and consequence of the huge trend of negative globalization. Bauman argues that the fear that permeates us now is due to the disappearance of the solidarity (in the case of Korean society, its strong nationalism and myth of a single ethnicity) that we have been holding on to so far.

In this context, this unfamiliarity towards foreigners, and Muslims in particular, returns in the form of fear. In other words, while globalization means an “open society” in a space of infinite possibilities, in Korean society, where nationalism has played such an important role, the Muslims remain an unfamiliar subject of fear who are believed capable of causing terrorism in Korea at any moment. In Europe or the United States, where the Muslim population or the number of Muslim refugees far outnumber those in Korea, Islamophobia looms as an existential fear. However, the representation of Islam in Korean society is uncharacteristic in that Islam is a target of a largely imaginary and invalid fear caused by rumors and fabricated facts. In the next section, we will examine the increase in the number of Islam-related news articles in Korea and their implications, the representation of Islam in social media, and the channels through which Islamic discourse is circulated.

Representation of “Islam” in Korean Media: Big Data Analysis

Case 1. Nationality: Turkey, Gender: Female, Age: 32, Muslim, international student, currently residing in Korea

The above interviewee has lived in Korea since 2012. Although she is a Muslim who wears a hijab, it is not a traditional one like a chador. Rather, it is a trendier hijab that young Muslim women prefer nowadays.

“There is nothing too difficult about living as a Muslim in Korea where I wear a hijab all the time. Except for some rude people, no one really remarks much about my hijab. The people in my graduate school are especially more

respectful about my identity as a Muslim and considerate about my dietary restrictions, among other things. However, since the IS terrorist attacks, I have felt more disapproving stares by people on the streets or in subways. I can definitely say that the way people look at Muslims has become negative since these attacks."⁶

Case 2. Nationality: Iran, Gender: Male, Age: 24, Muslim, international student currently residing in Korea

*"I am generally satisfied with my life in Korea even though most of my friends are foreigners. However, since the IS attacks, I feel that the way people look at me has changed—they view me in a negative way. Even though Iran is a Shiia-based country and IS is a radical Sunni Islamist militant group, people tend to think that Shiia and Sunni groups are the same. I feel that IS has completely changed the way people look at Muslims, even though Islam is really nothing like the IS."*⁷

The following study was conducted to examine whether the representation of Islam in the media after reports of IS terrorist attacks has contributed to the construction of a negative image of Islam in Korea. Analysis of news article searches from KINDS (Korean Integrated News Database System), a database system provided by the Korea Press Foundation, shows that the public interest in Islam has escalated since major terrorist events such as 9/11 and the rise of IS. Reference to Islam was made for the first time in the Korean media after the 9/11 attacks of 2001. Figure 1 shows the spike in the total number of Islam-related news articles, peaking at 1,916 in October of 2001 just after the 9/11 attacks. Following this, the number of such articles peaked again with 19,164 in 2015, just after the emergence of IS.

The search frequencies found in various major online communities, such as Naver cafés, do not exactly match the rate of increase in the number of Islam-related news article searches. Nevertheless, the related-word search results and media article search counts both show the highest frequency in January of 2015, when the number of Islam-related articles reached its peak after the Charlie Hebdo shooting, and in November of 2015, after another terrorist attack in France.⁸

Figure 1: Graph of the Number of “Islam”-related News Articles

Source: Author’s online search through KINDS

Meanwhile, online communities and social media like Twitter reveal an increase in the number of news article searches related to terrorism and Islam. Below are search results from blogs and Twitter for the years 2013 to 2016.⁹

The search word “terror” should be noted as one of the most relevant among the search words related to the keywords “Islam” and “Muslim.” Table 2 shows that the word “terror” ranked 12th in 2013, 6th in 2014, and 1st in 2015. Islam-related search words with negative connotations began to enter the rankings in 2014, which coincides with the emergence of IS. News article search results analyzed by KINDS also show similar trends when it comes to public interest in IS. The increase in the number of news article searches under the keyword “Islam,” from 6,512 in 2001 to 19,164 in 2015, show the impact of IS entering the international scene. Further, it should be noted that the word “Islam” was one of the most searched keywords in both 2014 and 2015.

In other words, events like 9/11 and the rise of IS strengthened the public perception that closely associated the words “Islam” and “terror.” These events not only increased the public’s awareness of Islam but also created negative images and discourses about it. Furthermore, this tendency has had a negative impact upon Muslims residing both in and outside of Korea. The last keyword

Table 2. Search Words Related to Searches on the Keyword “Islam”¹⁰

Ranking	2013	2014	2015	2016
1	Korean	Christianity	Terror	Women
2	Treasure	Muslim	France	Homosexuality
3	Christianity	America	Women	Accident
4	Event	Region	Muslim	Terror
5	Muslim	Korean	Korean	Korea
6	Region	Terror	Paris	Men
7	Mosque	Mosque	America	India
8	Culture	Muslim Country	Christianity	America
9	Europe	Women	Korea	Muslim
10	America	Europe	Youtube	Men
11	Islam	Korea	Europe	Hate
12	Terror	Armed Group	Channel	Christian Liberal Party
13	Official	Culture	Men	Christianity
14	Exhibition	Iraq	Region	Halal
15	Turkey	Islam	Men	Women
16	Twitter	City	Accident	Turkey
17	City	Turkey	Muslim Country	Food
18	Egypt	Government	Society	Political Party
19	Account	Trust	Culture	Society
20	India	Syria	Middle East	Protest

Source: SOCIALmetrics™ (<http://academy.some.co.kr>)

examined was “halal.” The word halal entered the list as a keyword related to “Islam” for the first time in 2016. A search term that comes up often in connection to halal is “food.” The former Park Administration’s plan to construct a halal food complex was one of the biggest triggers of fear and misunderstanding about Islam in Korea. In June 2015, the Park Administration announced that it would increase halal food exports targets to US\$1.5 billion. In addition, the government launched an initiative to build a halal food complex within the Korea National Food Cluster in Iksan, Jeollabuk-do province. The plan was to

promote Halal food exports by providing various incentives in R&D, technical support, and for the purchase of raw materials, as well as reduced distribution costs to exporters of halal food. However, such efforts were challenged by some Christian organizations that made official statements opposing the construction of the halal food complex.¹¹

In campaigns led by Christian churches, fear and misunderstanding were spread in 2016 by means of text messages, Kakaotalk, Naver blogs, Twitter, and Facebook. Faced with opposition not only from Christians but also from the general public, proposed construction of halal food complexes in Iksan, Jeju, and Daegu were cancelled. As such, “halal” entered the list of related search words in 2016 due to protests against government policies. The following is one halal food complex-related message that spread through text messages, SNS, and Kakaotalk group chats:

Sign the Petition! (Forwarded Message)

Title: Sign the petition against the Halal Food Complex

The government is investing 55 billion won [USD\$51.7 million] to construct a halal food complex in Iksan City. 500,000 p'yŏng of land in Iksan City will be leased free of charge for the next fifty years. Foreigners from Southwest Asia and Southeast Asia will receive every month one million won [USD \$940] from the Jeonbuk Provincial Office and 500,000 won [USD\$470] from Iksan City and other housing subsidies as resettlement funds.

This is absurd. There are hundreds of thousands of Koreans who are suffering economically. Why should the government give such privileges to foreigners who do not pay a single won in tax?

The construction of the halal food complex site will be completed in 2016. Three years after the completion of the site, one million Imam (religious leaders) and 7,103 foreign workers are to enter Korea.

Our country is on the verge of being taken over by foreigners.

It is clear from this message that the Christian groups appealed not only to religious, but also economic and political motives to position the public against

the Muslims. A similar case can be found in the Korea Tourism Organization's dropping a plan to build a mobile Muslim prayer room at the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics in the face of resistance by conservative Christian circles. The "Petition against the Installation of a Pyeongchang Winter Olympics Muslim Prayer Room," initiated by the Pyeongchang Olympics Gangwon Citizens' Islam Countermeasure Association, gathered 58,766 signatures online.¹² One of the main reasons the petition was written was the expressed belief that, though there may be genuinely faithful Muslims among those who wish for a mobile Muslim prayer room, the possibility of Muslim extremists being among them cannot be ruled out. This is one instance that well-illustrates the fact that Islamophobia in Korea is initiated by certain conservative Christian organizations.

In addition to the analysis of search frequencies, an analysis about the psychology behind the keyword "Islam" using the SOCIALmetrics™ sentiment analysis method was conducted. Sentiment analysis is conducted by grouping the keywords under the categories of positive/neutral/negative. The changes in sentiment regarding Islam-related search words from 2013 to 2016 show the evolving psychological reactions of Korean society towards Islam.

That a negative image of Islam developed gradually over time can be seen through the psychological categorization of the related search words. In 2013, only one negative psychological item could be found, while there were seven in 2014. In 2015, nine of the top 20 Islam-related search terms had negative psychological connotations. The fact that in both 2015 and 2016, three of the top five search words were listed as "negative" reflects the public's growing negative sentiments towards Islam. Such an increase in words of negative sentiment accompanies and reflects Korean society's increasingly negative view of Islam and its growing Islamophobia.

Moreover, the word "hate," which ranked first in terms of search frequency in 2016, symbolizes the representation of Islam in Korean society. The fact that the word (Islam)-"phobia" (corresponding to the word "hate" or "loath" in Korean) is one of the words that comes up most frequently in relation to Islam requires further analysis and attention. As mentioned in the introduction, throughout 2016 and 2017, there has been a growth in the use of the word "phobia" in relation, not only to Islam, but also to relations between men and

Table 3. Psychological Analysis Regarding Search Terms Related to “Islam” (2013–2016)

2013				2014			2015			2016					
	Psychological Condition	Classification	Frequency	Psychological Condition	Classification	Frequency	Psychological Condition	Classification	Frequency	Psychological Condition	Classification	Frequency			
1	Spread the rumor	Neutral	3460	Trust	Positive	5294	Insult	Negative	6246	Hate	Negative	8566			
2	Peace	Positive	2476	Peace	Positive	2404	Magnificent	Positive	5982	Assault	Negative	5539			
3	Bless	Positive	2075	Religious	Neutral	2106	Vulgar	Negative	5982	Welcome	Positive	4929			
4	Trust	Positive	2055	Kind	Positive	1652	Vulgar	Negative	5982	Assaulted	Negative	4646			
5	Open one's heart	Positive	1679	Kidnap	Negative	1575	Peace	Positive	5557	Like	Positive	4406			
6	Give Gratitude	Positive	1664	Various	Neutral	1401	The Worst	Negative	3841	Rise	Neutral	3897			
7	Various	Neutral	1620	Beautiful	Positive	1380	Emergency	Negative	3443	Crime	Negative	3524			
8	Mercy	Positive	1516	Like	Positive	1354	Conflict	Negative	3441	Discrimination	Negative	3440			
9	Help	Positive	1364	Crime	Negative	1158	Shock	Negative	3132	Right	Positive	2492			
10	Beauty	Positive	1360	Compete	Neutral	1152	Discrimination	Negative	2810	Serious	Negative	2242			
11	Beautiful	Positive	1300	Threat	Negative	1095	Trust	Positive	2299	Harsh Words	Negative	2177			
12	New	Neutral	1287	Conflict	Negative	1045	Hate	Negative	2290	Confusion	Negative	2168			
13	Religious	Neutral	1196	Deny	Negative	1023	Religion	Neutral	2164	Thankful	Positive	2121			
14	Conflict	Negative	1106	Illegal	Negative	1001	Criticism	Negative	2159	Important	Neutral	2098			
15	Big	Neutral	990	Market Invasion	Neutral	937	Lie	Negative	2106	Important	Neutral	2068			
16	Typical	Neutral	930	Kidnapped	Negative	936	Pretty	Positive	2083	Like	Positive	1931			
17	Fancy	Positive	868	Strong	Neutral	896	Hate	Negative	1913	Oppose	Negative	1925			
18	Important	Positive	866	New	Neutral	836	Hate	Negative	1854	Well Made	Positive	1733			
19	Market Invasion	Neutral	726	Typical	Neutral	757	Crime	Negative	1792	Misogyny	Negative	1659			
20	Right	Positive	690	Dominate	Neutral	756	Threat	Negative	1791	Spread	Neutral	1542			
2013		Positive 13 Neutral 6 Negative 1		2014		Positive 5 Neutral 8 Negative 7		2015		Positive 6 Neutral 5 Negative 9		2016		Positive 6 Neutral 4 Negative 10	

women, to sexual minorities, Chinese immigrants, and the disabled. This may reveal that it is not merely an issue of hatred towards Islam, but is related to a more general problem of hatred or animosity prevalent in Korean society.

Furthermore, the issues of IS terrorist attacks and Syrian refugees, at their peak in 2015–2016, not only contributed to an increase in the number of news article searches related to Islam, but also to the spread of negative images of Islam. In this way, in Korea, the media has become the most important medium shaping the image and representations of Islam and, at the same time, plays the most important role in reconstructing and spreading the general Islamophobic discourse. This brings us, once again, to the need for more in-depth studies on Islamophobia.

Islamophobia as “Liquid Fear”

Then how are fear and hatred of Islam, which are spreading within and beyond social media, created? How do Islamophobic rumors spread? Based on the aforementioned big data analysis, in 2013, the most influential Twitterian related to the search word “Islam” was a Korean Muslim. The most influential Islam-related blogger, meanwhile, was an individual who delivered information on current affairs, mostly on international affairs. He retained his position as the most influential blogger regarding Islamic matters from 2013 throughout 2014. The most influential Twitterian of 2014, on the other hand, was replaced by YTN. Further, since 2015–2016, the contents of the most influential blogs and Twitter accounts related to Islam are those that exhibit Christian values.¹³ Based on such findings, the following questions arise. Who is responsible for creating rumors and constructing fear? Who gains what from creating such fear?

The question of who benefits and how from the fear created towards Islam,¹⁴ the imaginary enemy in Korean society, is an important one. Bauman states, “In an age where all grand ideas have lost credibility, fear of a phantom enemy is all that politicians have left to maintain their power” (Bauman 2006, 243). Although the representation of Islam is affected by external elements such

as terrorism and the rise of IS, it is also directly connected to the public sentiments of Korean society. Because of this, it is important to identify the point at which Korean society directly “meets” Islam. The results of big data and online media analysis show that Korean xenophobic Christian communities are one of the most important points of contact with Islam.

Case 3. Pastor Kim Dong-moon

“Many Korean Christian organizations, individuals, pastors, and churches are exposed to so-called Islamophobia. Islamophobia can be defined as a fear of Islam and hatred towards Muslims. I personally think that the spread of exaggerated and fabricated information and rumors, that are closer to fictitious myths, began simply in conformity to the opinions made by a certain few. I also think that there are many Christians whose faiths are based on exclusion and hatred. They mistakenly believe that excluding and showing hostility to non-Christians or other religions is the way of keeping their faith. Very few have other political motives. For most others, it is more about conforming to the belief of the majority. What this means is that there are a few people who make the mistake of hastily generalizing the discourse of Islamophobia, which is then spread throughout the Christian communities who wish to conform to these opinions. It is through such means that many Christians within and without the Church end up believing such biased Islamophobic information and notions.”¹⁵

As pastor Kim notes, one of the characteristics of Islamophobia in Korean society is the active role played by a few xenophobic individuals and the conformity of the remaining majority. The radical generalization by a minority has played a huge role in the creation of Islamophobia in Korean society. According to Yi Chin’gu (2011), some people within Korea’s Protestant communities have begun to voice concerns about the penetration of Islam in Korea, using incendiary slogans like “the Islamic tsunami is rolling in” or “Islam is after us.” The “Islamic tsunami theory,” which created a pervading mood of fear, gained the support of some Korean Christians and then as a result spread rapidly among all the Korean Protestant communities. Yi also

notes the rapid spread of the idea of this “Islamic tsunami” within Christian media, especially during the second half of 2008 and first half of 2009.

What accounts for the sudden emergence of Islamophobia among Korean Protestants? As many Protestants point out, the 9/11 attacks, the shock killing of the South Korean interpreter and Christian missionary Kim Sõnil by an Iraqi militia group in 2004,¹⁶ and the 2007 Korean hostage crisis in which some members of the Saemmul Church¹⁷ were captured and murdered by the Taliban, largely account for the rise of Islamophobia within Korean society, especially within Protestant communities, as discussed in Case 4.

Case 4. Male, Age: 30, layman in a Protestant church

“I think that the 9/11 terrorist attacks are what made Islam more terrifying within Korean Christian communities. The events of 9/11 were terrifying and shocking for all. However, it was all the more frightening for Christians because of Al Qaeda’s declaration of war against churches. I think the Christian communities believed it to be the start of a religious war. Also, terms like the ‘end of the century crisis’ spread around that time. I believe that some churches took advantage of that fear. The millennium came and there was no apocalypse, as some had warned against. Perhaps they needed to create a new object of fear for people. Soon after the end of all the drama related to the new millennium, there was the 9/11 terrorist attack in 2001, immediately followed by the murder of Kim Sõnil in 2004 and the abduction of the Saemmul Church members in 2007. All these events precipitated a greater fear of Islam within Korean Christian communities. When missionary work for Christ ended in the death of Christians by Muslims, fear was created.”¹⁸

The murder of Kim Sõnil (Kim Sun-il) exposed the lack of state protection measures for Korean citizens abroad, as well as the fatal weaknesses in the nation’s counterterrorism capabilities. The government’s lackluster response to the ordeal revealed the overall weaknesses in the country’s foreign policy, national security and crisis management capabilities. The government failed to achieve systematic information sharing and cooperation between governmental institutions like the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Intelligence Service and failed to come up with appropriate measures to tackle the

urgent issue. The murder of Kim Sönil was referred to as a “crisis in foreign affairs and national security” due to the Roh Moo-hyun Administration’s failure to respond to the case in a proper and timely manner. It was only after the murder of Kim Sönil and after the administration’s crisis management efforts and capabilities were questioned that counterterrorism policies were reformed (Yun 2007, 90–94). The brutal terrorist attack against a fellow Korean became a crucial turning point in shaping the Korean public’s perception of Islam, associating it more than ever with terrorism.

Yi Chin’gu (2011) explains that Islamophobia within Korean missionary communities is also closely related to their sense of crisis in their missionary work. After the Afghan hostage crisis in 2007, Korean Christian missionary work in foreign countries came to a halt. Civil society, and even the churches themselves, began to question the hitherto aggressive overseas missionary work (Yi Chin’gu 2011, 186). In a situation where the overseas missionary work of Korean Christian churches was at a standstill, the idea that Islam was penetrating Korea to Islamize Korean society presented itself as a facile solution for the church to overcome their crisis. “Islamophobia to stop the perceived penetration and Islamization of Korean society was presented as an ‘alternative’ type of Christian missionary work” (Ibid., 189). In other words, Islamophobia would be the solution that for recovering the “motor of missionary work.”

As examined above, the argument of Nami Kim (2016) explores how Islamophobia is not just a tool for the xenophobic Christian missionaries, but creates discourses of fixed racism and fear of Muslim men. According to Kim, “The Protestant right discourse that relies on this framework produces gendered racialized stereotypes of Muslims as violent, opportunistic, non-monogamous, incapable, deceitful villain/predators, and generates an ethno-nationalist view of Korean women as hapless victims who are desperately in need of being rescued by fellow Korean men from their violent and incapable migrant Muslim male spouses” (Nami Kim 2016, 117). She also adds that Islamophobia in Korean society is facing “classism, religious exclusivism, sexism, racial prejudice and discrimination” (Ibid.). Let us consider the claim that Korean Islamophobia is related to sexism, in addition to racial prejudice and discrimination. The Islamophobia in Korean society represents Muslim women as victims of oppression and interprets the Islamic religion as being less advanced.

At the opposite end of such hatred, we find sexism toward Korean women, which manifests itself as a paternalistic concern for women supposedly mistreated by Muslims in an attempt to minimize the sexism endemic in Korean society.

Nonetheless, demands of self-examination regarding such hatred within the church are emerging. There is an awareness of the fact that false and Islamophobic stories are being circulated in the church, and a criticism that, even when exposed, they are dismissed as having been in “good intention.” In addition, these stories surrounding Islam and homosexuality are not unrelated to feelings of fear and hatred, and there is growing criticism by people within the churches themselves regarding the excessive levels of such fear and hatred in the Korean churches (Kim Dong Mun 2017; Pak 2016).

In fact, perceptions of Islam as a religion of violence and terrorism is prevalent not only in conservative and xenophobic Korean Christian circles, but also outside of Korea, such as in Europe. As emphasized by Buchowski (2016), such negative perceptions of Islam can be attributed to the fact that many non-Muslim societies, to include Korean society, refuse to accept “difference” and “otherness.” As Buchowski claims, many societies are experiencing “Islamophobia without Muslims” (2016, 61). In many non-Muslim countries, including Korea, Muslims are treated as an “imagined other,” and such a notion is perceived through liquid fear. In other words, Islamophobia is represented as the result of a fear towards a symbolic power. While Islamophobia in Korean society has been emphasized by some conservative Christian camps, it is true that there is a greater emphasis on “homogeneity” in Korean society compared to other societies, as well as a serious problem of xenophobia towards other ethnic groups. The phenomenon of Islamophobia in Korea can be explained as the overall result of an excessive aspiration for a single-race country, racism, representations through the media, and an imagined fear. The reason why the false stories about Islam are frightening is because they do not die out easily and are replayed over and over again. Regardless of the efforts made to check their validity and to correct distorted facts, once a rumor is spread, it does not disappear. It may seem to die out for a while, but after one or two years, it will reappear like a ghost, to be circulated once more, perhaps even amplified. Correcting a false story every time it breaks out cannot

be a fundamental counteractive measure. Rather, it is essential to understand the dangers of Islamophobia and combat it in order to create a proper multi-cultural society.

Conclusion

“Dividing the world into ‘us’ and ‘our enemies’ creates fear. A deceitful justification for aggression and war. These wars violate democracy and human rights in countries which have themselves been victims of aggression.”¹⁹

The above statement was part of an announcement made by the Iranian director Asghar Farhadi in his statement boycotting the Academy Awards. His film, *The Salesman*, had won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film in 2017. Accepting the award on behalf of Farhadi, Anousheh Ansari read a short statement from the director: “I’m sorry I’m not with you tonight. My absence is out of respect for the people of my country and those of six other nations who have been disrespected by the inhumane law that bans entry of immigrants to the U.S.”²⁰ On January 27, 2017, newly inaugurated President Donald Trump had signed an executive order restricting travel from seven Muslim-majority countries including Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. The executive order caused a great uproar as hundreds of Muslims from these countries were detained in major airports of the United States. Ostracizing Muslims by drawing a line between the non-Muslim “us” and the Muslim “enemy” creates feelings of hostility and discrimination against Muslims that infringe upon the basic democratic concept of human rights. The anti-immigration policy of the Trump Administration, as well as the discriminatory remarks made by extreme xenophobic politicians and hate-crimes in both Europe and the United States, have great implications on many levels for Korean society where hate speech is becoming increasingly pervasive. Islamophobic sentiments in the United States and Europe have formed over the course of actual events associated with Islam and Muslims. In contrast, Islamophobic sentiments in Korea are close to an “imaginary fear,”

prejudices formed without any circumstantial factors. Alarming, these expressions of hatred are targeted not only towards Muslims but also towards foreigners, immigrants, multicultural families, sexual minorities, and anyone who holds different ideas and political views.

As recommended in “A Study on Hate Speech and its Countermeasures” (2017) by the National Human Rights Commission of Korea, further in-depth studies and reflection are needed to curb the rise of online hate speech. The online space existing as a variety of platforms, characterized by continuity, expansiveness, anonymity, and trans-nationality, is playing a major role in spreading hate speech. The harmful effects of hate speech spread more widely and rapidly due to the nature of the online medium and the difficulty of implementing measures to regulate or ban it. Korea’s online hate speech is collectivized through the activity of online hate groups and communities. This characteristic is frequently evidenced through social media, such as Facebook, online news articles and comments posted in response to these articles.

Recently online hate speech has been spreading through both official and offline domains, for which there is a need for monitoring (NHRC 2017, 287). One possible and much needed countermeasure is the implementation of a “comprehensive prohibition on discrimination act” which would draw attention to online hate speech, including expressions of hatred directed against Islam and Muslim communities. Such a measure carries the risk of violating freedom of speech. Yet, whether online hate speech can be tolerated as “free speech” is also a major issue. The European Union, in collaboration with major information technology companies such as Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter, and Youtube, proclaimed the “Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online” on May 31, 2016 to further systematize rules concerning online hate speech.²¹ Freedom of speech is one of the foremost values to be preserved and respected in Europe. However, article 19 of this Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online states, “‘Hate speech laws and laws on national security should prohibit discriminatory speech that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.’”²² Besides such legal control, the use of media is crucial in preventing the spread of Islamophobia. The media has been largely responsible for creating prejudices and negative perceptions on Islam. The use of media to refute the fabricated and forged stories regarding

Islam and Muslims and to educate the public will in the long-term be the more effective option.

Compared to European societies, where Islamophobia has been identified as a serious issue since 1997, public awareness of the severity of Islamophobia remains at ground level in Korean society. More detailed studies on Islamophobia are needed as the bias and discrimination against Islam and Muslims are otherwise indiscriminately shaped and spread within Korean society. Though the concept of multicultural society and related policies have been actively discussed since 2000, a more serious approach to minority religions and groups like Muslims is required.

Meanwhile, since 2017, when Korean industries were adversely impacted by the Chinese tourism boycott in protest of the installation of the THAAD (Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense), the Korean government has been making efforts to diversify the Korean tourism industry by establishing policies to attract Muslim tourists from Southeast Asia and the Middle East. However, in contrast to these governmental efforts and policies, there remains a widespread Islamophobia in Korean society, for which a fundamental counter-measure needs to be found. While it is important to think about the immediate needs of the Muslim tourists, including what foods they need, where they want to visit, etc., is not welcoming them with an open heart and without prejudice more urgent? This study seeks to emphasize, once more, the need to recognize and resolve the problem of Islamophobia prevalent in today's Korean society.

Notes

- 1 The author conducted an interview with an immigrant Imam of an Islamic mosque in Korea on October 6, 2016. The Korea Muslim Federation (KMF) filed a complaint with the Central Election Management Committee (CEMC) stating this constituted a “malicious slander towards a specific religion.” However, the CEMC answered that “the promotional materials used in the election campaign are legal. Individual charges or complaints should be filed for libel accusations.” An official from the CEMC stated in a *Hankyoreh* article: “The promotional materials should contain false statements and defamation about election candidates or disparagement

of certain regions in order to be brought as a case before the CEMC. However, the promotional materials distributed by the Christian Liberal Party do not contain any of the above. I understand that the Muslims in Korea may feel victimized. Unfortunately, there is nothing we can do about it” (<http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/politics/polibar/739003.html#csidx853ab4914f424a5b911997309fb7ab3>). The Korean Imam argued that the promotional materials by the Christian Liberal Party and the response from the CEMC were practically a form of religious oppression.

- 2 According to this report, the rates of experiencing online hate speech among immigrants are lower than for other groups. However, several things need to be taken into account for a fair comparison, such as differences in time spent online, the characteristics of internet use, and one’s ability to understand or recognize hate speech in Korean. The time spent online for other groups is found to average 3.2–4.4 hours per day. Meanwhile, the time spent online by immigrants is the lowest of the four groups examined, averaging about 2.4 hours per day (National Human Rights Commission of Korea 2007). Making adjustments for their low level of understanding of the Korean language and their relatively low internet use in Korean, it can be concluded that the index for their experience of online hatred is in reality higher than is reflected in these statistics.
- 3 According to the data presented by An Chŏngguk (2015), the number of Muslim immigrants in Korea is estimated at 135,585 as of February 2015. Statistics published two years later, in February 2017, estimate the number of Muslim immigrants in Korea to have grown to 158,922, which corresponds to an increase of 23,337.
- 4 The data for the rate of increase and the total number of Muslim tourists since 2010 in Korea was taken from the study by Ch’ae and Yi (2015, 99–100). The number of Muslim tourists by country of origin for 2014 was 181,662 (Indonesia), 149,890 (Malaysia), 110,283 (China), 28,758 (Singapore), 22,337 (Turkey) and 22,872 (Thailand). For the same year, the total number of tourists from the Middle East was 125,356.
- 5 31-year-old Muslim woman, interview by author, Seoul, Korea, April 29, 2017.
- 6 Interview by author, Seoul, Korea, May 25, 2016.
- 7 Interview by author, Seoul, Korea, June 20, 2016.
- 8 The results of the buzz trends of search words in social media and online communities were provided by Daumsoft. Results of the search word buzz trends from 2014 to 2016 for the keywords “Islam,” “Islamic country,” “IS,” “halal,” and “multiculturalism” were analyzed. It is difficult to identify the cause of the buzz increase for each keyword, but the results clearly show that the buzz volume increased greatly whenever incidents related to terrorist attacks occurred.

- 9 The following are the search words related to the keyword “Islam,” identified for two consecutive months from January 1 to February 28, 2017: 1) hatred 2) entry 3) hijab 4) region 5) Trump 6) homepage 7) airport 8) New York 9) worker 10) announcement 11) student 12) ground/bottom 13) lawyer 14) hacking 15) Indonesia 16) official 17) schedule 18) Korea 19) official website 20) results. The Trump Administration’s anti-immigration and anti-Muslim policies announced in February 2017 account largely for the above search results.
- 10 Related-word search results collected during the period January 1–February 28, 2014, January 1–February 28, 2015, and January 1–October 1, 2016 through the academic version of SOCIALmetrics™ (<http://academy.some.co.kr>) were reconstructed for illustration in the table.
- 11 “Pan Isŭllam chŏngsŏ e ‘hallal sŭk’um tanji’ musan wigi” [Plans to build a “halal food complex” face crisis due to anti-Islamic sentiments], *Han’guk kyŏngje* (January 22, 2016), <http://www.hankyung.com/news/app/newsview.php?aid=2016012138601#AA.11162277.1>.
- 12 https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScx42cDXXtPG-u0LxCgvA_1cJxoWuxZNmL79OjNjWul5K7Tpw/viewform
- 13 The addresses for the Twitter and Blog can be searched on the academic version of SOCIALmetrics™ (<http://academy.some.co.kr>); however, they remain anonymous in this paper.
- 14 The Counterterrorism Act for Protection of the Nation and Public Safety, which sparked heated debate, was passed in June 2016 by the former Park Administration. The background and the actual outcome of the act need further examination.
- 15 Kim Dong-moon (Kim Dong Mun)
- 16 Kim Sŏnil was an employee of Gana General Trading Company, a South Korean company under contract to the American military. On June 22, 2004, Kim was kidnapped and killed by the Iraqi militant group, Jama’at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad, allegedly led by an Islamic terrorist leader, Abu Mussab al-Zarqawi. The group demanded the South Korean government withdraw its troops from Iraq. Al-Jazeera, an Arabic news and current affairs satellite TV channel, aired videotape footage of Kim being decapitated. Many South Koreans reacted with shock and anger. There were protests calling for immediate cancellation of the Korean government’s plan to deploy additional troops to Iraq. In addition, the South Korean government’s failure to properly respond to the hostage release negotiations fueled further public outrage.

- 17 The 2007 South Korean hostage crisis in Afghanistan began July 19, 2007, when 23 Korean missionaries were taken captive by members of the Taliban. Of the 23 hostages captured, two men, Bae Hyeong-gyu, a 42-year-old Korean pastor of Saemmul Church, and Shim Seong-min, a 29-year-old South Korean man, were executed. Later, negotiations succeeded in the release of the remaining 21 hostages. The crisis lasted 42 days, from the capture of the Korean missionaries to the return of the survivors to Korea on September 2. The hostage crisis in Afghanistan provoked criticisms of some Protestant churches for their indiscreet and aggressive approaches to missionary work in dangerous areas.
- 18 Kim Dong Mun, interview by author via social media (Facebook), October 25, 2016.
- 19 “Iranian Director Ashgar Farhadi Won’t Attend Oscar Ceremony,” *New York Times* (January 29, 2017), <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/29/movies/trump-immigration-oscars-iranian-director-asghar-farhadi.html>.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 The European Commission and IT Companies announced a code of conduct on illegal online hate speech on May 31, 2016 (http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=54300)
- 22 European Union, Code of Conduct for Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online and the Framework Decision, Article 19, p. 15. (https://www.article19.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/ECA-hate-speech-compilation-report_March-2018.pdf).

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