

Hate Thy Communist Neighbor: The Protestant Church and Election Outcomes in South Korea

Abstract

How do religious organizations influence constituents' political preferences? In this paper, we investigate the role of the Protestant church in election outcomes in South Korea, a secular democratic state with a large concentration of Protestants and church organizations arguably wielding powerful political influence. Using novel church location data, we find that districts with more churches per population also had greater support for the conservative party during the country's presidential elections in 2012 relative to 2007. We argue that the church had a substantive impact on the constituents' political preferences in South Korea, and its stance against the legitimacy of the North Korean regime and security concerns became especially prominent and influential in the run up to the 2012 presidential election. Responses from the Korean General Social Surveys validate our proposed mechanism of Protestants' support for the conservative party as coming from their attitudes toward North Korea.

1 Introduction

Religious organizations may play critical roles in shaping congregants' political preferences. Through sermons and scriptures, congregant networks and organized public goods support, they can induce tangible differences amongst the believers. Various studies indeed show that these organizations may have an impact on constituents's political attitudes with influential religious messages, and by providing beneficial social networks for the members. For example, McClendon and Riedl (2015) show that political participation among respondents can be explained by self-affirming religious messages, while Campbell (2013) discusses political participation as an outcome of not only individual correlates, but also social networks formed in churches. Potential converts are thus likely to enjoy membership in a organization that readily provides religious messages and support networks, the two primary channels through which people become proselytized. Among the many outcomes that one may imagine in becoming religious, experimental studies have uncovered some of the "fruits of the spirit" to be statistically significant. The works suggest that when respondents are "treated" with the religious factor, they tend to be more giving (Condra, Isaqzadeh and Linardi 2017; Warner et al. 2015), politically active (McClendon and Riedl 2015), and pro-social (Shariff and Norenzayan 2007).

In this paper, we focus specifically on the impact of the Protestant church in changing the political preferences and voting patterns of constituents in South Korea. The country provides an important case for studying the impact of an organized religion on the political leanings of its constituents. South Korea has one of the highest concentration of Protestant churches per capita in the world, and despite it being a secular state,¹ the country has arguably

¹Using the World Value Survey, Jhee (2011) finds that while most respondents in South Korea value secularism, those who identify strongly with democracy are more likely to support the division between the state and religion. The author also finds that religious respondents supporting the role of the church in society are less likely to be supportive of secularism.

witnessed the church exercise significant influence on its politics.² We look at the two recent presidential (December 2007, 2012) and legislative (April 2008, 2012) election results, to find that unlike 2007, districts with more churches per population also saw significantly greater support for the conservative party in the 2012 presidential election. These elections, with the exception of the 2016 legislative and the 2017 presidential by-election, are the most recent series of political events that have revealed Korean voters' preferences. They also stand out for the strong emphasis that the competing parties placed on the North Korean issues, and the conservative party winning with strong support by the Protestants. In this context, our analysis attempts to investigate where the root of support for the conservative party among the Korean Protestants in 2012 comes from. While one could argue that general Protestant values likely encourage church congregants to support the conservative party due to its rhetoric on various social issues, we find this not to be the case; in 2007, we do not find any church effect on support for the conservative party. At the same time, in comparison with the previous election, we find that the church had a strongly positive impact on the support for the conservative party in 2012. We argue that the main determining factor during the latter election was the church's reaffirmed stance against North Korea, and its opposition against the liberal party's more lenient and cooperative attitudes towards the dictator regime during the months leading up the election.

The spread of Protestantism in Korea can be traced back to the end of Joseon Dynasty in the late 19th century, when many American missionaries settled in Pyongyang. The missionaries' focus on education, mercantilism and social welfare, along with messages of the gospel, successfully met with a large following of converts.³ With the advent of the

²For instance, President Myung-bak Lee was criticized by the opposition party for nominating his administration's ministers from the Somang Presbyterian Church, in which he served as one of the elders. Many cabinet members in his administration shared the so-called "SKY" background, referring to the Somang Presbyterian Church, Korea University, and Youngnam (Southeastern region) (Lee 2008; Kang 2008).

³Pyongyang was originally hailed as the "Jerusalem of the East" in the early 20th century by western missionaries (Chung 2001, pg.53); by 1908, the city had the largest number of self-supporting churches (Clark

communist ideology becoming popular by 1930s, however, Protestants became increasingly marginalized. When the country gained its independence from Japan at the end of World War II, Pyongyang also became the capital city of the communist regime, and religious freedom was banned by the new state. This led a large number of Protestants to defect to South Korea between 1945 to 1953, after their churches and properties in the north were taken by the communist regime. As a result, a large number of influential pastors in the biggest churches in South Korea defected from the North and have direct family connections in North Korea.

More specifically, at the time of liberation, approximately 200,000 Protestant lived in North Korea, comprising about 60 percent of the total Protestant population in the peninsula; out of these, 35 to 50 percent (70,000 to 100,000) defected to the south between 1945 and 1953 till the end of the Korean War, becoming leaders of major Presbyterian and Methodist churches and related organizations (Choi 1982). In particular, they flourished under South Korea's anti-communist propaganda. The church's continuing support for the conservative party appears to have largely stemmed from its anti-communist sentiment, rooted in the history of persecution and exile by the North Korean communist regime in the 1940s and 1950s, and transmitted in church over generations. Indeed, we find that respondents who identify themselves as Protestants in the Korean General Social Surveys (2003-2016) share conflicted feelings toward North Korea. On the one hand, they feel animosity toward the northern neighbor, and list the United States, South Korea's tight military and economic ally since the Korean War, as their most favored country. On the other hand, they perceive North Korea as a place to want to send help and aid, while not wanting to cooperate with the regime. On the issue of the North Korean regime's legitimacy, the church has always

2010, pg.240-241). Northern provinces's openness to Protestantism can arguably be attributed to its role as the gateway to all the missionaries traveling by land, and as an open channel for communication, cultural and commercial exchange with mainland China. This contrasted with the southern region of the peninsula which, surrounded by three seas, was considered isolated, traditional, and backwardly (Clark 2010, pg.235).

sided with the conservative party, which has sustained its hostile view against it with strong emphasis on national security through the ROK-US alliance. We find that in 2012, the church's pivotal role in politicizing congregants became more prominent and influential; the anti-communist rhetoric that the conservative party carried out in the run up to the presidential election in December appears to have been particularly effective in gathering support from the Protestant congregants.

Our paper contributes to the growing political science literature on the role that the church plays in shaping voters' behavior,⁴ and brings into focus a unique historical context that can explain the source of conservative leanings amongst Protestants, apart from their religious values based on biblical teachings. To the extent that the rapid spread of Protestantism coincided with South Korea's initial democratic transition and economic development, our case study supports the view that conversionary Protestants had influenced the rise and spread of stable democracies as well as economic development (Woodberry 2012; Bai and Kung 2015). At the same time, the country's experience with a subsequent period of autocratic regimes under Park Chung-hee and Chun Doo-hwan, and continuing tension with North Korea suggest that the Protestants' conservative political attitudes may be derived from more complex and historical underpinnings. Our findings also provide an update to an ongoing debate on how political cleavages may form along religious divides in South Korea, especially in regard to the country's policies on North Korean issues.⁵

⁴For example, see Campbell (2006) for a study of white Evangelical American voters and their Republican leanings under "religious threat" by their secular counterparts in presidential elections, and Trejo (2009) for the impact of the Catholic church in promoting indigenous movements in Latin America. Through experiments in Kenya, McClendon and Riedl (2015) also finds that Pentecostal and Charismatic churches motivate political participation in the Sub-Saharan context.

⁵Jang and Ha (2011) discuss the popular perception of Korean Protestants' attitudes towards North Korea. However, in their empirical analyses, the authors find that the Protestants were neither politically conservative nor hostile to North Korea. We update their results with discussions on Protestant attitudes over the two elections, and validate our mechanism with a further analysis using the same survey data (Korean

The remainder of the paper continues as follows. In the next section, we provide a brief history of Protestantism and its connection to politics in Korea. In section 3, we describe the data collected for our empirical analysis and propose an empirical strategy. In section 4 we present our main findings. We continue with discussions on robustness checks and potential caveats in Section 5. Finally in Section 6, we conclude with a summary of our findings and suggestions for future research topics related to this paper.

2 Protestantism in Korea

The history of Korean Protestantism began in the late 19th century, over a century later than the introduction of the Catholic to the peninsula. The first Protestant to reach Joseon (as Korea was formerly known before the Japanese colonization in 1910) was Nagasaka in 1883, a Japanese Christian who was part of the National Bible Society of Scotland in Tokyo. However, most attribute Dr. Horace N. Allen, a medical missionary dispatched from the American Presbyterian Church in 1884, as the first missionary in the peninsula (Cho 2014, pg.313). Missionaries such as Dr. Allen and the Methodist Reverend Henry G. Appenzeller engaged in institutional missionary work, such as medical and educational aid. Protestant missionary work used the Nevius Method, which emphasized self-support, self-propagation, self-government and independence of the church; this encouraged the natives' participation in evangelical work (Kim 1995, pg.40).

When Japan declared Korea its protectorate in 1905, the number of baptized adherents on the peninsula was 9,761; this number had doubled two years later, to 18,964. Park (2011) describes three groups of thought that attempt to explain the success of Protestantism in Korea during the Japanese colonization period. The first observes the resemblance between Protestant Christianity and Korean traditional beliefs. The familiarity of the concepts of God, Trinity, Heaven and Hell, allowed Koreans, who had formerly worshipped shamanistic

General Social Surveys).

cults, to embrace Protestantism without strain. The ethics and family values of Christianity and Confucianism also aligned (Kim 2000). The second approach suggests that the Protestant church's initial involvement in social and political activism appealed to Koreans.⁶ Thirdly, some scholars believe that the indirect early missionary method adopted by Protestant missionaries, using educational, medical and social services, was more effective eroding Koreans' hostility towards foreigners than direct evangelical work. Park (2011) argues this to be a plausible explanation for the success of Protestantism in Korea, although the author also notes that the same method did not yield such successful results when previously used in China or Japan (Park 2011, pg.14-15). The initial success of Protestantism likely stemmed from all of the aforementioned factors.

When Korea was liberated from Japan's occupation on August 15th, 1945, the peninsula was divided into the communist north, and the democratic south. By the end of 1945, the conflict between communists and Protestants became highly intensified. A large number of Protestants in the south, supporting the US army military government in the south and Rhee Syngman, persecuted communists (Kang 2005, pg.44-45). Christians in the north advocated for freedom of religion and assembly. Finding church leaders to be too influential, the communist government under Kim Il-sung in the north forced churches to register under a government-sponsored Christian League, confiscated church properties, and reduced the number of churches in the north (Park 2011, pg.41). Though some minor Christian organizations that supported the communist government emerged, those that criticized the government were charged with treason, or escaped to the south (Kim 1992).

In the south, Rhee Syngman, a Methodist, rose to power with the support of the U.S. military government and the Christian refugees from the north. The Christian Newspaper

⁶Park (2011) argues that this alone cannot explain the spread of Protestantism. The church continued to grow after it withdrew from more aggressive political movements after the Independence Movement of 1919. In addition, the churches that grew explosively later in Korean history, during the 1970s and 1980s, were conservative churches opposing social and political activism.

(*Kidok Simmun*) on August 15, 1948 noted that Rhee took his oath of office as the President of the Republic of Korea in 1948 with his hand on the Bible, a gesture unheard of in Korea before or after. Later that year, he vowed that his government would aspire to further the Christian doctrine in Korea. The same speech identified communism as the enemy of both democracy and Christianity, strengthening the bond between the South Korean government and the church. The Protestant church offered organizational support, even forming the Korean Church Committee for Election for Rhee's campaign (Park 2011, pg.177-178).

In the subsequent period of dictatorship under Park Chung-hee, who led a military coup for an authoritarian regime that lasted for 18 years,⁷ Park preached anti-communism and prioritized economic growth. At the same time, Korea experienced an explosive growth of Protestantism and the emergence of big churches. These churches, which produced substantial financial profits, were generally of conservative nature, although some Protestant churches supported the democratization movement in opposition of Park's regime (Chang 2015). Lee (2009) contends that the development of these mega-churches between the 1960s and 1980s can be attributed to the influence of modernism and economic success during Park's authoritarian rule.⁸

⁷When Rhee was forced out of office by the Student Revolution of April 19, 1960, Yun Posun took over as the president that lasted for only one year until Park led a successful coup against him.

⁸Lee (2009) points out that the average annual GDP growth rate from the 1960s to 1980s was around 9.2 percent, while the population of Protestants in Korea was 1,570,649 in 1972, and 4,571,920 in 1981. The Protestant population had an annual growth rate of approximately 9.3 percent. In particular, megachurches, such as the Yoido Full Gospel Church, recorded a 1,611 percent growth rate in the 1970s, and boasted 500,000 members in 1989 (Kim 2000, pg.120). Kim (2000) also extends the effects of emphasis on materialistic concerns to the success of the Protestant Church as a whole; the promise of materialistic success appealed to a society in which economic prosperity was prioritized. 55 percent of the Protestants who responded in the 1984 Korea Gallup Polls said that heaven is to be found in this world, rather than the other world. The respondents also prioritized material values such as health, money and wealth over truth, honesty, love, and trust.

Over the course of these historical events, the Protestant church has held its firm stance against the North Korean regime. While the number of surviving Protestant defectors from the north has decreased, their legacy nevertheless lives on decades after the Korea War. The church has continued to influence its congregants's political preferences through sermons and fellowship networks. Political messages embedded in biblical teachings (e.g. preaching on the sin of idolatry, in the context of North Korea's cult of personality surrounding the Kim family), prayer groups for the salvation of suffering North Koreans under the dictator regime, and fellowship networks focusing on providing aid to North Korean refugees and missionaries are all commonly found in various churches, especially large ones. Even with the end of authoritarian rule in 1987 and the political social transition in the 1990s, the Protestant church has remained generally characterized as conservative, and against religious pluralism, gender equality, and de-anti-communism.

Kang (2004) notes that the South Korean Protestant Church has become increasingly politically active and come to represent the conservative right wing since 2000, and again traces the origin of the political conservatism of the Korean Protestant church back to the successful settlement of North Korean Christian refugees in South Korea around the Korean War. In particular, the Christian Council of Korea (CCK) established in 1989 has become the center of not only Korea's conservative Protestant churches, but also conservative civil activism, as the CCK often cooperated with far-right conservative groups such as the Korean Veterans Association (Ryu 2017).⁹ The Protestant church's engagement in politics also became more pronounced with the presidents Kim Dae-jung and Rho Moo-hyun from the liberal party taking office between 1998 and 2008 (Cho 2014, pg.319). The church, repre-

⁹A major Protestant organization, National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK), publicly acknowledged conversion towards a softer stance on North Korea in 1988, citing that they had neglected the souls of North Korean people amid the strict anti-communist campaigns. However, this announcement led to the creation and the rise of the biggest conservative Protestant church organizations, the Christian Council of Korea (CCK), which maintained conservative and hostile views on North Korea.

sented by the CCK, strongly opposed the Kim Dae-jung administration’s “Sunshine Policy” toward North Korea, which was inherited by the Roh Moo-hyun administration (Ryu 2017). The main reason for the opposition was that the policy treated the North Korean regime as a legitimate and equal partner in peace negotiation and cooperation (Christian Council Network Korea 2010). Furthermore, between 2007 and 2012 under Lee Myung-bak administration, there was increasing politicization of the church in Korea, likely spurred on by the president’s involvement with the Protestant church and the church’s prominence in the media. In the following, we argue that the positive Protestant church effect on the support for the conservative party in 2012 is an outcome of the reaffirmed anti-North Korean sentiment, particularly spread through the politicized Protestant churches.

3 Data and Empirical Strategy

3.1 Data and Variables

Our key explanatory variable is the number of Protestant churches per 1000 people in the years 2007 and 2012.¹⁰ The raw data contain around 60,000 church addresses, with a significant number of repeated and incomplete observations. After cleaning and reorganizing the data, we end up with 40,609 church addresses in 2007 and 32,377 church addresses in 2012, with complete information on addresses and denominations. Our unit of analysis is the district (eup-myun-dong in Korean), which is a subdivision of the city unit (si-gun-gu in Korean). We match each church location to the corresponding district, and sum up the total number for the district to obtain the number of churches per 1000 people. In order to measure the population size of each district accurately, we collect the population information in the month of the election from the Resident Registration Data, provided by the Ministry

¹⁰We have obtained the list of addresses through a private firm which specializes in collecting and distributing church addresses annually (<http://3590.co.kr/>). To our knowledge, the firm offers the most comprehensive, systematically unbiased collection of church addresses that is updated every week.

of Government Administration and Home Affairs.¹¹

Our key dependent variables are the vote shares for conservative parties from the presidential elections held in December 2007 and December 2012, and the legislative elections held in April 2008 and April 2012. We collect the polling-station-level electoral outcome data from the National Election Commission (NEC) and aggregate the outcome at the district level.¹²

From the election data, we construct the vote share variable for the conservative parties in each district. The conservative vote share is calculated by dividing the number of votes cast to the candidates from conservative parties by total votes, multiplied by 100. The largest conservative party in the 2007 presidential election and the 2008 legislative election was the Grand National Party (GNP) (*Hannaradang*), which changed its name to the Saenuri Party in 2012. In the 2007 presidential election, the GNP was not the only major conservative party. Another conservative party, Liberty Forward Party (LFP) (*Jayuseonjindang*), had an influential candidate, Lee Hoi Chang, who formerly led the GNP. He gained 15.1 percent of the total votes in the 2007 presidential election. Our dependent variable accounts for the constituents' support for both of these conservative parties.¹³ In the 2012 election, the Saenuri Party was the only major conservative party, with Park Geun-hye as the candidate. Smaller parties played more significant roles in the legislative elections. In the 2008 legislative election, in addition to the GNP which gained 153 seats out of 299 seats, the LFP and the Pro-Park Coalition gained 18 and 14 seats, respectively. In the 2012 legislative election, the

¹¹http://rcps.egov.go.kr:8081/jsp/stat/ppl.stat_jf.jsp

¹²One potential issue with the administrative boundaries in South Korea is that a number of them may have been re-drawn due to urbanization over time. We take the districts in 2012 as the baseline, identify those that had either merged or split before, and match them to the corresponding districts.

¹³There were other candidates from minor political parties running in presidential election. In generating our measure, we only include those candidates who received more than one percent of the total votes. Out of 12 candidates in the 2007 presidential election, five candidates received more than one percent of the total votes.

GNP obtained 152 seats while the LFP gained five seats.

Finally, we implement additional analyses using national survey data, the Korea General Social Survey (GSS) from 2003 to 2016, to validate our proposed mechanism through which the distribution of Protestant church may explain constituents' political preferences. We focus on two questions revealing the respondents' perception on North Korea as the dependent variable. The first question asks, "What do you think North Korea is for us?", and the respondents choose one of the four options including "an object of (1) aid", "(2) cooperation", "(3) vigilance", and "(4) animosity." In a previous study on religion and Korean politics, Jang and Ha (2011) treat these options as rank ordered, and use an ordered probit estimation for their analysis.¹⁴ Rather than rank ordering these options, we instead generate four separate indicators as our dependent variables, each corresponding to one of the said response types. This approach allows us to better capture any conflicted responses that particular respondents may have towards North Korea. As an additional dependent variable, we use responses from another question, which asks the following: "Which country do you feel most closely among America, Japan, North Korea, China or Russia?". As this question indirectly reveals the respondents' attitudes on North Korea, we create two indicator variables identifying those who choose America and North Korea. All variables are summarized in Table A.1 in the Online Appendix.

3.2 Empirical Strategy

Our empirical analysis is based on the following equation to capture any differential district-level effect observed in the conservative party's vote share, due to the number of local Protestant churches in 2012:

¹⁴The authors find no association between Protestantism and attitude toward North Korea using this empirical approach. To our best knowledge, this study represents the first attempt to systematically analyze the association between Christianity and political preferences in Korea.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{ConservativeVoteShare}_{dct} = & \beta_0 + \lambda_d + \beta_1 \text{Yr2012} + \beta_2 \text{Church}_{dct} + \beta_3 \text{Yr2012} \cdot \text{Church}_{dct} \\ & + X'_{dct} B + \varepsilon_{dct}, \end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

where $\text{ConservativeVoteShare}_{dct}$ is the vote share of the conservative parties in district d in city c in year t . We present results for the presidential and the legislative elections below. The main explanatory variable, Church_{dct} , is the number of Protestant churches per 1000 people in district d in city c in year t . The indicator λ_d captures the time-invariant district fixed effect, and the time indicator, Yr2012 identifies the election period. In the first period, the presidential election occurred in 2007, and the legislative election followed in 2008. In the second period, both the presidential and the legislative elections took place in 2012.

X is a vector of both city and district-level time-varying confounders that we include in our analysis. As of 2012, 3,482 districts in Korea belonged to 230 cities. A large number of unobservables, those potentially affecting the political behavior of constituents, likely feature at the city level. For instance, every four years, electorates of each city vote for a new mayor and legislative members in local elections, while no formal election exists at the district level. South Korea runs a single-member district plurality system to elect the large majority of 300 National Assembly members. In legislative elections, the precinct ranges from 1/4 to 4 cities, depending on the population of the city. While these city-level characteristics are subsumed in the district fixed effect (λ_d), time-varying factors are not. In particular, the level of economic output in each city may correlate with the support for the incumbent party in the run up to election, and the level of support may change from one election to another due to the economic performance. We include the regional gross domestic product (RGDP) in 2007 and 2012 to address this alternative potential mechanism.¹⁵

¹⁵RGDP statistics are available from the Korean Bureau of Statistics (KOSIS). In this paper, we mainly focus on the outcomes from the presidential elections, which take place at the end of year in December.

Next at the district level, we include the share of young voters for each year. Korean politics scholars have pointed out the rising gap in preferences across different generations as a key factor explaining individual voter’s political ideology and behavior (Lee and Jeong 2007; Noh, Song and Kang 2013). We generate the young voter share by employing the share of district population between the ages 20 and 49. In addition, we include the total population (in thousands of people) to account for the size of each district. Furthermore, we add the church denomination controls to account for the possibility that certain denominations have particularly different effects on congregants’ political decisions. We generate the denomination share variables for the five major Protestant denominations, and assign each church to the corresponding group.¹⁶ Finally, the errors are clustered at the city level.

For validating the association between Protestantism and attitude towards North Korea, the channel which we argue to explain the Korean Protestants’ support for the conservative political parties, we analyze the KGSS data using the following specification:

$$\text{Perception}_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Protestant}_i + X'_i B + \lambda_t + \varepsilon_{it}, \quad (2)$$

We use the *logit* model as our dependent variables are binary. Perception_{it} captures individual respondent i ’s attitude towards North Korea in year t . The key explanatory variable is whether a respondent i is a Protestant. We construct two variables measuring the respondent’s Protestant belief. The first is a simple indicator variable capturing whether one

We thus interpret the RGDP in 2007 and 2012 as measures of economic output obtained *prior* to the elections, and use them to minimize potential endogeneity issues in election outcomes influencing local economic performance.

¹⁶Each church belongs to an organization with membership to a major denomination in Korea. For the approximately 250 small organizations that the churches belong to from our dataset, we assign each of them to one of the five major denominational groups. They are the two major groups from the Presbyterian Church of Korea (Hapdong and Tonghap), the Methodist Church, the Evangelical Holiness Church, and the Baptist Church. Churches which do not belong to one of the five major denominations are classified as “others”.

believes in Protestantism or not. The other is a continuous variable measuring how sincere one's belief in Protestantism is, for which we use the frequency of Protestant church attendance to construct a measure between zero (not Protestant) and one (devout Protestant).¹⁷ We also control for a large number of individual traits which likely affect the respondent's political attitude. These include educational attainment, age, employment, income, urban residence, gender, and marital status. Additionally, we control for regional factors. Regional cleavage is a long-standing empirical trend in elections which have prevailed in Korean politics for the last several decades (Lee 1998; Sonn 2003). Constituents living in the southeastern provinces of Korea (Yeongnam) have generally supported the conservative party, while voters living or born in the southwestern provinces (Honam) have tended to support a moderate liberal party. In order to control for the regional confounder, we construct dummy variables for these two regions.¹⁸

Next, we employ the year fixed effects to address major national-wide time trends between 2003 and 2016, the period for which the KGSS is available. The public perception toward North Korea went through a drastic change, for example, in 2007 as North Korea carried out its first nuclear test in October, 2006. We find that the incident led to the general attitude in Korea becoming substantially more hostile toward the North Korean regime than before, regardless of individual religious belief, regional affiliation, or political ideology. Finally, the standard errors are clustered at the province level.

¹⁷The measure is a normalized score based on the respondents' answers to their religion, and how frequently they attend religious services.

¹⁸Throughout the KGSS, the respondents' location information is available at the provincial level. To estimate the direct effect of residing in Yeongnam or Honam, we do not use the province fixed effects in the main analyses. Employing province fixed effects, however, does not alter our main results.

4 Empirical Findings

Table 1 presents the analysis results using the 2007 and 2012 presidential elections. In the 2007 presidential election, Lee Myung-bak of GNP (the largest conservative party) was elected with 48.7 percent of votes. Lee was followed by Chung Dong-young of UNPD, the largest liberal party (26.1 percent), and Lee Hoi Chang of another prominent conservative party, LFP (15.1 percent). In the 2012 presidential election, the conservative candidate was again elected as the winner. Park Geun-hye from the Saenuri Party (formerly GNP) was elected with 51.6 percent of the total votes, followed by Moon Jae-in of DUP (48.0 percent).

Table 1 Vote Share of Major Conservative Parties in Presidential Elections (2007-2012)

	(1)	(2)
Church per capita \times Y2012	0.1525* (0.0653)	0.1506* (0.0652)
Church per capita	-0.0125 (0.0598)	-0.0139 (0.0592)
Share of Young Voters \times Y2012	-0.0486*** (0.0033)	-0.0487*** (0.0033)
Share of Young Voters	0.0026 (0.0075)	0.0027 (0.0074)
Local GDP per capita \times Y2012	-0.0178 (0.0289)	-0.0176 (0.0287)
Local GDP per capita	0.0998 (0.0623)	0.1000 (0.0619)
pop1000 \times Y2012	-0.1324*** (0.0176)	-0.1328*** (0.0175)
pop1000	-0.0274 (0.0266)	-0.0280 (0.0268)
yr2012	13.7067*** (1.5799)	13.7654*** (1.5761)
Constant	57.5935*** (3.6953)	57.5333*** (3.7006)
Denomination Controls	No	Yes
Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes
Observations	6310	6310

Robust standard errors in parentheses

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 1 presents the vote share for the conservative parties as the dependent variable in the presidential elections. We find that the results support our theoretical prediction: in 2007, we find no church effect on support for the conservative parties. However, the constituents in the district with more churches per 1000 people in 2012 are more likely to cast votes for the conservative party candidates, compared to other districts. The coefficient estimate from the number of churches per population interacted with the year 2012 dummy (β_3 in Equation 1) gives the differential church impact in 2012 relative to 2007. When the district has one more church per 1000 people in 2012, the vote share for the conservative parties increases by 1.5 percentage points (Model (1) and (2)). Put differently, one standard deviation in the number of churches increases the vote share of the conservative party by roughly 5 percentage points.¹⁹ Given the usually competitive elections held between the two sides, particularly in the 2012 election where the margin was only 3.6 percent between the two major candidates, the Protestant effect appears to have a sizable impact. The difference between Model (1) and Model (2) is the inclusion of church denomination indicators as additional controls.

We find that the coefficient estimates of our remaining controls correspond to various findings in the existing literature. For example, more young voters (voters of ages between 20 and 49), means a significant drop in the vote share for the conservative parties in 2012. While a higher regional GDP per capita on the other hand is not particularly associated with voting patterns, the size of population has significant negative impact for conservative parties, which is consistent with the existing works on voting behaviors in urban versus rural areas, suggesting that urban voters prefer liberal candidates while rural voters prefer the candidates from the conservative parties (Cho 1994, 2013). Finally, we do not find any notable effects of particular church denominations on constituents' voting behaviors. We note however that these null findings may be an outcome of a measurement problem, as classifying over 250 small organizations into five larger denomination groups has proven challenging in numerous cases, despite having consulted both pastors and theologians on the matter. We leave further

¹⁹The mean number of church per 1000 people is 2.9, and the standard deviation is 3.5

analyses on denominational group impact as a topic for future research.

Table 2 presents the results using the 2008 and 2012 legislative elections. The estimates from the table differ from those of president elections; a higher number of Protestant churches per 1000 people within a district is not associated with a greater vote share for the conservative parties. The stark difference in the church effect between the legislative and presidential election can be attributed to the electoral context, and explained by comparing the voters' preferences on candidates for legislative elections with those for presidential elections. We argue that the null findings in these legislative elections reflect the general features of legislative elections, and more importantly the types of salient political issues that appeared in the presidential election in December 2012, after the legislative election took place in April of the same year.

The legislative elections in Korea run under a single member district plurality system, and candidates of each district carry at least as much weight as the party nominating the candidate. Except for Yeongnam and Honam, which are the core regions for the conservative and the liberal parties, respectively, other regions have not shown any clear or consistent leanings in their party support. A candidate's educational background, occupation, local networks, and campaign platforms all play important roles in the legislative elections. In contrast, candidates' party affiliation functions as the key factor in the presidential elections, where the party's ideological platform and political atmosphere at the time are critical.

In the 2012 presidential election, regarding welfare policy and market reforms, both the Saenuri Party and DUP supported similar reformative policies. These policies addressed concerns for the enlarging inequality that became particularly salient during the Lee Myung-bak administration (2008-2012), and in the public polls in the run up to the election. The fact that the two competing parties proposed similar platforms stands out as exceptional from what is typically observed in western democracies, where welfare and economic policies, such as taxation and market regulation, usually constitute the core difference between two political camps. Instead, the major difference came from attitudes toward the past political

Table 2 Vote Share of Major Conservative Parties in Legislative Elections (2008-2012)

	(1)	(2)
Church per capita \times Y2012	-0.0110 (0.2688)	-0.0197 (0.2682)
Church per capita	0.2950 (0.2256)	0.2701 (0.2254)
Share of Young Voters \times Y2012	-0.0344* (0.0148)	-0.0356* (0.0148)
Share of Young Voters	-0.0440 ⁺ (0.0265)	-0.0424 (0.0264)
Local GDP per capita \times Y2012	-0.0269 (0.0791)	-0.0245 (0.0784)
Local GDP per capita	0.0037 (0.1947)	-0.0026 (0.1942)
pop1000 \times Y2012	0.0133 (0.0477)	0.0139 (0.0473)
pop1000	-0.0189 (0.0609)	-0.0203 (0.0607)
yr2012	7.9634 (7.3502)	8.6035 (7.3098)
Constant	69.5129*** (11.9881)	70.6400*** (11.9428)
Denomination Controls	No	Yes
Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes
Observations	6394	6394

Robust standard errors in parentheses

⁺ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

repression and North Korea-related issues, which were closely related to each other. Both major candidates in the 2012 presidential election inherited legacies of past leaders. On the one hand, Park Geun-hye, as the first daughter of Park Chung-hee, was criticized for her stance regarding the past state repression under her father's ruling. On the other hand, the criticism against Moon Jae-in was closely related to the former president Roh Moo-hyun, due to his long-time personal and formal partnership with him.

In the run up to the 2012 election, voters were primed by a scandal around the Northern Limit Line (NLL), one of the most heated issues during the presidential campaign. The scandal broke two months before the election in December, when the Saenuri Party claimed that President Roh Moo-hyun of South Korea offered Kim Jong-il, the head of North Korea, part of South Korea's territory around the Northern Limit Line (NLL) in the West (Yellow) Sea during an inter-Korean summit in 2007. Both parties of the summit, Roh and Kim, were unable to confirm this claim, as they passed away in 2009 and 2011, respectively. Later in 2013, the National Intelligence Service (NIS) opened the summit record to the parliamentary members, where such statement was not found. Regardless of the truth, the NLL issue was at the center of the election campaign, mobilizing conservative and security-concerned voters. It hinted at the possibility that Moon, the presidential candidate in 2012 and the former chief-of-staff under the Roh administration, might concede too much national interest to North Korea, such as South Korea's effectively occupied territory in the West Sea. What was notable about the NLL incident was not the perennial issue of North Korea; even back during the 2007 election period, a series of missile launching and the nuclear weapon testing by the north had alarmed the constituents of South Korea of the impending threats. These incidents however were deemed outside of the presidential candidates' control, and perceived as a one-sided action by North Korea. The NLL scandal on the other hand played to the advantage of Saenuri party and its presidential candidate (Park), by making the North Korean issue salient again. Along with increasing concerns for Moon's relatively independent stance over the ROK-US alliance, as well as repeated nuclear and missile tests by the North Korean

regime, the NLL scandal generated a particularly pro-conservative bias among the Protestant constituents in the 2012 election.

Next, in order to examine the mechanism through which the Protestant church affects the constituents' political behavior, we employ individual-level analyses using the KGSS data from 2003 to 2016. We argue that security issues related to North Korea are important particularly to Protestants, and as we discuss above, their stance on the north stems from the unique historical context. If our argument is valid, we should observe that the Protestant constituents have a distinctive view on North Korea, different from those with other religions, as well as those with no religious faith.

The first question we analyze is “What do you think North Korea is for us?” The respondents choose one of the options from the following: “an object of (1) aid, (2) cooperation, (3) vigilance, (4) animosity”. We do not treat these responses as variable with ordinal values, but as separate, independent choices. In other words, we do not assume that those who see North Korea as a country in need of aid are necessarily more hospitable to North Korea, than those who believe that they need to cooperate with the north, and *vice versa*. Therefore, we create four indicator variables from this question, assuming that each answer carries an idiosyncratic political attitude toward North Korea. The Protestant church's historical connection to North Korea affects the congregants to perceive the north as an object of aid *and* animosity. Many Protestant churches in South Korea have been actively engaging in providing educational and medical aid to North Korea. For example, one of the megachurches in Korea, the Somang Church, established Pyongyang University of Science and Technology, the first private university in North Korea in 2010. A large number of smaller churches have also been playing major roles in assisting the settlement process of North Korean defectors, and advocating human rights in North Korea. At the same time, the Protestant church has sustained its antagonistic attitude toward the North Korea's communist regime, historically inherited from the persecution and the Korean War. As such, the Protestant respondents are less likely to support cooperation with North Korea, as that would mean the legitimization

of the North Korean regime as a counterpart of cooperation.

The results presented in Table 3 are consistent with our prediction. For the models with odd numbers, our main independent variable is a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent declares herself as a Protestant or not. For the even-numbered models, we employ a continuous variable that measures how often the Protestant respondent attends church. We find that being a Protestant is positively and significantly correlated with a hostile attitude toward North Korea (Models (1) and (2)). The more devout a respondent is, as measured by the frequency of church attendance, the more antagonistic he or she is toward the north. At the same time, the Protestant respondents are more likely to support providing aid to North Korea (Models (7) and (8)). The findings are again significant for both the dichotomous and continuous Protestant measures. On the contrary, Protestant religiosity reduces the respondent's support for cooperation with North Korea, which requires the recognition of the North Korean regime as a counterpart of cooperation (Models (5) and (6)). We find a negative but generally insignificant association between Protestant religiosity and perceiving the north as an object of vigilance in Models (3) and (4). An object of vigilance in the Korean context assumes a possibility of negotiation and cooperation when the north shows significant changes in its policy and attitude. The results shows that the Protestant respondents generally object to such case.

Table 3 Mechanism: Protestantism and Attitudes Toward North Korea

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	To us, North Korea is an object of ...							
	animosity		vigilance		cooperation		aid	
Protestant (Dummy)	0.121*		-0.061		-0.079 ⁺		0.164*	
	(0.054)		(0.046)		(0.041)		(0.066)	
Protestant (Continuous)		0.160**		-0.117 ⁺		-0.157***		0.346***
		(0.059)		(0.069)		(0.039)		(0.081)
Education	-0.152***	-0.150***	-0.037**	-0.034**	0.103***	0.103***	0.078**	0.078**
	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.027)	(0.029)
Age	0.021***	0.021***	-0.002 ⁺	-0.002 ⁺	-0.015***	-0.015***	-0.001	-0.003
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Employed	-0.233***	-0.257***	-0.028	-0.029	0.166***	0.192***	0.071 ⁺	0.070 ⁺
	(0.047)	(0.046)	(0.052)	(0.051)	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.037)	(0.036)
Income	-0.017***	-0.017***	0.002	0.002	0.002	0.001	0.014*	0.014*
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Urban	-0.019	-0.022	0.113**	0.121*	0.024	0.023	-0.143**	-0.162***
	(0.038)	(0.040)	(0.044)	(0.054)	(0.074)	(0.082)	(0.050)	(0.041)
Yeongnam	0.059	0.035	0.021	0.009	-0.018	0.006	-0.006	-0.005
	(0.044)	(0.040)	(0.015)	(0.013)	(0.029)	(0.026)	(0.022)	(0.013)
Honam	-0.261***	-0.266***	-0.412***	-0.423***	0.332***	0.364***	0.335***	0.337***
	(0.042)	(0.043)	(0.011)	(0.009)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.018)	(0.009)
Male	0.435***	0.454***	-0.053 ⁺	-0.055	0.056*	0.031	-0.239***	-0.232***
	(0.038)	(0.037)	(0.031)	(0.034)	(0.027)	(0.028)	(0.038)	(0.037)
Married	-0.254***	-0.270***	0.093***	0.082***	0.085*	0.100***	0.166***	0.182***
	(0.048)	(0.046)	(0.025)	(0.022)	(0.036)	(0.029)	(0.050)	(0.051)
Constant	-2.570***	-2.614***	-0.753***	-0.626***	-0.529***	-0.614***	-1.643***	-1.619***
	(0.154)	(0.168)	(0.161)	(0.188)	(0.118)	(0.149)	(0.189)	(0.146)
Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	17746	16627	17746	16627	17746	16627	17746	16627

Standard errors clustered at the province level are in parentheses

⁺ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Finally, we also examine another question which indirectly captures the respondent's attitude toward North Korea. In Table 4, we use the question asking the country that the respondent feels most close to. We find that the Protestant constituents are more likely to have particular preferences for the United States (Models (1) and (2)), while less likely to favor North Korea (Models (3) and (4)). The favorable response for the United States again has ties with the Protestant root, going back to the American missionaries in Pyongyang, and the United States' role in the US army military government in Korea (1945-48), the Rhee administration in South Korea (1948-1960), and particularly in the Korean War (1950-52), as well as in the proliferation of the Protestant church and democratization of South Korea in the post-war period.

Table 4 Mechanism: Protestantism and Favored Country

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	The country I feel closest to is ...			
	United States		North Korea	
Protestant (Dummy)	0.231*** (0.029)		-0.166*** (0.038)	
Protestant (Continuous)		0.475*** (0.029)		-0.307*** (0.037)
Education	-0.004 (0.024)	-0.009 (0.027)	0.072*** (0.016)	0.073*** (0.017)
Age	0.024*** (0.003)	0.023*** (0.003)	-0.019*** (0.002)	-0.020*** (0.002)
Employed	-0.263*** (0.056)	-0.276*** (0.056)	0.271*** (0.072)	0.297*** (0.066)
Income	0.009+ (0.005)	0.010+ (0.005)	-0.009 (0.006)	-0.009+ (0.005)
Urban	0.103* (0.047)	0.107* (0.042)	-0.052 (0.058)	-0.067 (0.078)
Yeongnam	0.140*** (0.024)	0.143*** (0.023)	-0.192*** (0.045)	-0.187*** (0.045)
Honam	-0.445*** (0.025)	-0.456*** (0.025)	0.423*** (0.042)	0.424*** (0.043)
Male	0.249*** (0.025)	0.273*** (0.024)	-0.116* (0.059)	-0.133+ (0.068)
Married	0.008 (0.029)	-0.007 (0.030)	0.192*** (0.047)	0.196*** (0.048)
Constant	-1.425*** (0.170)	-1.407*** (0.171)	-0.566*** (0.149)	-0.501*** (0.144)
Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	17746	16627	17746	16627

Standard errors clustered at the province level are in parentheses
⁺ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

5 Robustness Checks and Caveats

There are several potential caveats with our empirical analyses, each of which we consider in the following. First, we argue that the positive association between an increase in the number of churches per capita and the increase in support for the conservative party likely comes from more people becoming converts or attending church more frequently, due to having easier access to church than before, and changing their political attitudes through church attendance. But one may argue that an increase in the number of churches per capita may not necessarily mean an increase in the number of church attendees, since there could be a larger number of churches overall, but smaller number of congregants per church. More churches therefore may not mean more converts or fervent believers with changed political attitudes.

In the absence of data on the actual number of congregants for each church in our dataset, we are not able to address this concern directly. The Korean population census collects information on the respondent’s religious affiliation, but for every ten years with the most recent ones being in 2005 and 2015, in between which the four elections have occurred. Furthermore, the census data are only available at the city level, with the exception of 2005 for which we were able to obtain the district-level information on the percentage of district residents identified as Protestant. In order to test the relationship between the number of Protestants and the number of churches, we therefore regress the Protestant share of total population on the number of churches at the district level in 2005. Here we include the distance to the nearest megachurch to control for a potential confounder related to the characteristics of churches in each district: the size of the church. “Megachurches” in Korea are well-known for their large sizes and wealth, and their effects on neighboring churches.²⁰ The proximity measure controls for the pull-effect that megachurches have, in which their congregants not only come from the churches’ own districts but also nearby places. As long

²⁰We do not include this control in our main regressions (Tables 1 and 2), as the district fixed effects subsume the distance measure for the megachurches, whose locations stay fixed over the 2007-2012 period.

as these churches are close by enough, they are likely to draw congregants across neighboring districts. To our knowledge, there is no official statistics on official attendee figures and size of each church in Korea. We obtain a list of 39 megachurches in Korea from www.leadnet.org/world, which defines a megachurch as a church with weekly worship attendance numbers exceeding 2,000, and purportedly lists all the megachurches in the world.²¹ In addition to the distance to the nearest megachurch, we also include a number of controls available from the census.²² In Table A.2 in Appendix, we find that there is indeed a statistically significant association between the Protestant share of population and the total number of churches in the district.²³

Second, one could argue that increased church presence did not have a direct impact on the support for the conservative through additional converts or an increase in fervent congregants with conservative preferences. Based on the recent findings of religious messages on political participation (McClendon and Riedl 2015), the association between church presence and support for the conservative party could instead come from increased political participation among existing constituents with conservative preferences. These voters may have been motivated by powerful religious messages to fulfill their civic duty, and vote for the conservative party, as more churches became available for access in their districts. In order to check whether this was likely the case, Table A.3 presents the results in which the outcome variable is the change in voter turnout in the presidential election, and the rest of the estimation specification remains the same in the right hand side of the equation. We find that the change in the number of churches per capita has no significant impact on the change in voter turnout, which in turn suggests that more church presence did not likely encourage

²¹The list includes only the most well-known churches in Korea; given the actual number of churches in Korea, the number of megachurches under the said definition is likely underestimated.

²²These include the total district population, share of population under 20, population with higher education and the number of households. Both the age and education factor likely feature prominently in deciding whether to attend church, and individuals in the same household are also likely to hold the same religion.

more constituents to vote in 2012.

Third, one may argue that changes in support for the conservative party may explain variations in the number of churches in a given district, not the other way around. We do not believe, however, that this reverse causal story has a clear direction. On the one hand, if new churches simply seek many attendees and select themselves to be located in districts with conservative party supporters, we would expect an increase in the number of churches in such districts. On the other hand, if new churches seek to primarily proselytize the liberal-minded, they may not locate in districts with a strong support base for the conservative party. Both outcomes are possible and give no clear indication on which result should obtain.²⁴ In order to test for potential reverse causality, we run additional regressions in which we regress the number of churches per capita in 2012 on the share of votes for the conservative parties in 2007. Table A.4 reports the results, in which we find that the coefficients are statistically insignificant and that there appears to be little support for causality running from support for the conservative parties to church location selection.

Fourth, if Protestantism can be associated with electoral outcomes due to North Korea's religious persecution, it may be that Protestants are not the only religious group to form grievance against the north. More so than other religions, the communist regime actively persecuted Catholics for similar reasons as Protestants, although their numbers remained relatively small in the North Korean territory at the time of liberation in 1945.²⁵ Soon after the Korean War, both Catholic and Protestant organizations have been heavily restricted in North Korea. There are two official Protestant churches and one Catholic church in North Korea, all of which are located in Pyongyang. We examine whether this ongoing restric-

²⁴We also rule out the aforementioned (reverse causal) mechanism, as there is considerable empirical support for the role of religious messages and organizations influencing political behavior in the literature, but we have yet to find a study that look at the impact of changing constituent attitudes on the church location selection process.

²⁵In 1945, there were approximately 190,000 Catholics in the Korean Peninsular, out of which 50,000 of them were in North Korea (Kang 1992).

tion on Christian religions by the North Korean regime shapes the Christian constituents' attitude toward North Korea differently from electorates with other religions or no religion. In Appendix Table A.5, we replicate the results in Table 3 using GSS, but include both the Protestant and Catholic indicators. We find that respondents identifying themselves as Catholic have different attitudes towards North Korea; they feel conciliatory towards, and prefer to cooperate with North Korea. At the same time, they do not consider North Korea as an object of vigilance or animosity. These effects become more evident when employing a continuous variable of religiosity. Meanwhile, the effect of Protestantism remain unaffected. Furthermore, we find supporting evidence in Table A.6 that Catholics consider North Korea to be the closest country to them, not the United States. These findings suggest that while both Catholic and Protestant were historically persecuted and remain repressed by the North Korean regime, only Protestants appear to hold strong anti-North Korean attitudes.

A potential explanation for the different attitudes between the two Christian sects is that they stem not only from the long-term ideological animosity between Protestantism and socialism tracing back to the 1920s, but also, perhaps more importantly, from the material conflict generated by the communist regime's land reform following Korea's liberation in 1945. The landlords and businessmen in Pyongyang and its surrounding regions, who readily accepted Protestantism as a harbinger of modernization, were also often in charge of founding Protestant churches themselves, in contrast to the Catholic chapels set up by local bishops under the direction of the Vatican. They saw their influence demolished by the communist regime with the transfer of their land titleholds to farmer tenants, and many of them defected to the south as a result (Yoon 2015). These events, coupled with the communist persecution of the Christian faith, likely catalyzed the North Korean defectors' involvement in the establishment of Protestant churches with anti-communist rhetoric in South Korea in the 1950s.

Fifth, one may argue that the association between Protestants and their support for the conservative party may not come from their attitudes towards North Korea, but rather

from a specifically preached set of core Protestant values that somehow align more with the conservative party’s policy platforms. If this were true, then the Protestant effect on the conservative party support should not have been significant and positive in the 2012 presidential election, as both the Saenuri Party and DUP supported similar reformative policies in terms of market regulation and social welfare. We find instead that there was indeed an increased support from the Protestants for the conservative party in the 2012 presidential election, which in turn was likely spurred on by the scandal around the Northern Limit Line (NLL) in the run up to the election.

To further validate this point and test whether Protestant constituents hold particularly more conservative ideologies than others, we analyze responses from additional questions in the KGSS. We choose commonly used questions on policy preferences to measure the conservative leanings of respondents; these cover the government’s role in welfare, taxation, and immigration. Specifically, we employ the following four questions (ordered responses are in brackets): 1) “Who should take responsibility for people’s welfare?” ([1] the government-[10] the individual); 2) “Do you think that welfare is more important than economic growth?” ([1] strongly agree-[5] strongly disagree); 3) “Do you think that immigration causes a tax increase?” ([1] strongly agree-[5] strongly disagree); 4) “Do you think that the rich should pay more tax than now?” ([1] strongly agree- [5] strongly disagree). Unlike the attitudes toward North Korea, the results in Table A.7 show no significant effects of Protestant religiosity on conservative ideological inclinations of Protestant constituents.²⁶ These findings therefore reinforce our argument that Korean Protestant constituents support the conservative party because they have distinctive attitudes toward North Korea and its regime, but not because they hold particularly more conservative ideologies or are more supportive of the policy platforms of the conservative party.

Another related potential concern with the scandal in 2012 is that it somehow made

²⁶The number of observations for each question varies, as the KGSS includes different policy-related questions for respondents each year.

Protestants to become more aware of their spiritual burden to proselytize North Koreans. That is, one may argue that the Protestants believed that the liberal party making concessions to North Korea would jeopardize their proselytizing efforts, and thus voted for the conservative party instead. We believe that that the spiritual burden and anti-North Korean attitudes are both salient and intertwined traits of Protestant voters. As shown in the GSS survey results, Protestants respond strongly to the responsibility of helping North Koreans while remaining critical of the regime. The scandal likely reaffirmed both of these factors on North Korea to make the Protestant voters support the conservative party.

Finally, there is a concern in regard to the differential effect in 2012 on the conservative party support. The outcome may not reflect the Protestants' attitudes on North Korea, but rather their support for Park Geun-hye and her legacy as the daughter of Park Chung-hee. We do not consider Park Chung-hee's legacy effect as separate from the North Korea effect heightened by the NLL scandal. While Park's legacy of his widely successful economic campaigns found support in older voters and in Yeongam region in particular (both of which are controlled for in our regressions),²⁷ part of the legacy also came from his anti-North Korean policies. The Protestants' core support for Park Geun-hye thus stemmed from a common history of anti-communist rhetoric shared by both her father and the church, and this effect in turn was magnified by the NLL scandal in the run up to the 2012 election.

In the absence of valid instruments, we cannot address potential endogeneity concerns completely. However, the conditional correlations that we observe do suggest that the presence of churches is indeed statistically significant, and the estimates for our main variable may be interpreted as causal for the following reasons. First, we control for unobserved district and time period effects. Second, we include relevant controls discussed in the literature

²⁷Successful economic policies under Park Chung-hee led the constituents directly benefited from those policies to support the authoritarian incumbent party in elections at the time. These constituents, particularly those residing in Yeongnam, have remained as the main supporters for the conservative parties inheriting Park's legacy, even after the democratization (Hong and Park 2016).

as main determinants of voting outcomes. Third, we find little evidence of causality running in the opposite direction. Fourth, our dependent variable, given the specific context, does not proxy for support in other kinds of platforms that the conservative party pursued that can be explained by unobservables.

6 Conclusion

In this paper, we have investigated the role of the Protestant church on the political preferences of constituents in South Korea. Specifically, we look at the outcomes during the elections in 2007 and 2012, and find that relative to 2007, districts with more Protestant churches also witnessed greater support for the conservative parties in 2012. We find that the differential Protestant effect is the most striking between the presidential elections, in which the constituents tend to vote for the party, rather than the candidate. Given the multifaceted nature of political conservatism, we focus in our paper on a specific Korean issue at hand: concerns over North Korea. With additional analyses using the Korean General Social Survey, we suggest that there is likely a specific mechanism at play involving the Protestants' historical connection with North Korea. North Korea, known for its high concentration of Protestant in the early 20th century, saw many of them defect down to the south with the rise of the communist regime. The spread of Protestantism in South Korea was facilitated by these migrants, who successfully instilled anti-communist sentiments amongst the believers in South Korea, as evident from the gathered responses in KGSS. We find that when the divisive issue on North Korea and security concerns became highly salient in the run up to the presidential election in 2012, those who identified as Protestants chose to support the conservative party, which had always taken a hardline stance against the legitimacy of the North Korean regime.

Our case study serves as an example of how political conservatism among Protestants can be historically rooted, and more broadly how religion can influence political outcomes.

While our findings help to illuminate the relationship between the Protestants and election outcomes in Korea, we also believe that the following extensions on the current topic certainly warrant more future research. First, we believe that megachurches may have a separate and independent effect from smaller churches. They are particularly influential across various social and political arenas. For instance, one of the megachurches, Yoido Full Gospel Church, is arguably the largest church in the world. It is also the founder and owner of a major nation-wide newspaper, *Kukmin Daily*, in Korea. Researchers and observers have pointed out megachurches' long-time involvement in politics (Kim 2013). Casual observations also suggest that churches are becoming bigger and fewer, and given their influence in society (at least in the Korean case), megachurches' political impact may have increased over time. The implication may not be limited to the Korean case, as megachurches exist around the world, not only in advanced countries like the United States but also in developing regions such as Southeast Asia and Africa.

Relatedly, another extension would be to look at the role of the Protestant church on political outcomes across the world, adding to the aforementioned seminal works which have looked at the Protestant outcomes in democratization and income levels. Focusing on the role of the religion within democracies may be a fruitful exercise in itself, which will help to uncover yet other various, specific channels through which Protestant church spreads to influence political preferences of voters. On the other hand, the role of the Protestant church in non-democracies likely has a different role, another research topic which we hope to see more works of. Finally, we believe that similar exercises focusing on other major religious organizations, and comparing their difference with the church, would contribute to the literature greatly. While we have seen various works in the literature on the importance of Muslim mosques and Catholic churches, for example, there is much yet to be done for other religious organizations (Buddhist temples, for example), and their role on politics.

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Online Appendix

Hate Thy Communist Neighbor: Protestantism and Election

Outcomes in South Korea

Table A.1 Summary statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	N
PANEL A: Presidential Election					
Vote Share of Conservative Parties	56.469	24.355	4.766	93.358	6806
Share of Young Voters	430.277	87.472	176.263	743.502	6688
Church per capita	2.826	3.522	0.02	41.096	6310
Population in 1000	14.011	12.286	0	132.108	6806
Local GDP per capita	24.565	16.603	6.162	159.046	6806
Share of Presbyterian Church (Hapdong)	0.324	0.254	0	1	6552
Share of Presbyterian Church (Tonghap)	0.194	0.239	0	1	6552
Share of Methodist Church	0.12	0.189	0	1	6552
Share of Evangelical Holiness Church	0.085	0.151	0	1	6552
Share of Baptist Church	0.048	0.106	0	1	6552
PANEL B: Legislative Election					
Vote Share of Conservative Parties	47.521	24.284	0	97.216	6953
Share of Young Voters	433.302	86.429	194.318	740.067	6848
Church per capita	2.826	3.546	0.021	41.958	6405
Population in 1000	14.164	12.298	0	128.076	6960
Local GDP per capita	24.729	16.667	6.162	159.046	6960
PANEL C: KGSS					
View North Korea as an object of...					
Animosity	0.149	0.356	0	1	18605
Vigilance	0.363	0.481	0	1	18605
Cooperation	0.306	0.461	0	1	18605
Aid	0.159	0.366	0	1	18605
Most Favored country...					
United States	0.589	0.492	0	1	18605
North Korea	0.19	0.392	0	1	18605
Protestant (dummy)	0.227	0.419	0	1	18605
Protestant (continuous)	0.141	0.293	0	1	17424
Education	3.481	1.587	0	7	18562
Age	45.029	16.617	18	99	18585
Employed	0.573	0.495	0	1	18605
Income	7.558	5.008	0	21	17792
Urban	0.836	0.37	0	1	18605
Yeongnam	0.279	0.449	0	1	18605
Honam	0.121	0.326	0	1	18605
Male	0.462	0.499	0	1	18605
Married	0.64	0.48	0	1	18605

Table A.2 The Number of Churches and the Share of Protestant Population

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Number of churches in 2005	0.0195** (0.0062)	0.0134* (0.0065)	0.0233*** (0.0063)
Distance to nearest megachurch (Km)	-0.0034 (0.0204)	-0.0025 (0.0203)	-0.0062 (0.0196)
Total Population in 1000		0.0393*** (0.0115)	0.1830** (0.0565)
Share of Pop Under 20			10.0962*** (2.6787)
Share of Higher Edu Pop			8.3254*** (1.6393)
Number of households in 1000			-0.6020** (0.1814)
Constant	16.6115*** (0.7001)	16.1471*** (0.7160)	12.8242*** (0.9059)
City FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	3105	3105	3105

Robust standard errors clustered at the city level are in parentheses

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A.3 Turnout in Presidential Elections (2007-2012)

	(1)	(2)
Church per capita \times Y2012	-0.3959 (0.3441)	-0.3851 (0.3442)
Church per capita	0.1199 (0.3537)	0.1111 (0.3535)
Share of Young Voters \times Y2012	0.3606*** (0.0204)	0.3612*** (0.0205)
Share of Young Voters	-0.3999*** (0.0779)	-0.4016*** (0.0776)
Local GDP per capita \times Y2012	-0.0001 (0.0001)	-0.0002 (0.0001)
Local GDP per capita	0.0005 (0.0003)	0.0005 (0.0003)
Population (1000) \times Y2012	0.0001 (0.0001)	0.0001 (0.0001)
Population (1000)	0.0005** (0.0002)	0.0005** (0.0002)
yr2012	-0.0529*** (0.0107)	-0.0532*** (0.0107)
Constant	0.8001*** (0.0354)	0.7999*** (0.0353)
Observations	6310	6310
Denomination Controls	No	Yes
Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes
N	6310	6310

Standard errors clustered at si-gun-gu level are in parentheses
⁺ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A.4 Reverse Causality Test

Dep. Var.	(1)	(2)
	Num of Church per capita in 2012	
Vote Share of Conservative Parties in the previous election	-0.0029 (0.0024)	0.0002 (0.0012)
Constant	0.0021 ⁺ (0.0011)	0.0006 (0.0005)
Observations	3081	3146

Si-gun-gu fixed effects are employed.

Standard errors clustered at si-gun-gu level are in parentheses.

⁺ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A.5 Protestantism, Catholic, and Attitudes Toward North Korea

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	To us, North Korea is an object of ...							
	animosity		vigilance		cooperation		aid	
Protestant (Dummy)	0.102*		-0.071		-0.066 ⁺		0.177*	
	(0.050)		(0.048)		(0.036)		(0.074)	
Catholic (Dummy)	-0.149*		-0.071		0.092*		0.094	
	(0.073)		(0.070)		(0.046)		(0.115)	
Protestant (Continuous)		0.139*		-0.145*		-0.138***		0.392***
		(0.063)		(0.069)		(0.040)		(0.090)
Catholic (Continuous)		-0.259*		-0.331***		0.217 ⁺		0.489*
		(0.122)		(0.100)		(0.122)		(0.201)
Individual controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	17746	16627	17746	16627	17746	16627	17746	16627

Standard errors clustered at the province level are in parentheses

Individual controls include education, age, employment, income, urban residence, Yeongnam and Honam, gender, and marital status.

⁺ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A.6 Protestantism, Catholic, and Favored Country

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	The country I feel closest to is ...			
	United States		North Korea	
Protestant (Dummy)	0.223*** (0.029)		-0.139*** (0.026)	
Catholic (Dummy)	-0.064 (0.118)		0.190+ (0.106)	
Protestant (Continuous)		0.450*** (0.031)		-0.259*** (0.023)
Catholic (Continuous)		-0.281+ (0.154)		0.500** (0.156)
Individual controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	17746	16627	17746	16627

Standard errors clustered at the province level are in parentheses
 Individual controls include education, age, employment, income, urban residence, Yeongnam and Honam, gender, and marital status.
 + $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A.7 Tests for Ideological Bias among Protestants

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Welfare is individual's responsibility		Welfare is more important than growth		Immigration causes tax increase		The rich should pay more tax	
Protestant (Dummy)	-0.113 (0.060)		-0.006 (0.091)		-0.011 (0.075)		0.131 (0.114)	
Protestant (Continuous)		-0.061 (0.127)		-0.147 (0.155)		0.002 (0.084)		0.130 (0.192)
Individual controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2753	2744	963	962	1355	1342	963	962

Standard errors clustered at the province level are in parentheses

Individual controls include education, age, employment, income, urban residence, Yeongnam and Honam, gender, and marital status.

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$