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Religion and Preferences for Redistributive Policies in an East Asian Country

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Abstract

This paper investigates the role of religion in shaping people's preferences for redistributive policies in an East Asian country, where traditional values mostly stem from the beliefs of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism that influence people's perceptions about the principles of social justice. Using data from Taiwan Social Change Survey of 2006, the findings from this study provide supportive evidence for the arguments of previous literature and offer some further distinct results. In particular, under the social and cultural context of an East Asian country, the linkages between religious affiliation and frequency of religious attendance and preferences for redistributive policies are different from what have been found in studies of Western Christian societies. Being Protestant leads to a more favorable attitude toward several social insurance and welfare programs in Taiwan, while Buddhists and Taoists tend to be more supportive of a government's role in providing health care and believers of folk religions are more favorable for the provision of financial help to students from low-income families. By contrast, the frequency of religious attendance displays some negative relationships with preferences for redistributive policies. As an important part of traditional cultures, religion is influential to the cultivation and indoctrination of people's beliefs about fairness, social justice, and the legitimization of redistributive policies.

Keywords: redistribution, religion, welfare policies

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Introduction

It has been argued that people's perceptions about fairness, "the belief in a just world," have strong influences on their attitudes toward a government's redistributive policies. These perceptions stem from the fundamental value system of a society affected by social and cultural contexts, political institutions, as well as historical experiences. In particular, as an important component of culture, religion plays a significant role in shaping people's beliefs about fairness, causes and consequences, the reward for hard work, individual responsibility, altruism, and the relationship between personal interests versus the collective well-being of society. As a result, these beliefs stemming from different religious traditions in turn lead to different preferences for the legitimization of redistributive policies and the government's role in reducing inequality.¹

In Western societies, earlier theoretical foundations for explaining the relationship between religion and economic attitudes can be traced back to the arguments made by Marx and Weber.² According to Marx's well-known statement of "religion is the people's opium," religion is a comfort or substitute for suffering that provides an illusory happiness for people against adverse events. By contrast, Weber's argument suggests that Protestantism resulting from the idea of salvation through secular works leads to the emphasis of the importance of hard work in pursuing personal fortune and wealth and the emergence of the spirit of capitalism. This linkage between religion and beliefs about the causes of economic success is also strongly supported by empirical studies using data of cross-country and Western societies.³ In a broadly discussed study by Esping-Andersen on advanced

¹ Luigi Guiso, Paola Sapienza, and Luigi Zingales, "Does Culture Affect Economic Outcomes?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 20 (2) (2006): 23-48; Kenneth Scheve and David Stasavage, "Religion and Preferences for Social Insurance," *Quarterly Journal of Political Studies* 1 (2006a): 255-286; Kenneth Scheve and David Stasavage, "The Political Economy of Religion and Social Insurance in the United States, 1910-1939," *Studies in American Political Development* 20 (2006b): 132-159.

² Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction," in *The Marx-Engels Reader* (1844), ed. Robert C. Tucker, Second Edition. (New York: Norton, 1978); Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Unwin, London, 1905).

³ The findings from these empirical studies suggest that Protestantism is negatively associated with support for a government's redistributive policies while Catholics have a more positive attitude toward redistribution and welfare programs. See, for example, Luigi Guiso, Paola Sapienza, and Luigi Zingales, "Does Culture Affect Economic Outcomes?"; Alberto Alesina and Eliana La Ferrara, "Preferences for Redistribution in the Land of Opportunities," *Journal of Public Economics* 89 (2005): 897-931; Alberto Alesina and Paola Giuliano, "Preferences for Redistribution," Working Paper, Department of

Western societies, it is argued that welfare policies adopted by political parties influenced by Catholic doctrine are systematically different from those adopted by political parties inclining toward Protestant beliefs.⁴ This argument is based on the idea that the relative importance of different religious denominations helps determine the types of political parties that form in a country, leading to different welfare policies across countries. Considering the emergence of post-industrial society, Esping-Andersen also emphasizes the importance of new technologies and globalization rivaled by domestic institutional traditions and the structure of family economy in shaping the kind of welfare regime.⁵

Compared to Western Christian societies, many East Asian countries have inherited the traditional cultures of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism that strongly emphasize collective well-being rather than individual success.⁶ People's perceptions about the principles of justice usually relate to their beliefs derived from the value systems under a specific socio-cultural condition of society. In many East Asian societies, the traditional values of collectivism, responsibilities for the group, and acceptance of hierarchies tend to prefer a more active role of government regarding the institutional arrangement on wealth distribution. The ideologies cultivated and indoctrinated under these traditional cultures and contextual

Economics, Harvard University, 2008.

⁴ Gosta Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).

⁵ Gosta Esping-Andersen, *Social Foundations of Postindustrial Economies* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999); Gosta Esping-Andersen, *Why We Need a New Welfare State* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁶ See Junjiro Takakusu, *The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy*, Third Edition (Honolulu: Office Appliance Co., 1956); C.K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961); Judith A. Berling, "Asian Religions", *Focus on Asian Studies* 2 (1) (1982): 5-11; Rodney L. Taylor, *The Religious Dimensions of Confucianism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985); D.C. Lau (translator), *Tao Te Ching by Lao Tzu* (Everyman's Library, 1994); David Y.F. Ho and Che-Yue Chiu, "Component Ideas of Individualism, Collectivism, and Social Organization: An Application in the Study of Chinese Culture," in *Individualism and Collectivism: Theory, Method, and Applications*, eds. U. Kim, H.C. Triandis, C. Kâğıtçibasi, S. Choi, and G. Yoon (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994); Roger Goodman and Ito Peng, "The East Asian Welfare States: Peripatetic Learning, Adaptive Change, and Nation-Building," in *Welfare States in Transition: National Adaptations in Global Economies*, ed. Gosta Esping-Andersen (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996); Luo Lu, Robin Gilmore, and Shu-Fang Kao, "Cultural Values and Happiness: An East-West Dialogue," *Journal of Social Psychology* 141 (4) (2001): 477-493; Xinzhong Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); K. Sri Dhammanada, *What Buddhists Believe*, Fourth Edition (Malaysia: Buddhist Missionary Society, 2002); J. Legge (translator), *The Analects of Confucius* (eBooks@Adelaide, 2004).

backgrounds influence people's beliefs about fairness, social justice, and the legitimization of public provisions of redistribution and welfare programs.⁷ Therefore, these traditional Asian values and socio-cultural factors play an important role in shaping people's attitudes toward redistributive policies. By contrast, recent economic and democratic developments in these societies have led to the emphasis on individualism, personal efforts, and self-determination in pursuing individual well-being and taking one's own responsibilities. It is possible that religion has different effects on preferences for government redistributive policies in East Asian countries from those found in Western societies. However, empirical studies on the differences in preferences for redistribution for a society with a social context of "Asian culture" remain inadequate.

After the ending of martial law in 1987, Taiwan advanced from an authoritarian to a democratic regime accompanied by rapid economic development, and the country's society turned more autonomous away from the state.⁸ From social and cultural perspectives, Taiwan's economic and democratic advance offers an interesting opportunity for a case study on the relationship between religion and preferences for redistributive policies. Using data from the Taiwan Social Change Survey 2006, this study aims at empirically examining the relationship between attitudes toward redistribution and religion for a society with traditional values of Buddhism, Taoism, and folk religions of Confucian beliefs. This paper makes a contribution to the literature on the linkage between cultural factors and preferences for a government's redistributive policies by focusing on whether the important economic and cultural factors for explaining the preferences for redistribution found in Western Christian societies are still valid under the context of East Asian cultures.

The findings of this study suggest that religion's role in shaping people's attitudes toward redistributive policies in Taiwan is substantially different from what is found in studies using data from advanced Western societies. In particular, being Protestant leads to a more favorable attitude toward several social insurance and welfare programs in Taiwan, while Buddhists and Taoists tend to be more supportive of a government's role in providing healthcare and believers of folk religions are more favorable toward the provision of financial help to students from low-income families. By contrast, the frequency of religious attendance displays some negative relationships with preferences for redistributive policies. As an important part of traditional cultures, religion is influential in the cultivation and indoctrination of people's

⁷ Alan Walker and Chack-kie Wong, *East Asian Welfare Regimes in Transition: From Confucianism to Globalization* (Bristol, UK: Policy Press, 2005).

⁸ Wen H. Kuo, "Democratization and the Political Economy in Taiwan," *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 11 (1997): 5-24.

beliefs about fairness, social justice, and the legitimization of redistributive policies.

Preference for Redistribution

The discussion of important factors explaining people's preferences for government's role in redistribution by providing social insurance and welfare programs has drawn much attention from researchers in economics, political science, as well as other social sciences in recent years. Previous theoretical and empirical studies have identified two sets of factors explaining the differences in people's preferences for redistribution. The first set of factors is based on the argument of the political economic model provided by Meltzer and Richard.⁹ Their model suggests that the preference for redistribution is higher when the ratio of the average voter's income to the median voter's income is larger, because the median voter gains from a higher level of redistribution than the level desired by the average voter. This traditional wisdom indicates that the difference between average and median voters is crucial in clarifying the degree of inequality. However, this model has not received much empirical support, because it neglects some important factors in the determination of a redistributive policy such as the effect of campaign contributions on the political mechanism of describing the aggregation of individual preferences and the role of the prospect of upward mobility (POUM) based on a dynamic framework in shaping preferences for redistribution.¹⁰

Aside from the interpretations provided by political mechanisms and the POUM arguments, many other explanations for the differences in preferences for redistribution have been suggested from the perspective of social and cultural contexts in the formation of people's beliefs about the appropriation of a government's redistributive policies. It is argued that social and cultural factors such as historical experiences, ethnicity, identity, religion, political ideology, as well as political institutions are critical for the fundamental value

⁹ Alan Meltzer and Scott Richard, "A Rational Theory of the Size of Government," *Journal of Political Economy* 89 (5) (1981): 914-927.

¹⁰ Francisco Rodriguez, "Inequality, Redistribution and Rent Seeking," *Economics and Politics* 16 (3) (2004): 224-247; Igor Baramboim and Loukas Campante, "One Dollar One Vote," Working Paper, Harvard University, 2008; Roland Benabou and Efe A. Ok, "Social Mobility and the Demand for Redistribution: The POUM Hypothesis," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 116 (2001): 447-487; Alberto Alesina and Eliana La Ferrara, "Preferences for Redistribution in the Land of Opportunities"; Helmut Rainer and Thomas Siedler, "Subjective Income and Employment Expectations and Preferences for Redistribution," *Economics Letters* 99 (2008): 449-453.

system of a society in defining the “beliefs in a just world” on perceptions about reciprocity, fairness, equal opportunities, and hard work.¹¹ Thus, these social and cultural factors are significant contextual foundations in constructing people’s beliefs about the responsibilities of individuals and government in the determination of income and wealth.

Regarding the effect of religion on shaping people’s preferences for redistribution, previous studies focused on the links between religion and people’s perceptions of fairness, individual responsibility, altruism, as well as social norms about what is acceptable or not in terms of inequality.¹² Two important findings have been obtained from previous studies. One finding identifies the denominational differences, suggesting that people with different religious beliefs have substantial differences in preferences for redistribution, while the other finding points out the differences in degree of altruism between religious people and those who are non-religious, leading to different preferences for redistribution.¹³ Scheve and Stasavage argue that religion and welfare state spending are substitute mechanisms that insure

¹¹ Thomas Piketty, “Social Mobility and Redistributive Politics,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 110 (1995): 551-584; Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, “Reciprocity, Self-Interest, and the Welfare State,” *Nordic Journal of Political Economy* 26 (2000): 33-53; Christina Fong, “Social Preferences, Self-Interest, and the Demand for Redistribution,” *Journal of Public Economics* 82 (2001): 225-246; Erzo F.P. Luttmer, “Group Loyalty and the Taste for the Redistribution,” *Journal of Political Economy* 109 (3) (2001): 500-528; Samuel Bowles, Christina Fong, and Herbert Gintis, “Reciprocity and the Welfare State,” in *Handbook on the Economics of Giving, Reciprocity and Altruism*, eds. S. Kolm and L.-A. Gerard Varet (Amsterdam: Elsevier, Amsterdam, 2004); Alberto Alesina and Edward Glaeser, *Fighting Poverty in the US and Europe: A World of Difference* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004); Alberto Alesina and Eliana La Ferrara, “Preferences for Redistribution in the Land of Opportunities”; Roland Benabou and Jean Tirole, “Beliefs in a Just World and Redistributive Politics,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 121 (2) (2006): 699-746; Alberto Alesina and Nicola Fuchs-Schündeln, “Good-Bye Lenin (or Not?) The Effect of Communism on People’s Preferences,” *American Economic Review* 97 (4) (2007): 1507-1528; Alberto Alesina and Paola Giuliano, “Preferences for Redistribution”; Sule Akkoyunlu, Ilja Neustadt, and Peter Zweifel, “Why Does the Amount of Income Redistribution Differ between United States and Europe? The Janus Face of Switzerland,” Working Paper No. 0810, Socioeconomic Institute, University of Zurich, 2008; Erzo F.P. Luttmer and Monica Singhal, “Culture, Context, and the Taste for Redistribution,” Working Paper, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 2008; Christina Fong and Erzo F.P. Luttmer, “What Determines Giving to Hurricane Katrina Victims? Experimental Evidence on Racial Group Loyalty,” *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 1 (2) (2009): 64-87.

¹² Luigi Guiso, Paola Sapienza, and Luigi Zingales, “People’s Opium? Religion and Economic Attitudes,” *Journal of Monetary Economics* 50 (2003): 225-282.

¹³ Luigi Guiso, Paola Sapienza, and Luigi Zingales, “Does Culture Affect Economic Outcomes?,” Alberto Alesina and Paola Giuliano, “Preferences for Redistribution.”

individuals against adverse life events.¹⁴ Their empirical results show that religious people prefer lower levels of social insurance than non-religious individuals since religious people privately insure themselves through religion and they rationally prefer a lower level of social insurance provided by the government. On investigating the “coping effect” of religion drawn from the concept of social psychology, Scheve and Stasavage also indicate that religiosity is an important factor shaping both individual preferences and policy outcomes regarding social insurance.¹⁵

Religion, Traditional Values, and Principle of Justice in Taiwan

The moral purpose of redistribution is often considered to achieve the societal solidarity of common utility and identity.¹⁶ Differing from the characteristics of a Western welfare state, the societal solidarity of East Asian countries as a base of moral justification may lead to substantial differences in preferences for redistributive policies according to their cultural and social contexts.¹⁷

¹⁴ Kenneth Scheve and David Stasavage, “Religion and Preferences for Social Insurance.”

¹⁵ Kenneth Scheve and David Stasavage, “The Political Economy of Religion and Social Insurance in the United States, 1910–1939.” Other empirical studies on the role of religion in shaping the preference for redistribution also include Stefan Svalfors, “Worlds of Welfare and Attitudes to Redistribution: A Comparison of Eight Western Nations,” *European Sociological Review* 13 (3) (1997): 283-304; Katerina Linos and Martin West, “Self-Interest, Social Beliefs, and Attitudes to Redistribution,” *European Sociological Review* 19 (4) (2003): 393-409; Olli Kangas, “The Grasshopper and the Ants: Popular Opinions of Just Distribution in Australia and Finland,” *Journal of Socio-Economics* 31 (2003): 721-743; Morten Blekesaune and Jill Quadagno, “Public Attitudes toward Welfare State Policies: A Comparative Analysis of 24 Nations,” *European Sociological Review* 19 (5) (2003): 415-427; Morten Blekesaune, “Economic Conditions and Public Attitudes to Welfare Policies,” *European Sociological Review* 23 (3) (2007): 393-403.

¹⁶ Patrick Doreian and Thomas J. Fararo, *The Problem of Solidarity: Theories and Models* (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1997); K. Bayertz, *Solidarität: Begriff und Problem* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998); Wil Arts and John Gelissen, “Welfare States, Solidarity and Justice Principles: Does the Type Really Matter?” *Acta Sociologica* 44 (2001): 283-299.

¹⁷ Arthur F. Wright, “Values, Roles, and Personalities,” in *Confucian Personalities*, eds. A. Wright and D. Twitchett (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1962); Roger Goodman and Ito Peng, “The East Asian Welfare States”; Theodore De Bary, *Asian Value and Human Rights: A Confucian Communitarian Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); John Fuh-Sheng Hsieh, “East Asian Culture and Democratic Transition, with Special Reference to the Case of Taiwan,” *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 35 (1) (2000): 29-42; Russell J. Dalton and Nhu-Ngoc T. Ong, “Authority

Religions in Taiwan are polytheistic and syncretistic. Among the various types, folk religions, Buddhism, and Taoism are considered as traditional religions in the country. In general, these traditional religions are combinations of beliefs, superstitions, and cultural practices descended from generation to generation. Taoism is an indigenous Chinese religion and became widespread as early immigrants from mainland China came over from across the Taiwan Strait. Folk religions in Taiwan are a mixture of ethical ideology and philosophy of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. In the mixture, Confucianism is often considered to be a system of social and ethical philosophies that emphasize ritual actions beyond the formal sacrifices and religious ceremonies that are courtesies and accepted standards of behavior in everyday life.¹⁸ Under the system of Confucian values, the basis of human civilization for a society can be formed with a stable, unified, and enduring social order as well as humaneness among people in society. Nowadays, Confucian values have become transcendent ideals of perfection and philanthropy in the pursuit of moral and spiritual fulfillment.

Although not mutually exclusive to Confucianism, Taoism offers some alternative approaches to one's way of life. Taoism considers Tao (way or path) as the ultimate origin of all creation and the force that lies behind the functions and changes of the natural world. Taoism teaches that the order and harmony of nature are more stable and enduring than any states or institutions constructed by humans, and human life can only flourish in accordance with Tao, the power of nature.¹⁹ The tenets of Taoism are based on the worship of heaven and in carrying out its Tao. Therefore, Taoist ideals emphasize the love of nature, good moral conduct, and the affirmation of life, health, well-being, vitality, longevity, and immortality. The Taoist art of living and surviving by conforming to the natural way of things is called *Wu-Wei* (no action).

Two potentially important concepts embedded in Confucianism and Taoism may be related to people's ideological orientations that influence their attitudes toward government's role in income redistribution. On the one hand, Confucian and Taoist concept of governance is to govern by virtue. When a political leader's behavior follows moral doctrines, his or her personal virtue can spread positive influences throughout the country and the leader can achieve more of the collective interests by doing less and allowing everything to function smoothly. On the other hand, Confucian tradition also stresses

Orientations and Democratic Attitudes: A Test of the 'Asia Values' Hypothesis," *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 6 (2) (2005): 1-21; Alan Walker and Chack-kie Wong, *East Asian Welfare Regimes in Transition*.

¹⁸ Rodney L. Taylor, *The Religious Dimensions of Confucianism*; Xinzhong Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism*.

¹⁹ Max Kaltenmark, *Lao Tzu and Taoism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965); Judith A. Berling, "Asian Religions"; Russell Kirkland, *Taoism: The Enduring Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2004).

meritocracy whereby a virtuous plebeian who cultivates his qualities can be a “*Junzi*” (gentleman) such that personal efforts can break through the barriers of social class and the hierarchic structure in society.²⁰ The concept of virtue governance might lead to a positive attitude toward political authorities and a more active role of government in redistribution. By contrast, the emphasis of meritocracy potentially enhances the beliefs in diligence, hard work, personal efforts, individual rights, and the value of self-determination, leading to preferences for less redistributive policies.

Buddhist beliefs are based on the law of Karma, which is the principle that good conduct will be rewarded and evil conduct will be punished. The cycle of reincarnation is linked to Karma in that a human may be reincarnated in another existence as a different type of creature according to the good and evil actions he has done in a previous life. This repetitive cycle of birth, life, death, and rebirth continues until one reaches Nirvana, a state of non-being or voidness. In addition, Buddhism encourages social cooperation and active social participation, while stressing the importance and the prerequisites of political authority. The tenet of Buddhism believes that the political authority and social system should be established in accordance with humanitarian principles.²¹ As a result, Buddhism has potential effects on emphasizing altruism and the collective well-being of a society.

Given the fundamental social and cultural values of stability, conformity, harmony, diligence, and meritocracy established by the ideologies of Buddhism, Taoism, and folk religions, it is worth investigating further the relationship between religion and the attitude toward redistribution for the case of Taiwan. Presumably, these fundamental social and cultural values tend to cultivate people’s beliefs about the notions of social solidarity and the principle of justice for the acceptance of a government’s redistributive policies. Ever since the transition from an authoritarian to a democratic system in the 1980s, Taiwan has experienced a rapid advance and consolidation of democracy along with its economic success. The democratic system of the country has provided a valuable paradigm for many other Asian nations. Thus, from social and cultural perspectives, the case of Taiwan offers a valuable opportunity to further investigate how religion affects people’s attitudes toward redistributive policies.

²⁰ Judith A. Berling, “Asian Religions”; D.C. Lau (translator), *Tao Te Ching by Lao Tzu*; Xinzhong Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism*; James Legge (translator), *The Analects of Confucius*.

²¹ Junjiro Takakusu, *The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy*; Judith A. Berling, “Asian Religions”; K. Sri Dhammanada, *What Buddhists Believe*.

Empirical Strategy and Data

To examine the relationship between people's attitudes toward redistributive policies and religion, an empirical model is specified as follows:

$$redistribution_i = \alpha + \beta_1 religion_i + \beta_2 attend_i + \beta_3 X_i + \varepsilon_i,$$

where $redistribution_i$ is a measure for individual i 's preferences for redistributive policies, $religion_i$ is the type of religion that individual i is affiliated with, $attend_i$ is individual i 's religious attendance, X_i refers to a set of socioeconomic characteristics such as age, gender, marital status, employment status, income, education, and partisanship for the respondent, and ε_i is the error term.

This study uses data from the Taiwan Social Change Survey (TSCS) in the year 2006 to examine the relationship between people's attitudes toward redistributive policies and religion. Since 1984, TSCS has been conducted annually with different main topics by the Institute of Sociology at Academia Sinica. The topic on citizenship was surveyed in 2006 with a nationwide sample of 1,972 respondents aged 18 years old and over. The 2006 wave of this survey is used for this study because it contains information about respondents' religious affiliations, religious attendance, as well as attitudes toward a government's role in various social issues along with other basic demographic characteristics such as age, gender, educational background, income level, and so on.

In TSCS 2006, respondents answered questions regarding their preferences on several redistributive policies and welfare programs. Two indices are constructed as measures of people's preferences for a government's redistributive policies and welfare programs. According to the responses to questions asking individuals whether they would like to see more (coded as 1) or less (coded as 0) government spending in (1) health (*Health*), (2) retirement benefits (*Pension*), and (3) unemployment benefits (*Unemployment*), respectively, a composite index is constructed as a measure of preferences for social insurance (*Social*) by adding up the responses to these three questions. Respondents are reminded that if they say "much more," it might require a tax increase to pay for it. The index (*Social*) is scaled from 0 (the lowest level of preferences for social insurance when the respondent would like to see less government spending in all aspects of health, retirement benefits, and unemployment benefits) to 3 (the highest level of preferences for social insurance when the respondent would like to see more government spending in all aspects of health, retirement benefits, and unemployment benefits).

An index is also constructed as a measure of preferences for social welfare and benefits (*Welfare*) according to the responses to eight questions asking individuals whether they think it should or should not be the government's responsibility (1) to provide a job for everyone who wants one (*Work*), (2) to keep prices under control (*Price*), (3) to provide healthcare for the sick (*Medical*), (4) to provide a decent standard of living for the old (*Elderly*), (5) to provide a decent standard of living for the unemployed (*Living*), (6) to reduce income differences between the rich and the poor (*Inequality*), (7) to give financial help to university students from low-income families (*Student*), and (8) to provide decent housing for those who cannot afford it (*Housing*). The index (*Welfare*) is scaled from 0 (the lowest level of preferences for social welfare and benefits) to 4 (the highest level of preferences for social welfare and benefits).

There are nine possible responses to the question about religious affiliation: Buddhism, Taoism, folk religions, I-Kuan Tao, Muslim, Catholic, Protestant, non-religious, and other. Among these types of religion, I-Kuan Tao is often considered as the denomination of folk religions that are mixtures of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. In this study the types of religious affiliation are captured by five dummy variables: *Buddha* (Buddhist), *Tao* (Taoist), *Folk* (Folk religionist), *Catholic*, and *Protestant*.

Along with the type of religion, the frequencies of religious attendance and religious practice are also considered. Three dummy variables, *Attend1* (a few times in one year), *Attend2* (a few times in one month), and *Attend3* (a few times in one week), are created to reflect the effects of religious attendance, such as attending temples, shrines, or churches, that capture the intensity of religious beliefs.

The personal characteristics of the respondent included in the estimation are age (*Age*), age square (*Age2*), *Gender*, dummy variables for marital status (*Married*, *Divorced*), educational level (*High*, *College*, *Graduate*), employment status (*Unemployed*), partisanship (*Green*, *Blue*), residential location (*North*, *Central*), social class (*Class*), whether the respondent is a member of a labor union (*Union*), whether the respondent is worried about himself (herself) or his (her) family facing the problem of unemployment (*Losejob*), and income level (*FYD1*, *FYD2*, *FYD3*, *FYD4*). As has been argued in previous literature,²² the association of social status with honor or prestige to one's position in society often has effects on a person's attitude toward social issues involving a government's redistributive policies, which may significantly impact the interests of his (her) own or as a group member. From

²² More discussions can be seen in John H. Goldthorpe and Abigail McKnight, "The Economic basis of Social Class," CASEpaper 80 (2004) Center for Analysis of Social Exclusion, London School of Economics; Mathhias Doepke and Fabrizio Zilibotti, "Social Class and the Spirit of Capitalism," *Journal of the European Economic Association* 3 (2-3) (2005): 516-524.

the perspective of self-interest, it may be speculated that individuals in the middle or upper class are less likely to support redistributive policies, because they are the potential losers, while people in the lower class tend to have more positive attitudes toward redistribution. The inclusion of these variables intends to capture the effects of an individual's demographic background and socioeconomic status on shaping the attitude toward redistributive policies.

Partisanship, social class, and income level are included to indicate the social status related to an individual's position in systems of income distribution, educational opportunities, social welfare, as well as life chances in the society that may be affected by changes in government policies and regulations. The effect of partisanship is taken into account with two dummy variables, *Green* and *Blue*, indicating whether a respondent is a supporter of the two major political camps (Pan-green and Pan-blue).²³ Traditionally, the Pan-green camp has a higher proportion of supporters who are farmers and blue-collar workers than the Pan-blue camp. As for social class, two dummy variables are constructed according to the responses of respondents who are asked which class they belong to. The respondents are categorized into three social classes (upper class, middle class, and lower class), and *Up* and *Middle* are two dummy variables indicating belonging to the upper class and middle class, respectively. Appendix 1 reports the definitions of variables used in the estimations of this study, and Appendix 2 shows the descriptive statistics of these variables.

Empirical Results

Table 1 presents the results from estimations of the ordered probit model, with *Social* and *Welfare* as the dependent variables, respectively. Regarding individual characteristics, some interesting results are obtained. First, those who are members of labor unions have a more negative attitude toward social insurance. This indicates that people with membership in a labor union probably have more securities and better benefits at their jobs than those who are not in the labor unions. By contrast, people who are worried about becoming unemployed are more likely to believe that it is the government's responsibility to provide various welfare programs. Second, people with a monthly family income in the range between NT\$50,000 and NT\$100,000 (*FYDI*) are more likely to oppose social insurance with the knowledge of a potential tax increase to pay for it. Third, age has an inverted U-shaped relationship with preferences for social welfare.

²³ The Pan-green camp consists of Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU), while the Pan-blue camp includes Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, KMT), People First Party (PFP), and New Party.

Table 1. Preferences for social insurance and social welfare (ordered probit), N = 1,972

Variable	Social	Welfare
Constant	−0.459* (0.281)	−0.216 (0.231)
Age	−0.009 (0.012)	0.035*** (0.010)
Age2	−0.00003 (0.0001)	−0.0003*** (0.0001)
Gender	−0.009 (0.060)	−0.005 (0.049)
Married	0.040 (0.079)	0.073 (0.065)
Divorced	0.060 (0.184)	0.182 (0.150)
High	0.110 (0.090)	0.216*** (0.074)
College	−0.067 (0.099)	0.079 (0.080)
Graduate	−0.094 (0.168)	−0.208 (0.136)
Unemployed	−0.081 (0.121)	0.117 (0.098)
Buddha	0.034 (0.088)	0.127* (0.071)
Tao	0.100 (0.098)	0.140* (0.080)
Folk	0.039 (0.087)	0.039 (0.071)
Catholic	0.078 (0.266)	0.091 (0.204)
Protestant	0.429** (0.173)	0.197 (0.143)
Attend1	−0.025 (0.066)	−0.020 (0.054)
Attend2	−0.109 (0.111)	−0.150* (0.089)
Attend3	−0.531*** (0.160)	−0.152 (0.114)
Green	0.130 (0.088)	0.121* (0.072)
Blue	0.026 (0.073)	0.181*** (0.059)
North	0.101 (0.067)	0.321*** (0.054)
Central	0.219** (0.089)	0.231*** (0.074)
Class	0.020 (0.018)	0.018 (0.014)
Public	−0.022 (0.101)	0.067 (0.081)
Union	−0.152* (0.079)	0.014 (0.063)
Losejob	0.026 (0.065)	0.172*** (0.052)
FYD1	−0.148** (0.071)	−0.032 (0.058)
FYD2	−0.115 (0.110)	−0.013 (0.089)
FYD3	−0.015 (0.146)	−0.063 (0.121)
FYD4	0.046 (0.174)	−0.116 (0.147)
μ_1	0.681*** (0.033)	0.818*** (0.026)
μ_2	1.219*** (0.052)	1.542*** (0.028)
μ_3		2.127*** (0.035)
L-likelihood	−1,588.427	−3,046.861

Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. ***, **, and * denote significance at 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively.

In addition, high-school graduates have a higher level of preference for social welfare than those who attain less than the level of high-school education, but college and graduate educations have no significant relationship with preferences for social insurance or social welfare programs. People with partisanship in the Pan-green (*Green*) and Pan-blue (*Blue*) camps are also more likely to approve of the government's role in the provision of various welfare programs than individuals without a particular partisanship. Overall, these results are mostly consistent with previous studies suggesting that economic interests and political ideology are important factors for explaining people's preferences for redistributive policies.

As for the influences of religion, some striking results are found from the estimations. Most notably, people affiliated with Protestantism are more favorable to a government's social insurance policies (*Social*) than non-religious individuals, while there is no significant difference in the attitudes toward social insurance between believers of Buddhism, Taoism, folk religions, and Catholicism, and non-religious people. However, without knowing the specified costs and burdens, being Buddhist or Taoist leads to having a more positive attitude toward a government's provisions of social welfare programs (*Welfare*) than non-religious individuals. These results appear to have some differences from the findings of some previous studies with data of cross-country or Western societies.²⁴ Moreover, those who participate in religious activities a few times per week (*Attend3*) tend to have a more negative attitude toward social insurance and individuals participating in religious activities a few times per month (*Attend1*) are less likely to agree that it is the government's responsibility to provide various welfare programs. The frequency of religious attendance appears to have some negative relationships with preferences for redistributive policies.

Comparing the results of social insurance (*Social*) and social welfare programs (*Welfare*), it is also worth noting that when people take into account the costs of providing social insurance with a potential tax increase to pay for it, the relationships between preferences for social insurance and religions of Buddhism, Taoism, folk religions, and Catholicism are insignificant. However, without knowing the specified costs and burdens, Buddhists and Taoists are more likely to approve the role of government in providing various welfare programs. A possible explanation for this difference is that believers of Buddhism and Taoism approve the role of government in providing social welfare for reasons of moral value, but at the same time they think that the costs of social insurance should be provided by some rearrangements of government spending instead of raising taxes to pay for it.

²⁴ Kenneth Scheve and David Stasavage, "The Political Economy of Religion and Social Insurance in the United States, 1910–1939"; Alberto Alesina and Nicola Fuchs-Schündeln, "Good-Bye Lenin (or Not?)."

Individuals affiliated with Protestantism are interestingly more likely to support increases of government spending in health, retirement benefits, and unemployment benefits even if it is necessary to raise taxes to pay for it. By contrast, the moral principle of traditional values of Buddhism and Taoism justifies the legitimacy and responsibility of government in pursuing the collective interest of society as a whole through the provision of social welfare. This result may be caused by the interplay of economic and cultural factors under the social context in Taiwan. As Taiwan advanced from an authoritarian to a democratic regime and along with its rapid economic development since the 1980s, traditional values stemming from Confucian and Buddhist beliefs still have some effect on people's attitudes toward the government's role in providing social welfare while the principles of self-responsibility and meritocracy emphasized by the free market system continue to gain influence.

To more specifically examine the relationships between religion and preferences for a government's redistributive policies, we further conduct estimations with people's attitudes toward each of the social insurance and welfare programs as the dependent variable. Since people may have different judgments on various social insurance and welfare programs according to their own economic interests and moral principles, this will allow us to investigate their preferences for a particular redistributive policy more precisely.

Table 2 reports the results from the probit estimation with people's attitudes toward three types of social insurance—health benefit (*Health*), retirement benefit (*Pension*), and unemployment benefit (*Unemployment*)—as the dependent variables, respectively. Again, the affiliations of Buddhism, Taoism, folk religions, and Catholicism are not significantly associated with preferences for any of these three types of social insurance programs, while people affiliated with Protestantism tend to favor increases of government spending in health and unemployment benefits. Age has a U-shaped relationship with people's attitudes toward government spending in retirement benefit. This indicates that the economic factor is strongly related to how people feel about the government provision of retirement benefit, because people in the middle-age group will likely bear most of the costs for the retirement benefit if a tax increase is necessary to pay for it. Moreover, the relationships between these three types of social insurance and other demographic characteristics are mostly similar with the results using composite indices as reported in Table 1.

Table 2. Preferences for social insurance programs (probit model), N = 1972

Variable	<i>Health</i>	<i>Pension</i>	<i>Unemployment</i>
Constant	-1.279*** (0.328)	-0.564 (0.351)	-0.913** (0.383)
Age	0.009 (0.014)	-0.026* (0.015)	-0.006 (0.017)
Age2	-0.0001 (0.0001)	0.0002* (0.0001)	-0.0001 (0.0002)
Gender	-0.029 (0.071)	-0.030 (0.076)	0.006 (0.082)
Married	0.036 (0.093)	0.028 (0.097)	0.008 (0.110)
Divorced	0.049 (0.209)	0.137 (0.224)	0.117 (0.233)
High	0.217** (0.106)	0.018 (0.108)	0.005 (0.123)
College	0.217* (0.115)	-0.438*** (0.125)	-0.194 (0.135)
Graduate	0.166 (0.195)	-0.361 (0.221)	-0.243 (0.224)
Unemployed	-0.029 (0.140)	-0.146 (0.150)	0.026 (0.154)
Buddha	-0.060 (0.102)	0.128 (0.111)	0.065 (0.117)
Tao	0.094 (0.113)	0.197 (0.123)	0.017 (0.134)
Folk	0.042 (0.101)	0.032 (0.113)	-0.025 (0.118)
Catholic	-0.023 (0.307)	0.209 (0.337)	0.140 (0.341)
Protestant	0.379* (0.200)	0.239 (0.229)	0.497** (0.221)
Attend1	-0.103 (0.078)	0.076 (0.082)	-0.083 (0.091)
Attend2	-0.162 (0.131)	-0.021 (0.136)	-0.066 (0.151)
Attend3	-0.545*** (0.189)	-0.416*** (0.205)	-0.370* (0.214)
Green	0.052 (0.104)	0.231** (0.104)	0.111 (0.120)
Blue	0.057 (0.086)	-0.083 (0.095)	0.119 (0.098)
North	0.169** (0.079)	-0.017 (0.084)	0.119 (0.091)
Central	0.296*** (0.104)	0.146 (0.109)	0.021 (0.126)
Class	0.0006 (0.021)	0.023 (0.021)	0.034 (0.025)
Public	0.821 (0.114)	-0.236* (0.140)	0.011 (0.143)
Union	-0.123 (0.093)	-0.167* (0.101)	-0.235** (0.112)
Losejob	-0.053 (0.075)	0.049 (0.082)	0.166* (0.091)
FYD1	-0.195** (0.084)	0.019 (0.088)	-0.267*** (0.097)
FYD2	-0.114 (0.126)	-0.071 (0.145)	-0.138 (0.145)
FYD3	-0.022 (0.165)	0.106 (0.188)	-0.083 (0.199)
FYD4	0.126 (0.194)	0.049 (0.228)	-0.087 (0.236)
L-likelihood	-863.302	-743.312	-603.356

Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. ***, **, and * denote significance at 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively.

Table 3 shows the results from probit estimations with measures of preferences for eight different social welfare programs as dependent variables. Regarding the effects of religion, being Protestant leads to a more positive view on government's responsibility to provide a job for everyone who wants one (*Work*), to provide healthcare for the sick (*Medical*), as well as to give financial help to university students from low-income families (*Student*). People affiliated with Buddhism are more likely to think that it is the government's responsibility to provide healthcare for the sick (*Medical*), while believers of Taoism are more supportive of the government's role in keeping prices under control (*Price*) and providing healthcare for the sick (*Medical*). Moreover, believers of folk religions tend to have a more positive attitude toward government's responsibility to give financial help to university students from low-income families (*Student*). Most surprisingly, there is no significant difference between being religious and non-religious in the preferences for government's responsibility to reduce income differences between the rich and the poor (*Inequality*). This may suggest that religious affiliation does not have a significant effect on increasing or decreasing people's preferences for a government's role in directly reducing income inequality. Instead, religious affiliation has some positive influence on people's attitudes toward government's welfare provisions of healthcare for the sick and higher education for students from poor families.

As for the effects of religious attendance, those who participate in religious activities a few times per month (*Attend2*) have a less favorable attitude toward government's role in reducing income inequality between the rich and the poor, while a few times per week of religious attendance (*Attend3*) lead to a less supportive attitude toward government's provision of financial help to university students from low-income families. Moreover, age has an inverted U-shaped relationship with the attitudes toward government's responsibility to provide various types of welfare programs except to provide a decent standard of living for the old (*Elderly*) and to give financial help to university students from low-income families (*Student*). Results regarding other demographic characteristics such as educational attainment, partisanship, union membership, and income level are mostly consistent with those reported in Table 2 and the findings of previous studies.

Table 3. Preferences for social welfare programs (probit model), N = 1972

Variable	<i>Work</i>	<i>Price</i>	<i>Medical</i>	<i>Elderly</i>
Constant	-0.936 (0.277)	-1.165 (0.298)	-1.227*** (0.279)	-1.117***
Age	0.026** (0.012)	0.054*** (0.012)	0.025** (0.012)	0.146 (0.012)
Age2	-0.0003** (0.0001)	-0.0006*** (0.0001)	-0.0002** (0.0001)	-0.0001 (0.0001)
Gender	0.062 (0.059)	-0.019 (0.064)	-0.015 (0.059)	-0.040 (0.059)
Married	0.037 (0.078)	0.047 (0.083)	0.114 (0.078)	0.102 (0.078)
Divorced	0.172 (0.179)	0.192 (0.206)	-0.120 (0.180)	0.273 (0.181)
High	0.009 (0.088)	0.237** (0.097)	0.187** (0.089)	0.264***
College	-0.069 (0.096)	0.226** (0.105)	0.061 (0.096)	0.101 (0.096)
Graduate	-0.447*** (0.168)	-0.034 (0.177)	0.156 (0.166)	0.005 (0.165)
Unemployed	0.130 (0.116)	-0.095 (0.122)	0.046 (0.117)	0.051 (0.116)
Buddha	0.115 (0.085)	0.118 (0.091)	0.146* (0.086)	0.122 (0.086)
Tao	0.154 (0.097)	0.255** (0.106)	0.175* (0.097)	0.018 (0.097)
Folk	-0.023 (0.086)	0.045 (0.091)	0.103 (0.086)	0.072 (0.086)
Catholic	0.099 (0.244)	-0.106 (0.264)	0.338 (0.248)	0.275 (0.244)
Protestant	0.293* (0.170)	-0.081 (0.183)	0.331* (0.173)	0.202 (0.171)
Attend1	-0.035 (0.065)	0.052 (0.071)	-0.019 (0.065)	-0.056 (0.065)
Attend2	-0.018 (0.107)	-0.066 (0.115)	-0.172 (0.108)	-0.064 (0.108)
Attend3	-0.052 (0.138)	0.023 (0.150)	-0.045 (0.138)	-0.117 (0.138)
Green	0.101 (0.087)	0.081 (0.094)	0.182** (0.087)	0.221** (0.087)
Blue	0.182*** (0.072)	0.124 (0.079)	0.199*** (0.072)	0.141** (0.072)
North	0.217*** (0.065)	0.381*** (0.069)	0.329*** (0.065)	0.274***
Central	0.302*** (0.089)	0.156* (0.095)	0.308*** (0.090)	0.245***
Class	-0.012 (0.017)	0.022 (0.018)	0.021 (0.017)	0.0003 (0.017)
Public	0.044 (0.098)	0.060 (0.108)	0.001 (0.099)	-0.137 (0.099)
Union	-0.013 (0.076)	-0.036 (0.083)	0.116 (0.076)	0.068 (0.076)
Losejob	0.156*** (0.063)	0.038 (0.068)	0.098 (0.063)	0.138** (0.063)
FYD1	-0.077 (0.069)	0.074 (0.075)	-0.051 (0.070)	0.058 (0.070)
FYD2	-0.041 (0.107)	0.100 (0.119)	-0.043 (0.107)	0.016 (0.108)
FYD3	-0.056 (0.147)	-0.125 (0.156)	-0.062 (0.146)	0.120 (0.146)
FYD4	0.158 (0.179)	-0.126 (0.187)	-0.035 (0.180)	-0.001 (0.180)
L-likelihood	-1329.075	-1110.727	-1323.024	-1324.069

Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. ***, **, and * denote significance at 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively.

Table 3 (continued). Preferences for social welfare programs (probit model), N = 1972

Variable	<i>Living</i>	<i>Inequality</i>	<i>Student</i>	<i>Housing</i>
Constant	-1.847*** (0.312)	-1.451*** (0.283)	-0.463* (0.279)	-1.833*** (0.303)
Age	0.034*** (0.013)	0.040*** (0.012)	-0.0007 (0.012)	0.042*** (0.013)
Age2	-0.0003*** (0.0001)	-0.0004*** (0.0001)	-0.00001 (0.0001)	-0.0004*** (0.0001)
Gender	0.013 (0.066)	-0.077 (0.060)	-0.012 (0.060)	0.064 (0.064)
Married	0.053 (0.085)	0.010 (0.079)	0.048 (0.079)	0.041 (0.083)
Divorced	0.071 (0.190)	0.151 (0.187)	0.189 (0.180)	0.047 (0.187)
High	0.088 (0.094)	0.351*** (0.089)	0.207** (0.088)	0.161* (0.092)
College	-0.094 (0.104)	0.304*** (0.097)	0.091 (0.965)	-0.119 (0.102)
Graduate	-0.766*** (0.225)	0.080 (0.166)	-0.056 (0.167)	-0.574*** (0.197)
Unemployed	0.136 (0.125)	-0.006 (0.117)	0.171 (0.116)	0.184 (0.121)
Buddha	0.086 (0.096)	0.014 (0.087)	0.110 (0.086)	0.137 (0.092)
Tao	0.034 (0.109)	0.059 (0.098)	0.776 (0.098)	-0.002 (0.106)
Folk	0.070 (0.097)	-0.032 (0.087)	0.149* (0.086)	-0.047 (0.094)
Catholic	-0.037 (0.273)	0.054 (0.256)	0.100 (0.248)	-0.847 (0.272)
Protestant	0.151 (0.189)	0.175 (0.176)	0.296* (0.172)	0.207 (0.183)
Attend1	-0.080 (0.072)	-0.0008 (0.066)	-0.087 (0.066)	-0.013 (0.070)
Attend2	-0.160 (0.121)	-0.232** (0.109)	-0.165 (0.109)	-0.050 (0.116)
Attend3	-0.091 (0.150)	-0.141 (0.139)	-0.268* (0.140)	-0.163 (0.148)
Green	0.016 (0.098)	-0.021 (0.088)	0.166* (0.088)	0.005 (0.096)
Blue	0.206*** (0.077)	0.177** (0.073)	0.158** (0.072)	0.117 (0.076)
North	0.250*** (0.072)	0.292*** (0.065)	0.185*** (0.065)	0.196*** (0.070)
Central	0.034 (0.102)	0.240*** (0.091)	0.122 (0.090)	0.066 (0.098)
Class	0.019 (0.019)	0.033* (0.017)	-0.008 (0.172)	0.017 (0.018)
Public	0.060 (0.110)	0.309*** (0.101)	0.023 (0.989)	0.087 (0.106)
Union	-0.049 (0.831)	0.031 (0.077)	-0.006 (0.076)	-0.121 (0.081)
Losejob	0.210*** (0.072)	0.289*** (0.064)	0.101 (0.064)	0.156** (0.069)
FYD1	-0.171** (0.076)	-0.025 (0.070)	-0.148** (0.070)	-0.125* (0.074)
FYD2	-0.188 (0.122)	-0.107 (0.108)	0.012 (0.107)	-0.222* (0.119)
FYD3	-0.151 (0.169)	-0.174 (0.146)	-0.015 (0.146)	-0.095 (0.161)
FYD4	-0.458** (0.230)	-0.168 (0.179)	-0.240 (0.182)	-0.391* (0.212)
L-likelihood	-1036.601	-1291.903	-1307.907	-1107.975

Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. ***, **, and * denote significance at 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively.

The empirical results from this study help us understand the role of religion in shaping the preferences for redistributive policies in an East Asian country. Nevertheless, some research limitations may need to be addressed. Due to the lack of a comprehensive longitudinal database, changes in people's preferences caused by long-term economic and democratic development cannot be directly investigated in this study. It is still possible that people's belief in a just world and their preferences for redistributive policies are formed by a value system of economic, cultural, and social factors that is dynamically evolving with the development of global and domestic environments. Moreover, the findings of this study are based on estimations of ordered probit and probit models, and the effects of religion on preferences for redistributive policies are only estimated in terms of the relative intensities of people's attitudes toward a variety of social insurance and welfare programs. Further investigations on the structures of redistributive policies and their potential impacts for future research will require a much more sophisticated empirical framework and a more complete dataset.

Policy Implications and Conclusions

This paper examines the relationship between religion and preferences for redistributive policies in an East Asian country with traditional values of Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist beliefs. Using data from the Taiwan Social Change Survey of 2006, the study's findings provide supportive evidence for the importance of cultural factors in explaining people's attitudes toward government provisions of various social insurance and welfare programs. In particular, we have investigated some distinct results regarding the effects of Eastern religions of Buddhism, Taoism, and folk religions on shaping the moral principles of justification in the legitimization of government's role in providing redistributive policies.

Consistent with existing literature, demographic characteristics such as age, income, education, and partisanship are significant factors explaining the determinants of preferences for social insurance and welfare provisions. More importantly, religion's role in shaping people's attitudes toward redistributive policies in Taiwan is substantially different from that found in studies using data from advanced Western societies. In particular, being Protestant leads to a more favorable attitude toward several social insurance and welfare programs in Taiwan, while Buddhists and Taoists tend to be more supportive of government's role in providing healthcare and believers of folk religions are more favorable toward the provision of financial help to students from low-income families. By contrast, the frequency of religious attendance displays some negative relationships with preferences for redistributive policies. As an important part of traditional cultures, religion is influential the

cultivation and indoctrination of people's beliefs about fairness, social justice, and the legitimization of redistributive policies. Overall, economic and socio-cultural factors are important for explaining the preferences for redistributive policies.

This study's findings derive some important policy implications. First, in an East Asian country such as Taiwan inheriting values of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism such as Taiwan, societal solidarity as a base of moral justification under its cultural and social contexts leads to differences in preferences for redistributive policies with those of Western Christian societies. The designs of redistributive policies need to take into account these cultural and social differences.

Second, since the ending of martial law and advancement to a democratic regime in 1987, Taiwan has experienced rapid economic development and transformations from an agricultural society to an industrial and new technology economy. During this period, public spending on social security, health insurance, and social care has grown substantially as well, but in recent years the country has also been confronting increases in economic inequality and unemployment brought along by trends of globalization and economic liberalization. These changes toward a free-market economy in determining the distributions of income and wealth may lead to a stronger belief in individual responsibility and less reliance on public provisions. While economic openness is believed to increase overall welfare for the whole society, the poor and working class may suffer more from fluctuations of international markets and rely more on the existence of redistributions provided by the government.

Third, social and cultural factors shaping the value judgments of justifying various redistributive policies may also evolve with changes in social systems defining the roles of government, family, and other private sectors. For example, extending financial help to students from low-income families tends to be consistent with the principle of fairness based on equal opportunities of life chances and social mobility across generations. By contrast, the provision of public healthcare is more in line with the humanitarian principles of saving lives and alleviating suffering. The frequency of religious attendance may reflect a potential substitutive relationship between government and religious groups in redistributive provisions. Not only do the specific structures of social insurance and welfare programs need to be constructed based on these value judgments, but one should also consider the adjustments in the role that social organizations play and the tax systems that finance the social spending when confronting the challenge of globalization and economic liberalization. The redistributive policies should maintain consistency with the moral principles of an "East Asian" welfare state.

Appendix 1: Definitions of variables

Variable	Definition
Age	Age of the respondent
Age2	Squared of age of the respondent
Gender	Gender of the respondent. If male, then Gender = 1; if female, then Gender = 0.
Married	If the respondent is married, then Married = 1; otherwise Married = 0 (baseline category: single or widowed)
Divorced	If the respondent is divorced, then Divorced = 1; otherwise Divorced = 0 (baseline category: single or widowed)
High	Educational level. If high school, High = 1; otherwise High = 0 (baseline category: below high school)
College	Educational level. If college, then College = 1; otherwise College = 0 (baseline category: below high school)
Graduate	Educational level. If graduate school, then Graduate = 1; otherwise Graduate = 0 (baseline category: below high school)
Unemployed	Employment status. If unemployed, then Unemployed = 1; otherwise Unemployed = 0. (baseline category: employed or not in the labor force)
Buddha	Religious affiliation. If Buddhist, then Buddha = 1; otherwise Buddha = 0 (baseline category: no religion or others)
Tao	Religious affiliation. If Taoist, then Tao = 1; otherwise Tao = 0 (baseline category: no religion or others)
Folk	Religious affiliation. If Folk religionist, then Folk = 1; otherwise Folk = 0 (baseline category: no religion or others)
Catholic	Religious affiliation. If Catholic, then Catholic = 1; otherwise Catholic = 0 (baseline category: no religion or others)
Protestant	Religious affiliation. If Protestant, then Protestant = 1; otherwise Protestant = 0 (baseline category: no religion or others)
Attend1	How frequently have you participated in religious activities? If a few times per year, then Attend1 = 1; otherwise Attend1 = 0 (baseline category: no attendance)
Attend2	How frequently have you participated in religious activities? If a few times per month, then Attend2 = 1; otherwise Attend2 = 0 (baseline category: no attendance)
Attend3	How frequently have you participated in religious activities? If a few times per week, then Attend3 = 1; otherwise Attend3 = 0 (baseline category: no attendance)
Green	Some people think they belong to the Pan-green camp, and some people think they belong to the Pan-blue camp. Do you think of yourself as leaning to the Pan-green camp or the Pan-blue camp? If leaning to the Pan-green camp, then Green = 1; otherwise Green = 0 (baseline category: no partisanship)
Blue	Some people think they belong to the Pan-green camp, and some people think they belong to the Pan-blue camp. Do you think of yourself as leaning to the Pan-green camp or the Pan-blue camp? If leaning to the Pan-blue camp, then Blue = 1; otherwise Blue = 0 (baseline category: no partisanship)
North	Residence. If residing in the northern area of Taiwan, then North = 1; otherwise North = 0 (baseline category: eastern and southern areas)
Central	Residence. If residing in the southern area of Taiwan, then South = 1; otherwise South = 0 (baseline category: eastern and southern areas)
Class	If there are 10 social classes in society, and class 1 represents the lowest class and class 10 represents the highest class, then which social class do you think that you belong to?
Public	If the respondent works for the government, then Public = 1; otherwise Public = 0.
Union	If the respondent has membership in a labor union, then Union = 1; otherwise Union = 0.
Losejob	If the respondent is worried about himself (herself) or his (her) family members facing the problem of unemployment, then Losejob = 1; otherwise Losejob = 0.
FYD1	NT\$50,000 ≤ monthly family income < NT\$100,000 (baseline category: < NT\$50,000)

FYD2	NT\$100,000 ≤ monthly family income < NT\$150,000 (baseline category: < NT\$50,000)
FYD3	NT\$150,000 ≤ monthly family income < NT\$200,000 (baseline category: < NT\$50,000)
FYD4	NT\$200,000 ≤ monthly family income (baseline category: < NT\$50,000)
Social	An index of preferences for social insurance, which is constructed with the responses to questions asking individuals whether they would like to see more or less government spending in (1) health (<i>Health</i>), (2) retirement benefits (<i>Pension</i>), and (3) unemployment benefits (<i>Unemployment</i>), respectively. The respondents are reminded that if they say “much more,” it might require a tax increase to pay for it. The index is scaled from 0 (the lowest level of preferences for social insurance) to 3 (the highest level of preferences for social insurance).
Welfare	An index of preferences for social welfare and benefits, which is constructed with the responses to eight questions asking individuals whether they think it should or should not be the government’s responsibility (1) to provide a job for everyone who wants one (<i>Work</i>), (2) to keep prices under control (<i>Price</i>), (3) to provide healthcare for the sick (<i>Medical</i>), (4) to provide a decent standard of living for the old (<i>Elderly</i>), (5) to provide a decent standard of living for the unemployed (<i>Living</i>), (6) to reduce income differences between the rich and the poor (<i>Inequality</i>), (7) to give financial help to university students from low-income families (<i>Student</i>), and (8) to provide decent housing for those who cannot afford it (<i>Housing</i>). The index is scaled from 0 (the lowest level of preferences for social welfare and benefits) to 4 (the highest level of preferences for social welfare and benefits).

Appendix 2: Descriptive statistics (N = 1,972)

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation
Age	45.045	17.238
Age2	2,326.05	1,704.03
Gender	0.522	0.500
Married	0.620	0.485
Divorced	0.030	0.172
High	0.248	0.432
College	0.352	0.478
Graduate	0.047	0.211
Unemployed	0.067	0.251
Buddha	0.278	0.448
Tao	0.165	0.372
Folk	0.266	0.442

Appendix 2: Descriptive statistics (N = 1,972) (continued)

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation
Catholic	0.016	0.124
Protestant	0.042	0.200
Attend1	0.343	0.475
Attend2	0.089	0.284
Attend3	0.063	0.243
Green	0.134	0.341
Blue	0.228	0.420
North	0.482	0.500
Central	0.150	0.357
Class	4.454	1.814
Public	0.108	0.310
Union	0.197	0.398
Losejob	0.651	0.477
FYD1	0.348	0.477
FYD2	0.101	0.301
FYD3	0.048	0.213
FYD4	0.029	0.169
Social	0.398	0.757
Welfare	2.016	1.284
Health	0.166	0.372
Pension	0.133	0.340
Unemployment	0.099	0.299
Work	0.467	0.499
Price	0.719	0.450
Medical	0.504	0.500
Elderly	0.473	0.499
Living	0.239	0.426
Inequality	0.531	0.499
Student	0.406	0.491
Housing	0.271	0.445

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