Political Cynicism, Public Interest Blackballing and Voter Turnout: The Case of South Korea's 2000 National Assembly Elections

SUNWOONG KIM

Department of Economics, University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee,
Milwaukee, WI 53021
kim@uwm.edu

KISUK CHO

Graduate School of International Studies, Ewha Womans University,
Seoul, Korea
choks@mm.ewha.ac.kr

Abstract

In the South Korea's 16th National Assembly (NA) elections held on 13 April 2000, there was widespread speculation that the Citizens Alliance's (CA's) public interest blackballing campaign against 'unfit' candidates increased voter cynicism and decreased voter turnout, as it was the lowest ever for NA elections. We empirically evaluate this speculation by conducting logit analyses of individual voter survey data as well as regression analyses on district-wide aggregated data on turnout. Although we find that cynical voters are likely to be more sympathetic to CA's blackballing campaign, we do not find any evidence that the campaign decreases voter turnout. These findings are consistent with Kahn and Kenny (1999) who argue that voters respond well to the negative information if it is presented in an appropriate manner.

1 Introduction

Although there exists extensive literature on political participation and voter turnout in democratic nations in North America and Western Europe, not many studies focus on newly democratized nations.[1] This paper is an attempt to fill the gap

[1] Notable exceptions include Hirczy (1995), about Malta, and Baloyra (1979), about Venezuela.
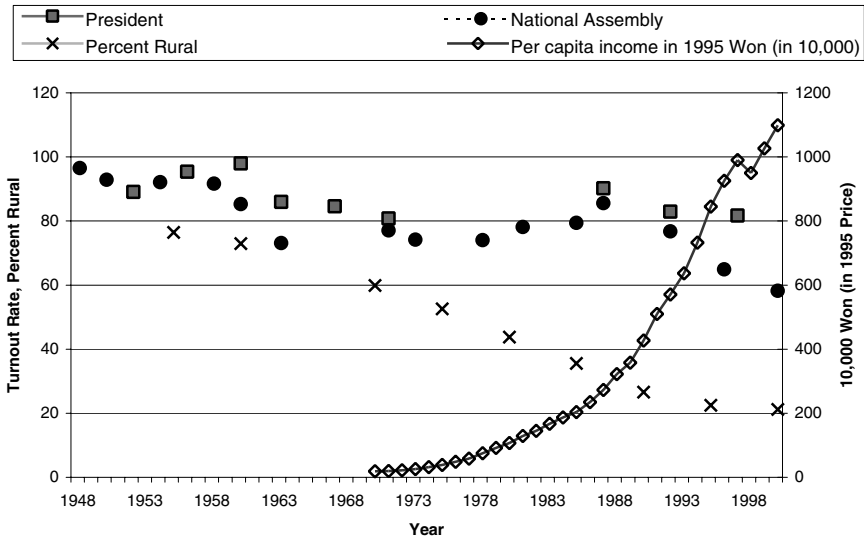
Figure 1 Voter turnouts in South Korean elections

by studying the political participation in South Korea, a relatively young democratic nation. In particular, we study the relationship between political cynicism and turnout by using the data from the 16th National Assembly (NA) elections held on 13 April 2000.

Since its independence from Japanese imperialism and the establishment of the Republic in 1948, South Korea's democracy has gone through a fair share of growing pains: corruption, dictatorship, and civil unrest. Eventually in 1986, Korea successfully started to build stable democratic institutions after the demise of the military dictatorship that had lasted more than two decades.[2]

One notable aspect in the 2000 NA elections is that turnout recorded the lowest ever of 57.2%. In fact, South Korea's turnout rates for NA elections have been declining continuously since the democratization.[3] For reference, Figure 1 depicts the turnout

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[2] The first President of the Republic, Rhee Sung Man, was forced to resign from the post in 1960 by the wide-scale civil demonstration protesting against the government corruption and the fraudulent elections. Since his resignation, the next government by Chang Myun could not create a stable democratic institution. Consequently, in 1961 the bloodless military coup led by General Park Chung Hee established an economically successful, but politically repressive regime. The dictatorial government collapsed in 1979, when President Park was assassinated by one of his confidantes. In the political vacuum following the traumatic event, another military government led by General Chun Doo Hwan took the control. Chun maintained the repressive dictatorship inherited from the Park's regime. However, the new Constitution did not allow him to continue for a second term as President. When his hand-picked successor, a former general and Chun's close personal friend, Rho Tae Woo, failed to contain the nationwide civil unrest and the calls for political freedom and participatory democracy, South Korea finally managed to create a stable political institution that allows peaceful transitions of power.

[3] The turnout rate was 84.6% in the 13th elections held in 1988, 75.8% in the 14th elections held in 1992, and 63.9% in the 15th NA elections held in 1996.

rates for all national (presidential and NA) elections ever held along with two key socio-economic indicators, the percentage of rural population and the per capita income.[4]

Another interesting thing that happened in the 2000 NA elections was that a public interest umbrella organization, the Citizens' Alliance for the 2000 General Elections (CA), staged a large-scale public blackballing campaign against a group of politicians who CA deemed 'unfit' to become members of the NA. CA's blackballing campaign includes public rallies, press conferences, door-to-door visits by volunteers, and internet websites that disclosed damaging information about candidates.[5]

Of the 86 candidates who were blackballed, 59 did not win seats. Also, 15 of 22 'zealously blackballed' candidates lost elections.[6] These remarkable results surprised even CA itself, because most observers expected that at most 40–50% of those targeted would be defeated.[7] Some praised CA's blackballing effort stating that it promoted development of South Korea's participatory democracy by rejecting the 'corrupted' politicians endorsed by the major political parties (Chung, 2000). According to this view, CA's blackballing was a grass-roots political activity against corruption; it exerted pressure for higher ethical standards by exposing the 'corrupted' politicians' past improper behavior.

Corruption has been a perennial problem in Korean politics. As past economic growth policies were based on strong government intervention, entrepreneurs have been engaged in a great deal of rent-seeking activities. Although the functioning participatory democracy has been installed since 1986, old habits did not die easily. Even under the democratic regime, corruption by high-ranking bureaucrats and politicians remained the top of public concern, while political participation through mass rallying and public demonstration continued. Quite frequently, politicians and high-ranking

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[4] Rural area is defined as a place whose population is less than 50,000. 1,200 Won is about one US dollar based on the exchange rate in July 2003. The two indicators are important determinants of turnout as will be shown in the later section.

[5] Perhaps the most influential channel for the campaign was the extensive mass media coverage. Virtually all mass media, newspapers, TV and radio stations covered CA's activities a great deal.

[6] CA targeted 22 out of 86 candidates for concentrated blackballing efforts, as they believed that defeating these candidates was more important. We shall call them zealously blackballed.

[7] Horowitz and Kim (2002) report that CA's blackballing efforts did indeed exert a remarkably strong influence on electoral outcomes, controlling for a variety of other factors that may affect the election outcome, such as characteristics of districts, candidates, and parties, and campaign spending. More specifically, blackballing reduced an average candidate's vote share by about 5%, and thereby may have changed election outcomes in many close races. Though being blackballed was most damaging to independent candidates and United Liberal Democrats (ULD), the ruling Millennium Democratic Party (MDP) candidates were harmed more than Grand National Party (GNP) candidates. This finding directly contradicts the allegation that CA's blackballing campaign was secretly sponsored by the ruling party in an attempt to gain ground *vis-à-vis* the GNP. Perhaps the findings that blackballing was most damaging to independents and ULD are not surprising. Some candidates ran as independent when they failed to secure nominations by the major parties (in some cases, due to the CA's earlier blackballing campaign against their nomination efforts). ULD had maintained the most antagonistic attitude toward CA's blackballing. Its leader, Kim Jong Pil himself was blackballed.

bureaucrats have been implicated in large-scale scandals, in which businessmen offered money in exchange for favorable political and administrative influence.[8]

Although low and declining turnout is a worldwide concern in many democratic nations (Lijphart, 1997), many observers blamed CA's blackballing activities for being mainly responsible for the record-low voter turnouts (Chosun Ilbo, 2000/4/9, 2000/4/13; Choi, 2001: 152). They argued that CA's activities elevated voter cynicism against politicians and the political system by focusing on the negative aspects of the candidates and that the more cynical voters stayed away from polling booths.

This paper attempts to evaluate this claim by analyzing individual survey data on voting behavior and attitudes as well as aggregated turnout data across election districts. Based on the empirical analyses, we find no evidence that supports the view that political cynicism and CA's blackballing campaign was an important factor in voter abstention. Although we find that more cynical voters are likely to be more sympathetic toward CA's activities, political cynicism and the exposure to the CA's blackballing efforts did not decrease turnout. These findings contradict Ansolabehere and his colleagues (1994, 1995, 1999) who argue that negative campaigning reduces political participation, but resonate with Kahn and Kenny (1999) who maintain that voters respond well to the negative information if it is presented in an appropriate manner.

The paper is organized as follows. In the next section, we provide theoretical arguments, based on previous literature, as to why CA's blackballing campaign will not reduce turnout. Section 3 discusses the data and the statistical methodology in order to test various hypotheses including that CA's blackballing campaign lowered voter turnout rates. Then, we report the empirical results in Section 4, followed by conclusions in Section 5.

2 Would blackballing lower voter turnout?

Despite the overall consensus that CA's blackballing efforts have influenced greatly the 2000 NA elections and that they might have contributed to the elimination of some 'unfit' politicians, it has often been argued that the blackballing activities increased voter cynicism, which, in turn, produced lower turnout in the elections. According to this argument, CA's blackballing activities systematically dug out old stories of each candidate's negative records on crimes, accepting bribes, participating in the dictatorial military regime, and so on. Therefore, voters became more cynical as the negative information on candidates became widely available as the elections approached. Moreover, the rebuttal excuses often provided by the blackballed candidates made voters even more cynical about the politicians and the political process in general. Consequently, the disheartened voters stayed away from ballot boxes. In this section,

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[8] For example, the ex-Presidents Chun and Rho were sentenced harshly with bribery charges. The ex-President Kim Young Sam had to exit his office with the disgrace of the corruption scandal surrounding his son. Another ex- President Kim Dae Joong suffered from the same fate in his last year in power. Also, the two nominees for the Prime Minister in 2002 were rejected by the National Assembly because of their past corruption activities.

we evaluate this claim from the perspective of previous studies on turnout and political cynicism.

Previous literature identified several determinants of turnout. Calculus of voting literature emphasizes benefits and costs of voting (Aldrich, 1993). The benefit (expected utility) depends on the degree in which the particular candidate's policy position is beneficial to voters. Thus, when the cost of voting is the same, the voter who has more to gain by having the candidate elected is more likely to turn out. Also, the expected utility increases as the probability that the voter's most preferred candidate is elected increases, and as the race is closer the probability that her/his vote becomes more crucial increases. Therefore, the voter is more likely to turn out when the race is closer. Even if the voter did not respond to the closeness of the election, candidates and parties would be likely to spend more resources to increase voters' support by encouraging turnout. Finally, although the probability of affecting the election outcome by the single voter is almost zero, the voter receives utility of fulfilling civic duty or expressing political opinions by voting. Therefore, general political attitudes such as how much the voter is satisfied with the status quo and how much the voter trust the political institution as well as personal socio-economic characteristics such as sex, religion, education, or income are important determinants (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980).

In this paper, we adopt the definitions of political criticism and political cynicism by Baloyra (1979). Analyzing 1973 Venezuelan national data, he distinguishes between the two concepts. He argued that, while political criticism – the dissatisfaction and disapproval of the current politicians or public policies – originated from partisan or ideological dissatisfaction, political cynicism – a hardened attitude of mistrust toward government and politicians – could not be disassociated from personal circumstances, such as the psychological profile or socio-economic environment of the voter. He argued that a voter who is intrinsically more critical and has more distrustful interpersonal relationships is more cynical politically and is less likely to participate.

In the spring of 2000, the Korean economy was still in recession after the catastrophic financial crisis of 1997. Therefore, the personal socio-economic environment of many voters might be difficult and that this gloomy economic environment might have contributed to a more cynical electorate in the election, in addition to the age-old and widespread corruption of politicians.

Moreover, Downsian model of turnout predicts that if the differences between the candidates' policy positions were not so different, voters would be less likely to turnout (Adams and Merrill, forthcoming). In the 2000 NA elections, it has been argued that there were no substantive political and public policy issues articulated by the major parties (Cho, 2000: 26–28).[9] Therefore, it is possible that the high level of political

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[9] Without pressing substantive election issues, some have argued that disclosure of personal information and CA's blackballing campaign contributed to the dilution of the political and public policy issues even further and made voters concentrate on the personal characteristics instead (Kim and Kim, 2000: 108; Park, 2000: 296; Yoo, 2000: 92; Hwang, 2000: 192).

cynicism along with the fact that no major political and policy issues excite voters may well be the major contributing factor of the low turnout.

Even though the contextual situation as argued above predicts high voter cynicism and lower turnout in the elections, it is questionable that wide availability of negative information about candidates makes voters more cynical. Previous literature suggests that the causality runs the other way around. For example, Miller *et al.* (1979) studied the effect of newspaper coverage on politics on voter cynicism and efficacy in the United States. He found that the media's negative coverage on politics has a modest effect on voter cynicism, although a more critical voter tends to read more critical newspapers. However, media criticism has no effect on voter attitudes on political efficacy. Therefore, it is unlikely that blackballing activities caused or heightened voter cynicism. On the contrary, the extensive coverage might have been a response to voters' desire to gain more information, as many Korean voters are already cynical toward the political system, and the cynical voters would like to receive more negative information.

Moreover, previous empirical evidence does not support the hypothesis that more cynical voters are less likely to vote. Earlier, Gamson (1968) suggests the so-called 'distrust-efficacy hypothesis', that voters with low political trust and with high political efficacy are more likely to participate. However, the empirical evidence is not consistent with it. Using the 1969 data from Lexington, Kentucky, Fraser (1970) tests the hypothesis, and finds that political participation, either through voting or other mechanisms (donating money, organizing political support, trying to persuade other voters, and so on), was not related to the voters' level of mistrust or efficacy. Similarly, Shaffer (1981), in his study of decreasing turnout in US presidential elections from 1960 to 1976, finds that, though decreased efficacy contributed to the decreasing turnout, increased political mistrust had no effect on turnout.

Furthermore, the empirical evidence of attack advertising on turnout is at best ambiguous. Ansolabehere and his colleagues (1994, 1995, 1999) contend that negative political advertising has substantial demobilizing and alienating effects on voters, based on the analysis of actual election data as well as in experiment. On the other hand, Wattenberg and Brians (1999) argue that the contention is not supported by their empirical study on the US National Election Survey data. Similarly, using the same data, Finkel and Geer (1998) find that attack advertising does not change overall turnout as it may depress turnout among some voters, but it is likely to stimulate others. Examining more than 50 studies on the subject, Lau *et al.* (1999) conclude that negative campaigning is not any more effective than positive campaigning, and that it does not seem to create any detrimental effects on the political system. Kahn and Kenny (1999) argue that although negative campaigning influences the likelihood of voting, voters are more likely to vote if the negative information is presented in an appropriate manner. On the other hand, if the campaign degenerates into unsubstantiated and shrill attacks, voters are less likely to turn out.

However, CA's blackballing activities certainly differ from negative mud-slinging campaigning conducted by the opponent. Rather, the blackballing was aimed at the public interest that seeks for more moral and/or ethical politicians by a third party. Also, CA publicly disclosed the criteria of blackballing and the supporting factual information behind their decision.[10] Therefore, one would expect that any possible adverse impact of CA's activities on voters' cynicism be lower than nasty attack advertising. Moreover, with more negative factual information about a corrupt candidate, a cynical voter may be more likely to vote against the corrupt candidate than simply to abstain when the voter has only a vague notion of political corruption.

To summarize, based on the previous theoretical and empirical literature, we hypothesize that:

1   The economic and political environment in the election is likely to generate low turnout.
2   The more cynical voters are likely to be more responsive to CA's campaign.
3   The CA's blackballing campaign is not likely to reduce voter turnout.

These statements can be tested empirically, and the data and methodology available are strong enough to provide us with clear evidence.

3   Data and methodology

In order to see if the turnout rate in the 2000 NA election is in line with the past historical trend, we use time series regression analyses by utilizing the aggregate turnout data for all elections held since Korea's independence. More specifically, we estimate a regression model in which the dependent variable is the turnout rate for each election using the data before the 2000 election, and estimate the turnout rate for the 2000 election. Then we compare the estimate with the actual turnout rate to see if the latter is smaller than the former.

In order to test the hypothesis that CA's blackballing campaign lowered voter turnout, we conduct analysis at two different levels: the election district level and the individual level. In the individual level analyses, we also examine who is more likely to be politically cynical and politically critical, and test whether more cynical and critical voters are more sympathetic toward CA's campaign.

In the district-level analysis, we perform correlation analyses, difference of means tests, and regression analyses on the cross-sectional data across election districts. It is hypothesized that if blackballing reduced voter turnout, then turnout rates in the districts in which one or more candidates are blackballed would be lower than those in the districts in which no candidates are blackballed, holding other district characteristics

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10   As CA was not a single group, but an alliance of more than 500 civic groups with diverse interests, it was difficult to push for a specific political agenda. CA's ability to influence the voters relied on its ethical high ground rather than the desirability or popularity of any specific policy initiatives. Consequently, CA's blackballing activities deliberately stayed away from endorsing any particular party, policy, or candidate.

constant. The data for this level of analysis are obtained from the Korean National Election Commission.

We also examine the turnout rates of districts in which voter cynicism may have been increased due to negative media coverage on candidates' military service records and tax payments.[11] In the previous presidential election held in December 1997, a great deal of media attention focused on the allegation that the two sons of the then presidential candidate Lee had been illegally exempted from the mandatory military service requirement. It is widely believed that this scandal might have cost him the election. Similarly, during the 2000 NA elections, there were numerous reports regarding the questionable military service records of candidates.[12] Also, several media reports looked at the low tax payments made by some candidates. Therefore, it is hypothesized that the turnout rates were lower in the districts where one or more candidates did not perform military services or make significant tax payments. Finally, we control for the degree of competitiveness of the election. It is measured by the competitiveness index, which is defined as the vote share difference between the top candidate and the second candidate in percent.[13] The maintained hypothesis is that turnout would be greater in the district in which the competitiveness index is higher.

For individual level analysis, we use the Voters' Attitude Survey for the 16th NA Elections, conducted by the Korea Social Science Data Center about one month after the elections. The Survey contains 1100 records based on a multi-stage quota sampling.[14] The data from questionnaires provide detailed information on voting behavior, attitudes towards popular political issues, and various socio-economic characteristics of the respondents.

Using these data, we would like to answer the following three specific questions: (1) Who is more politically cynical and more politically critical? (2) Are more cynical

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[11] The Korean National Election Commission posted the information on the candidates, including military records and tax payments, on its web sites. Although CA did not make military service records and the tax payments as the key issues, many observers argued that CA's blackballing efforts drew voters' attention to personal records rather than to policy issues. Whatever the reason may be, media paid a great deal of attention to military records and tax payments, and such attention was mostly negative in nature.

[12] According to Korean law, every male in Korea is required to perform military service, unless exempted for reasons of health, household condition, and so on. Unfortunately, we cannot determine whether a candidate's exemption was legitimate or not. Therefore, we simply used data on whether or not the candidate served in the military.

[13] The competitiveness index used in this paper is slightly different from the margin, the vote difference between the first and the second candidates divided by the number of registered voters. If turnout rates were the same across districts, the two measures would yield identical results. We use the competitiveness index, because it normalizes the differences in turnout rates across districts.

[14] The numbers of observations by region (7 metropolitan governments and 8 provinces, excluding Jeju) and by gender and age of the voters are determined proportionally to the figures of the 1995 Census of Population. Once these numbers are determined, two election districts were chosen randomly. Then for each district, one sub-district was chosen randomly. For each sub-district, 15 voters were chosen randomly and interviewed by the survey team.

or more critical voters more likely to be supportive toward CA's blackballing activities? (3) Are the voters exposed to blackballing more likely to abstain?

In order to answer the first question we run a regression model in which the dependent variables are indicators of political cynicism and political criticism and the independent variables are socio-economic and attitudinal variables of the voter. For the second question we run a regression model in which the dependent variables are voters' attitudinal variables and the independent variables are again voters' socio-economic and attitudinal variables, including political cynicism and criticism. For the third question, we estimate a logit model in which the dependent variable is whether the voter voted and the independent variables include the level of recognition of CA's activities and the dummy variables indicating whether the voter is in the district where one or more candidates are blackballed (or zealously blackballed) along with other variables that might affect turnout, such as socio-economic status and political attitudes toward key issues.[15]

4 Empirical results

4.1 Aggregated time series analysis

Time trend regression analysis uses nationwide turnout rates for past presidential and NA elections between 1971 and 1997.[16] The dependent variable is the aggregated turnout rate, and the independent variables are the type of election (NA elections or presidential election), real GDP per capita measured in 10,000 1995 Korean Won, and the proportion of rural population in percent using the data before the 2000 NA elections. The dummy variable indicating whether the elections are for NA is included, since NA elections have substantially lower turnout than presidential elections. The last two variables are included in order to capture the effect of urbanization and/or increased income level on voter turnout, as the voting behavior might be systematically related to those variables.[17] The result of the estimation is: Turnout rate in percent = 105.58 − 10.56 NA dummy − 2.20 GDP per capita − 0.47% of rural population. The model fits the data very well, as all the independent variables turn out to be significant at the 1% level, and the adjusted R-squared is 0.80.[18]

We use the model to estimate the 2000 NA election turnout rate, and compare the estimates with the actual. The point estimate of the turnout rate in the 2000 NA elections using the results of the model is 69.31, and the 95% confidence level interval estimate is between 60.99 and 77.64, while the actual rate is 57.2. Therefore, we reject

[15] The Voters' Attitude Survey does not include the dummy variables regarding blackballed candidates. However, as the Survey contains information regarding the voter's district, the variables were created using the separate information on the blackballed candidates and their districts.

[16] The sample period was limited by the availability of data. There are 4 presidential elections and 8 NA elections in the data set used.

[17] These socio-economic variables have better explanatory power than simple time trends.

[18] All statistical tests in regression and logit analyses are based on two-tailed tests.

Table 1. *Average Voter Turnout in 2000 National Assembly Elections in Percent*

	Nation	Urban areas	Rural areas
Districts with blackballed candidates	60.1 (7.4) 72 districts	56.9 (5.2) 46 districts	65.7 (7.3) 26 districts
Districts with zealously blackballed candidates	58.8 (7.1) 22 districts	56.3 (4.2) 15 districts	64.3 (9.2) 7 districts
Districts without blackballed candidates	57.8 (6.7) 155 districts	54.9 (4.1) 109 districts	64.6 (6.8) 46 districts

(Standard deviations are in parentheses).

the null hypothesis that the turnout rate in 2000 elections can be forecasted by the time trend of the turnout rates in the previous elections.[19] That is to say, we conclude that the turnout rate in the 2000 elections is lower than usual.

4.2 District level analysis

The average turnout in the 72 districts with blackballed candidates is 60.1%, whereas that in the 155 districts without any blackballed candidates is 57.8%. The rate in the 22 districts where CA has specially focused its blackballing efforts (zealously blackballed) is 58.8% (see Table 1). Both of the turnout rates in the blackballed districts are higher than in the districts without any blackballed candidates (by 2.5 percentage points and 1.0 percentage points respectively). This observation is opposite to the hypothesis that CA's activities lower turnout. Using the difference in mean test, we find that the turnout rate difference between the districts with one or more blackballed candidate and the districts without blackballed candidate is statistically significant at the 5% significance level. If we further classify them into urban areas and rural areas, the differences in the urban areas are 2.0 percentage points and 1.4 percentage points respectively. Again, the difference between the blackballed districts and non-blackballed districts is significantly different at the 5% significance level. In rural regions, the difference is not statistically different at the 10% level. In short, the turnout rates were higher in districts with blackballed candidates, and this is particularly true in urban areas.

The media hype on candidates' military records and tax payments supposedly increased the voter cynicism. In order to examine this claim, we compare the turnout rates between the districts where all candidates fulfilled the military service and the districts in which one or more candidates did not.[20] The difference in means test suggests

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[19] For some other model specifications using simple time trends as an independent variable rather than GDP per capita and percentage rural population, the 95% significance level interval estimate contains the actual 2000 turnout rate, although the point estimate is always higher than the actual 2000 turnout rate.

[20] As females are not required to perform military service, we regard female candidates as the same as males who fulfilled the military duty.

that there is no statistical difference (p = 0.18). Whether or not a candidate paid a fair share of taxes is a subjective call. However, if the candidate paid no taxes at all, then this information could be used to disgrace the candidate, possibly resulting in increased voter cynicism. Hence, we have conducted a difference test between the districts in which some candidates paid no taxes and other districts. The turnout rates in these two types of districts were 58.52% and 58.12% respectively, and the difference in means test is not statistically significant (p = 0.70). Even if the candidate paid some taxes, the amount may be too small in comparison to his/her wealth, and thereby increase voter cynicism and lower turnout. In order to evaluate the argument, we correlate the turnout rate and the ratio between the taxes paid and wealth of the candidates in the district. The correlation coefficient was 0.048 and statistically insignificant (p = 0.28).

Finally, in order to examine the effect of blackballing, controlling for other variables, we performed regression analyses in which the dependent variable is district turnout rate. The independent variables include a dummy variable for urban districts, a dummy variable for blackballed districts (1 if the district has a blackballed candidate, 0 otherwise), an index for election competitiveness (the winner's vote share – the runner-up's vote share), a military service dummy (1 if the district has a male candidate who did not perform military service duty, 0 otherwise), and a tax payment dummy (1 if the district has a candidate who did not pay any income taxes in 1999, 0 otherwise). In one specification, we added the district turnout rate in the 15th NA elections held in 1996, while in the other the variable is dropped. The turnout rates in the previous NA elections reflect unmeasured characteristics of the district. The competitiveness index is included since some suspect that close elections may increase turnout. The variables regarding military service records and tax payments are included to evaluate the hypothesis that the disclosure of such information increases voter cynicism and lowers turnout.

The results of the regression are reported in Table 2. Overall the models are significant (p values for the model are less than 0.0001). The model including the previous turnout rate has the adjusted R-squared of 0.75, while the model excluding the variable has only 0.41. Naturally the former model has a higher goodness of fit. Overall, the turnout rates in the 2000 elections decrease by about 9% from the previous election. In urban districts, they decrease by 9.58 percentage points, but if the turnout rates in the previous election were controlled for, they decrease by only 2.02 percentage points. Holding all the other independent variables constant, the districts with a blackballed candidate have higher turnout rates than the districts without blackballed candidates by 0.8 or 1.82 percentage points depending on whether the previous turnout rates are controlled for. The differences are statistically significant at 10% and 5% level, respectively. All other independent variables including the constant are not statistically significant either.[21]

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[21]   The dummy variable for the zealously blackballed districts turns out to be insignificant at 10% significance level, and the result is not reported here. Also, the interaction term between the two

Table 2. *Determinants for turnout rates across districts*

Independent variable	Coefficient (standard error)	
	Model with previous turnout rates	Model without previous turnout rates
Constant	0.75 (3.7)***	64.35 (0.84)***
Turnout in the 15th NA elections	0.91 (0.05)***	–
Urban districts	−2.02 (0.67)***	−9.58 (0.78)***
Districts with blackballed candidates	0.84 (0.50)*	1.82 (0.77)**
Competitiveness index	−0.017 (0.012)	0.0001 (0.019)
Districts with candidates who did not serve military duty	0.50(0.47)	0.55 (0.73)
Districts with candidates who did not pay any income tax	−0.76(0.85)	−1.79 (1.32)
Number of observation	227	227
Adjusted R^2	0.75	0.41
F statistics (p value):	116 (<0.0001)	32.7 (<0.0001)

(Dependent variable: election district turnout rates).
Notes: *** ($p < 0.01$), ** ($p < 0.05$), * ($p < 0.10$).

Based on the above district level analysis, the blackballing campaign did not decrease voter turnout. If anything, the blackballing increased voter turnout slightly. Also, there is no evidence supporting the argument that disclosing candidates' military service records and tax payments decreased voter turnout.

4.3   Individual level analysis

The purpose of the individual analysis is two-fold. First, we would like to examine who is more politically cynical and how does the political cynicism influence the level of responsiveness toward CA's blackballing campaign. Second, we would like to examine the determinants of turnout and test whether voters' levels of recognition and attitudes towards CA's blackballing campaign affects their decisions to vote, as the key debate on the 2000 NA elections is whether the disclosure of candidates' information leads to higher abstention by the voters.

We classified the political criticism into local level and national level.[22] By and large, Korean voters are quite cynical. Twenty-seven percent of the voters said they are

dummy variables of blackballed districts and of urban districts turned out to be insignificant at 10% significance level, and it is dropped from the model as well.

[22] For a measurement of local political criticism, we used the 1-to-5-scale approval rating (5 being the highest) of the district's Assemblyman. For national political criticism, we used the 1-to-5-scale approval rating of the President. For cynicism, we used the 1-to-5 scale answer to the question, 'What do you think about the statement that politicians do not keep the promises that they made before they get elected.'

very cynical, and 47.6% said cynical. This high degree of political cynicism is quite contrary to the low level of political criticism. Only 3.5% said they are very dissatisfied with the President, and 38.5% said they are dissatisfied. For Local Assembly members, only 3.8% are very dissatisfied and 27.4% are dissatisfied.

Table 3 reports the results of regression model of the determinants of cynicism and criticism. The independent variables include socio-economic variables of the voters, such as age, location of the residence, religion, place of origin,[23] level of education, sex, and income. Also, included are several attitudinal variables such as the level of political interest, the level of satisfaction regarding the personal qualifications of candidates and nomination procedure,[24] and the level of belief on political efficacy.[25]

The results indicate that the level of political interest and the satisfaction toward politicians and the political system are strong determinants of both political cynicism and political criticism, and the directions of influence are consistent with general expectations. In particular, voters who are more interested in elections and more satisfied with politicians and the nomination procedure are less politically cynical and less politically critical. The level of political efficiency, however, is unrelated to political criticism but strongly related to political cynicism.

Income, age, sex, and religion are unrelated to political criticism. Similarly, income, sex, and region are not significant determinants for political cynicism. However, the older and more educated voter is more cynical, whereas these variables do not affect the level of political criticism. Another interesting but not surprising thing from the Korean politics is that there is a strong regional contrast toward the President's approval rating.

We then proceed to examine how the voters reacted toward CA's blackballing campaign activities. There are five questions included in the Survey regarding CA's activities. They are: (1) Do you think CA's activity violates the current election laws? (2) Do you agree with CA's or other civic organizations' blackballing activities? (3) Do you think CA's activity affected the parties' nomination process? (4) Do you

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[23] During the last three decades, there has been a large-scale rural-to-urban migration, particularly to Seoul metropolitan area, in Korea due to rapid industrialization. However, Korean voters tend to keep strong regional ties in elections. Particularly, Honam (Southwest) and Youngnam (Southeast) are the two major regions that are historically competitive toward each other. Current President Kim Dae Joong is from the former region, whereas ex-President Kim Young Sam is from the latter region.

[24] The satisfaction variables are regarded as the measures of general political criticism, while local and national political criticism variables are specific to the incumbent office holders. The variables are also measured on a 1-to-5-scale approval rating (5 being the highest).

[25] Two questions were used to measure the level of efficacy. One question is 'What do you think about the statement: Since many people vote, it is not important for me to vote?' The other question is 'What do you think about the statement: Election is the only way to speak out about the government for me.' There are five categories to answer, and we use a 1-to-5 (5 being the highest) scale to represent the level of the voter's sense of efficacy. These questions are similar to the questions used in the US National Election Study, as reported in Niemi *et al.* (1991).

Table 3. *Regression models for voters' determinants of political cynicism and political criticism*

Category	Independent variable	Dependent variables		
		Cynicism	Local criticism	National criticism
		Do not trust politicians	Approve representative's work	Approve president's work
	Constant	4.02(0.322)***	1.619(0.246)***	2.04(0.185)***
Socio-	Age	0.0052(0.003)*	−0.003(0.002)	0.005(0.043)
economic	Not living in large cities	0.073(0.07)	0.009(0.057)	0.053(0.043)
variables	Christian	0.057(0.068)	−0.038(0.055)	0.066(0.042)
	Buddhist	−0.054(0.067)	−0.046(0.054)	−0.018(0.040)
	From Honam area	0.046(0.073)	−0.047(0.059)	0.309(0.044)**
	From Youngnam area	−0.070(0.065)	−0.016(0.053)	−0.308(0.040)***
	Education	0.125(0.043)***	−0.042(0.035)	0.0013(0.026)
	Sex	0.039(0.057)	0.022(0.046)	0.014(0.035)
	Income	−2.32(0.015)	0.016(0.012)	−0.009(0.009)
Interest	Degree of interest in election	−0.020(0.035)	0.071(0.029)**	0.025(0.021)
Satisfaction	Satisfied with qualifications of district's candidates	−0.101(0.029)***	0.210(0.024)***	0.048(0.018)***
	Dissatisfied with the nomination process	−0.184(0.038)***	0.122(0.031)***	0.128(0.0236)***
Efficacy	Election is the only way to speak out	0.097(0.025)***	0.034(0.020)*	0.007(0.015)
	My vote makes no difference	−0.011(0.027)	−0.0032(0.021)	0.007(0.016)
Number of observations		1,099	1,099	1,099
Adjusted R-squared		0.048	0.120	0.179
F-statistics (p-value)		4.98(0.000)	11.68(0.000)	18.11(0.000)

(Estimated coefficients with standard error).
Notes: *** ($p < 0.01$), ** ($p < 0.05$), * ($p < 0.10$).

think CA's activities were fair? (5) Have you been influenced by CA's blackballing activities in choosing your candidate?[26]

In general, the voters were very favorable toward CA's activities. About 80% of the respondents thought that CA's activities were not illegal, 73.1% agree with CA's activities (13.5% disagreed and 13.5% said they don't know), and 63.7% thought that CA's activities were very fair or fair (18% reported that it was not fair). Also, the voters said that CA's activities were effective: more than 80% thought that the blackballing affected the parties' nomination process, and 21.4% said that it affected their vote very much (48.5% said it affected somewhat, and 10.8% said it did not affect their votes at all).[27] In short, the majority of voters did not seem to be disturbed by CA's activities. It would be hard to imagine that the majority of approving voters become more cynical toward politics because of CA's activities.

Table 4 shows the results of regression models regarding voters' attitudes toward CA's activities. The dependent variables that we choose are: (1) how much the voter approved CA's activities; (2) how much the voter thinks that CA's activities were fair; and (3) how much CA's activities influenced the voter's vote. The results show that education and the location of residence are the strongest socio-economic variables in determining voters' attitudes toward CA's activities, judging by the size of the estimates and the significance level. In particular, more educated urban voters are more likely to be supportive toward CA's activities, and their votes are more influenced by CA's activities. Other socio-economic variables including, age, sex, income, and religion are insignificant. An interesting thing is that Honam voters and supporters of the President are more likely to think that CA's activities were fair. This suggests that Honam voters and Kim Dae Joong supporters are more likely to view incumbent NA members as corrupt. This may due to the fact that Kim Dae Joong, who has very strong support from Honam area, was the first President not from the Youngnam area, and incumbent NA members are more likely to be associated with the previous administrations. Voters who are more interested in elections are more likely to be supportive toward CA's activities. This finding suggests that the CA's blackballing campaign might have been viewed as a kind of political participation at the grass root level. Also, more cynical voters, but more efficacious voters are likely to support CA's activities.

Now we turn to the question whether more cynical voters or voters who are more responsive to CA's activities are more likely to abstain in the elections. Table 5 shows the cross tabulation between voters' attitudes toward CA's activities and their participation in the vote. The sample indicates that voters who expressed agreement or disagreement

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[26] The possible answers to the first two questions are yes, no, I don't know, and we convert them into 1-to-3 level. For the remaining three questions, there are five levels.

[27] According to the Survey, the turnout rate was 74.7%, which is substantially higher than the nationally reported rate of 57.2%. The self-reported turnout is known to be substantially higher than the actual turnout. The evidence in Sweden, reported in Grandberg and Holmber (1991), show that over 99% of the voters say that they voted, but only 74% of the nonvoters say they did not vote. Interestingly, these figures seem quite consistent with the South Korean data.

Table 4. *Regression models for the voter's response toward CA's blackballing campaign*

Category	Independent variable	Dependent variables		
		Agree with CA	CA was fair	CA influenced my vote
	Constant	1.92(0.263)***	1.86(0.34)***	1.64(0.33)***
Socio-economic variables	Age	0.0049(0.002)**	0.0011(0.003)	−0.0002(0.003)
	Not living in large cities	0.057(0.054)	−0.171(0.069)**	−0.321(0.068)***
	Christian	0.059(0.053)	0.088(0.067)	−0.068(0.066)
	Buddhist	−0.045(0.051)	0.086(0.065)	−0.064(0.064)
	From Honam area	0.046(0.057)	0.188(0.072)**	−0.047(0.071)
	From Youngnam area	−0.071(0.051)	0.016(0.066)	−0.081(0.065)
	Education	0.103(0.033)**	0.122(0.042)***	0.096(0.042)**
	Sex	0.042(0.044)	−0.063(0.056)	−0.044(0.055)
	Income	0.010(0.011)	0.021(0.015)	0.010(0.014)
Interest	Degree of interest in election	0.044(0.027)*	0.111(0.034)***	0.097(0.033)***
Efficacy	Election is the only way to speak out	0.004(0.019)	0.031(0.024)	0.070(0.024)***
	My vote makes no difference	−0.022(0.020)	0.047(0.026)*	−0.001(0.025)
Cynicism	Do not trust politicians	0.109(0.023)***	0.035(0.030)	0.065(0.029)**
Criticism	Approve Assemblyman	−0.022(0.028)	0.026(0.036)	0.046(0.035)
	Approve President	0.092(0.038)**	0.191(0.048)***	0.067(0.047)
	Number of obs.	1,099	1,099	1,099
	Adjusted R-squred	0.060	0.063	0.058
	F-statistics (p-value)	5.69(0.000)	5.96(0.000)	5.53(0.000)

(Estimated coefficients with standard error).
Note: *** ($p < 0.01$), ** ($p < 0.05$), * ($p < 0.10$).

Table 5. *Turnout and evaluation on CA's activities (in percent, N = 1, 100)*

		Do you agree with CA's activities?		
		Agree (804)	Disagree (148)	Don't know (148)
Did you vote?	Vote (822)	74.5	79.7	70.9
	Abstain (278)	25.5	20.3	29.1
	Total (1,100)	100	100	100

rather than ignorance (or indifference) have higher participation rates. In particular, voters who disagree have the highest participation rate among the three groups. This means that voters who know and have opinions about CA's activities are more likely to vote. This observation is opposite to the hypothesis that CA's activities lowered voter turnout.[28]

In order to control other variables that may affect the decision to vote, we estimated a logit model in which the dependent variable is whether the vote took part in the election (1 = vote, 0 = abstain). The independent variables include voters' socio-economic variables (age, place of current residence, place of origin, income, education, religion, and sex), voters' attitudes toward political process, and the voters' attitudes regarding CA's blackballing activities. Also, we include the dummy variables indicating whether voters are in the districts where the candidates are either blackballed or zealously blackballed.

Table 6 reports the results of the logit estimation of the selected independent variables. The model specification as a whole is quite significant (p < 0.001), and it correctly predicts the observations more than 70%. Holding other things constant, voters living in a large city are less likely to vote (this result is consistent with the district level analysis);[29] Christians are more likely to vote;[30] voters originally from Honam and Youngnam are more likely to vote; the more interested voters are in the election, the more likely they are to vote; if voters have a favorite candidate, they are more likely to vote; and if voters are not satisfied with the nomination process, they are less likely to vote. Also, voters with higher level of efficacy are more likely to vote. The results regarding attitude variables in general support the view that political participation is greater for those who are more satisfied with the candidates provided.[31]

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[28] However, chi-square test of the contingency table shows that the difference among the groups is statistically insignificant (p = 0.15).

[29] Since sex, education, and income are all not significant at 10% level, these variables are dropped in the model of Table 6.

[30] Christians takes about a quarter of population in Korea, and the current President Kim Dae Joong is known to be a Christian. A dummy variable for Buddhists turns out to be insignificant at 10% significance level, and is dropped from the model.

[31] Interaction terms with voter cynicism and blackballed (and zealously blackballed) variable were included in some other specifications, and they turn out to be insignificant while the estimates for the other variables did not change much. Hence, the results are not reported here.

Table 6. *Logit model for individual turnout*

Category	Independent variable	Coefficient (standard error)
	Constant	−5.27(0.89)***
Socio-economic variables	Age	0.047(0.007)***
	Not living in large cities	0.678(0.248)***
	Christian	0.365(0.203)*
	From Honam area	0.613(0.247)**
	From Youngnam area	0.522(0.213)**
Interest	Degree of interest in election	1.132(0.123)***
Satisfaction	Satisfied with my incumbent	0.340(0.192)*
	Satisfied with qualifications of district's candidates	0.424(0.100)***
	Dissatisfied with the nomination process	−0.276(0.126)**
Efficacy	Election is the only way to speak out	0.145(0.078)*
	My vote makes no difference	−0.410(0.079)***
Cynicism	Do not trust politicians	0.128(0.096)
Criticism	Approve Assemblyman	0.074(0.145)
	Approve President	−0.044(0.160)
Attitudes to CA	Agree with CA	−0.245(0.158)
	CA was fair	0.086(0.114)
	CA influenced my vote	0.128(0.107)
Blackballed Candidate in District	Blackballed	−0.304(0.297)
	Zealously blackballed	0.475(0.433)

Dependent variable (1 = Vote; 0 = Did Not Vote).
Notes: Number of observation: 1,100.
− 2 log likelihood: 865.8 ($p < 0.000$).
Percentage correct: 83.2.
*** ($p < 0.01$), ** ($p < 0.05$), * ($p < 0.10$).

However, the results indicate that voters' levels of trust (or cynicism) toward politicians did not change the likelihood of turnout. Also, the level of political criticism does not affect turnout. The three attitude variables related CA's activities are all not significant at 10% level. Similarly, whether voters are in the district where one of the candidates is the blackballed or zealously blackballed is not significant at 10% level. Besides the test for significance for the five individual variables, we conduct the joint test for the significance for all five variables related to CA. The resulting log-likelihood test also fails to reject the hypothesis that CA's activities change turnout.[32] In short, these results imply that voters who are cynical about politicians are not more likely to abstain, but they are more likely to be more supportive with CA's blackballing activities.

[32] The log-likelihood test statistic is 5.77 which is smaller than the chi-square test statistic of 9.236 at 5 degrees of freedom and 10% significance level.

5 Conclusions

The aggregated turnout rate in the 2000 NA elections was lower than the expected rate compared with the previous elections. However, the empirical analyses of both district level and individual level reported in this paper do not support the popular opinion expressed by mass media and academics that CA's activities lowered the voter turnout. If anything, it may have increased the voter turnout somewhat. However, we find that more cynical voters are more likely to support CA's activities. Another important finding is that voters with stronger political interest in general or stronger attachment to their candidates are more likely to vote. Moreover, voters with higher level of efficacy are more likely to vote, a result that is consistent with previous studies in the US.

The empirical evidence reported in this paper sheds some light on the debate on the relationship between the negative campaign and voter turnout. The Korean experience suggests that in a political environment in which corruption is a serious issue, the voters are interested in obtaining more information about politicians, and such voters (they tend to have high levels of education) are quite supportive toward open negative campaigning conducted by the public interest organization. It turns out that the worry over the reduction of turnout due to such blackballing is unwarranted. Therefore, negative campaigning itself should not be a major concern as long as it satisfies voters' demand for more information regarding politicians.

The findings in this paper also provide some insights into the empirical literature on turnout. First, some socio-economic variables are important in determining turnouts in Korea. In particular, older voters are more likely to vote, and voters living in rural area are more likely to vote. The place of origin, which was a determining factor in 1997 Presidential Election as well as in 2000 NA election seems to be an important determinant, that is voters from two major competing regions are more likely to turn out. However, in contrast to the studies on American voters, sex, education, and income are insignificant in Korea. These results suggest that, although individual socio-economic variables are important in determining turnout, some variables may be more important than the others depending on specific political environment. However, the findings regarding the influence of attitudinal variables on turnout are surprisingly similar to what is known about American voters. The voter who is more interested and has more specific political agenda and/or more favorite candidates is more likely to vote, whereas political cynicism and criticism does not seem to influence turnout.

The voter turnout rate in South Korea has been decreasing steadily since 1988, and the rates for NA elections in general are lower than those for presidential elections. Though we have identified several socio-economic and political determinants of voter participation for this election, we have not provided comprehensive reasons for the declining electoral participation. A more complete treatment of this issue will have to be deferred to a separate paper.

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