



저작자표시-비영리-변경금지 2.0 대한민국

이용자는 아래의 조건을 따르는 경우에 한하여 자유롭게

- 이 저작물을 복제, 배포, 전송, 전시, 공연 및 방송할 수 있습니다.

다음과 같은 조건을 따라야 합니다:



저작자표시. 귀하는 원저작자를 표시하여야 합니다.



비영리. 귀하는 이 저작물을 영리 목적으로 이용할 수 없습니다.



변경금지. 귀하는 이 저작물을 개작, 변형 또는 가공할 수 없습니다.

- 귀하는, 이 저작물의 재이용이나 배포의 경우, 이 저작물에 적용된 이용허락조건을 명확하게 나타내어야 합니다.
- 저작권자로부터 별도의 허가를 받으면 이러한 조건들은 적용되지 않습니다.

저작권법에 따른 이용자의 권리는 위의 내용에 의하여 영향을 받지 않습니다.

이것은 [이용허락규약\(Legal Code\)](#)을 이해하기 쉽게 요약한 것입니다.

[Disclaimer](#)

Master's Thesis of Political Science

Are 'A'partisans Non-partisans?

– Partisan Attitudes of Apartisans –

비(非)당파층은 당파성을 띠지 않는가?

– 비당파층의 당파적 태도에 관하여 –

February 2023

Graduate School of Social Sciences

Seoul National University

Political Science Major

Do-Hoon Kim

Are ‘A’partisans Non-partisans?

– Partisan Attitudes of Apartisans –

Thesis Advisor Kang, Won-Taek

Submitting a master’s thesis of Political Science

January 2023

Graduate School of Social Sciences

Seoul National University

Political Science Major

Do-Hoon Kim

Confirming the master’s thesis written by

Do-Hoon Kim

January 2023

Chair Park, Won-ho (Seal)

Vice Chair Kang, Won-Taek (Seal)

Examiner Hahn, Kyusup (Seal)

Abstract

Are ‘A’partisans Non-partisans? Partisan Attitudes of Apartisans

Do-Hoon Kim

Department of Political Science

The Graduate School of Social Sciences

Seoul National University

Are political independents free from partisan bias? Our understanding of independents’ political attitudes in a polarized environment remains limited since previous studies exclusively focused on partisans’ attitudes. I argue that contrary to common belief, well-informed independents may also display partisan bias in a politically polarized environment. Politically sophisticated independents, or apartisans are expected to rationally evaluate government performance. However, their reliance on personal cues from politicians and social media to acquire political information may lead them to having biased partisan stances on polarized political issues. Using the 2020 South Korean National Assembly election survey data, I explore if cognitive mobilization makes independents rationally assess the government’s responses to COVID-19. I find that the preference for party leaders plays a crucial role in independents’ assessment of government policies, especially among the most sophisticated independents. This result suggests a counterintuitive implication that neither political sophistication nor detachment from political

parties may efficiently deter voters from partisan bias.

Keyword : Partisan Bias, Apartisan, Political Polarization, Cognitive Mobilization, COVID19

Student Number : 2019-25071

Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction	1
1.1. Research Background.....	1
1.2. Purpose of Research.....	3
Chapter 2. Literature Review	6
2.1. Partisan Bias: An Exclusive Property of Partisans?.....	6
2.2. Cognitive Mobilization: Why the Independents May Hold Biased Partisan Attitudes.....	8
Chapter 3. Data and Method	11
3.1. Hypotheses.....	11
3.2. Research Design.....	14
Chapter 4. Results.....	19
4.1. Who Are the Apartisans?.....	19
4.2. Partisan Bias in Apartisans' Evaluations.....	26
Chapter 5. Robustness Check.....	29
5.1. The Effect of the Preference for President Moon on the Evaluation of Government Performance.....	29
5.2. The Use of Social Media to Get Political Information as a Source of Biased Partisan Attitudes.....	32
Chapter 6. Discussion	35
Bibliography.....	38
Abstract in Korean	45
Appendix 	47

Tables

Table 1. Changes in the proportion among voters between the 2016 and 2020 elections	3
Table 2. Categorization of Voters	18
Table 3. Independents between the 2016 and the 2020 election.....	19
Table 4. Socio-demographic Characteristics of Four Groups.....	21
Table 5. Ideology and Political Dissatisfaction	23
Table 6. Political Engagements.....	23
Table 7. Media usage	24
Table 8. Affective Polarization between 2016 and 2020	26
Table 9. A Main Linear Regression Table using OLS Estimator (for pure independents).....	47
Table 10. A Linear Regression Table using OLS Estimator for Robustness Checks (for pure independents).....	48

Figures

Figure 1. A Coefficient Plot: Moderating Effects of Cognitive Mobilization among Pure Independents.....	27
Figure 2. Partisan Attitudes of Party Supporters and Pure Independents according to their CMI	28
Figure 3. Distributions of Preferences for Hwang and Moon	30

Figure 4. A Coefficient Plot of the First Robustness Check Model: Moderating Effect of Cognitive Mobilization among Pure Independents	31
Figure 5. The First Robustness Check: Partisan attitudes of Pure Independents according to their CMI	32
Figure 6. A Coefficient Plot of the Second Robustness Check: Moderating Effect of Frequency of Using Social Media to Get Political Information among Pure Independents	34
Figure 7. The Second Robustness Check: Partisan attitudes of Pure Independents according to their FREQ.....	34

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

Partisan bias is one of the most crucial problems in politically polarized environments. The normative power of representative democracy partly lies in the ability of rational voters to rationally reward or punish the incumbent based on their evaluation of the politician's performance (Fiorina 1981). By doing so, voters can hold the incumbent accountable and responsive by reelecting or rejecting them. However, politically polarized partisans filter and update information exclusively depending on their party identification. Specifically, they tend to accept new information only if it fits their partisan preference, or confirmation bias, while they discount or ignore the value of the information if it does not, or the discounting bias (Achen and Bartels 2016; Bartels 2002). These "rationalizing voters" (Lodge and Taber 2013) are problematic in that they weaken one of the most powerful normative values of democracy. Since partisans tend to evaluate policy outcomes in a way that conforms to their party preference, politicians are less incentivized to stay alert to public opinion or appeal to voters beyond their most vocal supporters. Candidates who do not appeal to these partisans are at risk of losing the nomination to stand for election on their party's ticket but may then find it difficult to persuade other voters after embracing political polarization. In short, in a politically polarized world, the normative power of representative democracy is waning with voters' excessive favoritism of their

own preferred party (Lebo and Cassino 2007; Rudolph 2003).

What about political independents who do not have such party attachments? Are they free from partisan bias? The answer remains unclear since most prior studies have exclusively focused on partisans' attitudes in polarized politics (Druckman et al. 2021; Druckman et al. 2021; Green et al. 2002; Huddy et al. 2015; Iyengar et al. 2012; Iyengar and Westwood 2015). Since independents lack partisan identity, they have usually been excluded from discussion of partisan bias, without being tested. As a result, our understanding of independents' political attitudes in a polarized environment is very limited.

A more thorough examination on independents' political attitudes is required in "the age of polarization" (Lupton et al. 2017). Table 1 indicates that, contrary to concerns of increasing polarization and partisan sorting, the share of self-identified independents is increasing. In particular, the bulk of the increase came from those pure independents who deny attachment to any specific political party. Yet, the number of the leaning independents, those who admit leaning toward a particular party, is relatively stable. Moreover, the number of self-identified partisans fell to under 30% of the total electorate in the 2020 South Korean National Assembly election. This is a very puzzling story, in that parties' influence on their electorates is apparently waning even in a most politically polarized environment.

TABLE 1. Changes in the proportion among voters between the 2016 and 2020 elections.

	The 2016 election (%): A	The 2020 election (%): B	Changes (%p): B-A
Partisan Identifiers (Major Parties*)	40.17	28.58	-11.59
Partisan Identifiers & Leaning Independents (Major Parties)	61.83	52.00	-9.83
Leaning Independents & Pure Independents	50.12	61.56	+11.44
Pure Independents	18.66	26.40	+7.74

Note:

* Major Parties refer to the Democratic Party and the Saenuri Party (2016) in South Korea. The latter changed its name to the United Future Party in 2020.

Source: “The survey on voter’s political awareness in the 20th/21st National Assembly Election” conducted by the Korean Association of Electoral Studies (KAES) and Korean Social Science Data Center (KSDC) in the 2016 and 2020 elections.

1.2. Purpose of Research

This paper focuses on cognitively mobilized (hereafter, CM) independents, dubbed “apartisans” by Dalton (1984; 2007; 2013). Due to their high level of education and interest in politics, apartisans are able to acquire and process political information without depending on party cues. They are, in this manner, expected to rationally evaluate the performance of government, staying any partisan bias.

However, are apartisans free from partisan bias? I argue that apartisans may also hold biased partisan attitudes under polarized politics. The lack of stated party loyalty among independents should not be reason alone for scholars to assume that those voters are free from any partisan bias.

I suggest two reasons for this claim. First, they are more susceptible to personal traits or images of politicians than partisans are (Dalton 2007; 2013). Thus, they are subject to manipulation or incitement by politicians (Holmberg 1994). Second, apartisans mainly depend on social media to acquire political knowledge as an alternative to party cues (Chung and Gil 2014). Yet internet-based media tends to provoke affective polarization and partisan bias among the public in a polarized environment (Iyengar et al. 2019; Lelkes et al. 2017; Jang and Han 2021). In short, notwithstanding their denial of party loyalty, apartisans may have biased partisan issue positions due to their reliance on candidate cues and their use of social media. In this vein, apartisans may not be ‘non-partisan’ after all.

To examine whether apartisans are free from biased partisan attitudes, I explore if the preference for party leaders affects independents’ evaluations of government performance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, the moderating effect of the level of CM on the formation of partisan issue positions is tested. Then I compare the moderating effect between independents and party supporters. As a result, this paper suggests two key findings. First, CM independents may also have biased partisan issue positions due to their preference for party leaders. Second, CM independents may be more biased in their attitudes on political issues along with preferences for party leaders, compared to CM party supporters.

These findings have two implications. The one is that staying detached from the political party itself does not eliminate the possibility of

holding bias in partisan attitudes. The other is that CM may also result in partisan bias not only for partisans but also for apartisans in the polarized environment. These implications are in stark contrast to Dalton's (2013) positive anticipation of the growing number of CM independents. CM may drop independents into partisan spheres under polarization. These implications bode poorly for lowering the temperate of political debates. Political polarization undermines representative democracy as not only partisans but also independents become less likely to evaluate policies based on outcome, but instead who enacted the policies. Future research may further address the moderating factors of partisan bias other than political sophistication and detachment from party loyalty.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1. Partisan Bias: An Exclusive Property of Partisans?

Citizens need to make objective evaluations of the incumbent's performance if they are to hold the politician accountable. However, voters often hold contrasting factual beliefs in a way that conforms to their party attachment (Bullock et al. 2013; Bullock and Lenz 2019). For example, American voters showed a wide divergence, according to their party attachment, on their beliefs whether Iraq had weapons of mass destruction (Jacobson 2010) despite the U.S. government's confirmation that Iraq did not have them (Duefler 2005). Similar patterns appear regarding numerous issues: the state of the economy (Bartels 2002) and climate change (Quealy 2017). A large body of literature gives empirical evidence that partisans also diverge in their tendency of blame attribution (Bisgaard 2015; Malhotra 2008; Rudolph 2003; Rudolph 2006; Gil 2020).

Scholars often use social identity theory to explain partisans' gaps in their political views (Greene 1999). According to this theory, people have a motivational need to divide the world into a dichotomous way: 'us' versus 'them' (Tajfel et al. 1979; Turner and Tajfel 1979). Also, they have perceptual bias favoring the group they belong to (in-group favoritism) while denouncing the group they do not (out-group hostility). Partisanship plays a key role as a social identity in distinguishing the in-group from the out-group (Huddy et al. 2015; Greene 1999; Kim and Lee 2021; Jang and Ha 2022).

Partisanship here refers to a voter's affective psychological identification with their preferred political party (Campbell et al. 1960). Thus, for example, Republicans may think that unemployment rate sharply increased during the Clinton administration partly due to their desire to denigrate the achievements of the out-group, the Democratic Party.¹

However, arguments trying to explain voters' divergent opinions based on social identity theory have a key limitation. The applicability of the assertions is limited to partisans who have a partisan identity. In other words, the theory tells nothing about those political independents who do not display party identity.² Then, what explains the variance among independents' political views? Early scholars did not pay much attention to independents since independents were considered to be uninformed, unsophisticated, and most importantly, not politically engaged (Campbell et al. 1960; So and Hyun 2006).

A turning point came following a series of studies which placed an emphasis on heterogeneity among independents (Hillygus and Shields 2008; Magleby et al. 2011; Lee 2001; Park and Song 2012). In *The Myth of the Independent Voter*, Keith et al. (1992) distinguish leaning independents from pure independents. The former is distinct from the latter in that the leaning

¹ It remains difficult for scholars to conclude that this kind of thinking reflects the respondents' true belief in political objects. See Bullock et al. (2013) and Bullock and Lenz (2019) for alternative explanations.

² Klar (2014) argues that independents have their own distinct identity. However, many scholars consider that independents are more heterogeneous rather than homogenous (Keith et al. 1992; Hillygus and Shields 2008; Magleby et al. 2011; Lee 2001; Park and Song 2012).

independents tend to lean toward a particular party, while pure independents do not. The authors find that the political attitudes and behaviors of leaning independents are more analogous to partisan identifiers than pure independents. Since then, researchers have begun to consider the possibility of leaning independents' manifesting partisan bias.

Still, pure independents have been expected to display little, if any, partisan bias. However, there are several reasons why they may also hold bias in their partisan attitudes.

2.2. Cognitive Mobilization: Why the Independents May Hold Biased Partisan Attitudes

Dalton (1984; 2007; 2013) suggested a new typology regarding partisanship. He points out two social developments that have made cognitive mobilization (CM) among the non-identifiers available. One is voters' much higher level of education compared to the 1950s. The other is the low cost of acquiring political information owing to the spread of mass media. These social changes have dramatically enhanced voters' ability to acquire and process complex political information. As a result, apartisans, or cognitively mobilized (CM) independents depend less on party cues and more on their own political knowledge when they make political decisions. Apartisan voter is a new type of independent voter, in that they are sophisticated and informed, contrary to the traditional type of unengaged and uninformed independent

voter as profiled by Campbell et al. (1960). They are highly engaged in politics with their access to abundant political resources.

Since apartisans do not base their political decisions on party cues, they are expected to be relatively free from partisan bias. In this manner, they are assumed to be “rational independent[s]” (Dalton 2007: 280) who correctly evaluate the incumbent’s performance, apart from partisan bias. Dalton (2013: 204), therefore, anticipates that CM will produce “a deliberative public” close to the ideal of classic democracy.

Contrary to Dalton’s expectation, I argue that apartisans may also be susceptible to partisan bias in terms of issue positions. To begin with, independents are still subject to the influence of candidate’s personal traits or public image (Dalton 2007; 2013). In this manner, independents may be more susceptible to manipulation or incitement by politicians (Holmberg 1994:113-114). Therefore, notwithstanding their denial of affiliation with any specific political party, apartisans may still possess partisan attitudes on political issues owing to their preferences for party leaders or candidates. Independents’ lack of preference for any political party does not necessarily mean that they also have no preference for any party leaders or candidates.

Moreover, apartisans’ source of political knowledge may lead them to biased partisan stances. CM independents tend to rely heavily on social media as an alternative to party cues (Chung and Gil 2014). Yet, such internet-based media is subject to selective exposure (Garrett 2009) and tends to provoke affective polarization among the public in a polarized environment

(Iyengar et al. 2019; Lelkes et al. 2017; Jang and Han 2021). In sum, CM independents may not be free from partisan bias in a polarized context because of their reliance on personal cues from politicians and frequent use of social media as a source of political information.

Chapter 3. Data and Method

3.1. Hypotheses

Are independents, especially apartisans, free from partisan bias when they decide their stances on political issues? To address this research question, I propose, in this paper, two empirically testable hypotheses regarding COVID-19 issues.

The 2020 South Korean National Assembly Election is a salient example to explore how independents in a polarized environment form their opinions on political issues. South Korea was also at its peak of COVID-19 infections during the election. The main controversy in the election, therefore, was centered on the government's response to the pandemic. Shin (2020) finds that voters' assessment of governmental performance dealing with the virus had a significant effect on voters' vote choice. Yet, his findings tell us nothing about how the voters' appraisals were established.

How were these evaluations formed? Since voters are not always perfectly informed about political issues, they often use heuristics and cues to evaluate political objects. Party cues are one of the most often used heuristics (Kam 2005). Gil and Kang (2020) also point out that party attachment may have played a decisive role in evaluations of the government among partisans in the 2020 election. Partisans' views on COVID-19 were colored by their party ties. For instance, while supporters of the ruling party praised on the government's effort to reduce the spread of COVID-19, partisans of the main

opposition party were negative in their evaluations. The same pattern is also demonstrated on the voters' attribution of blame. Most supporters of the ruling party ascribed the outbreak of the contagion to a certain religious group's laxity in observing social distancing. On the contrary, opposition party supporters criticized the government as incompetent in dealing with the spread of the virus.

However, such partisan evaluations may not be limited to partisans. I argue that apartisans may also utilize their partisan preference when they evaluate the government's efforts. The difference between partisans and apartisans, in this case, lies in the sources from which they derive their preferences. Unlike partisans, independents do not base their political decision primarily on the party cues. Alternatively, independents rely more on personal cues from politicians. In this manner, independents may be susceptible to partisan bias in evaluating government performance with their preferences for party leaders. For example, independents who were extremely in favor of President Moon Jae-In may positively evaluate the government's response to the pandemic, regardless of their individual level of stress caused by COVID-19. Likewise, independents supportive of Hwang Gyeo-An, the leader of the main opposition party, may castigate the government even if they do not feel threatened by the virus. Thus, the first hypothesis examines if relative preference for party leaders affected independents' assessments of

government performance during the pandemic.³

H1: For pure independents, voters who prefer President Moon to Hwang, the leader of the main opposition party are more likely to positively evaluate the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, political sophistication may influence the extent to which independents rely on personal cues from party leaders when they establish their issue positions. This tendency may appear more salient among the more knowledgeable independents, who frequently use social media to get political information (Chung and Gil 2014). It must be noted that the use of social media was more important than ever in the 2020 election for acquiring political information. Due to COVID-19, most electoral campaigns were conducted through online media (Lee 2021). Yet, apolitical people are often unfamiliar with using social media (Chung and Gil 2014). Even if they are familiar, such voters are more likely to use it for entertainment purposes rather than for politics (Arceneaux and Johnson 2013). In this vein, partisan attitudes on people's evaluation of government performance are more likely to be salient among more educated independents.

³ Indeed, there are sufficient reasons to believe, in the 2020 election, that there were numerous 'personal' supporters (not party supporters) of either Moon or Hwang. For example, controversy over the range of the Emergency Relief Fund (ERF) is a good example with respect to Moon supporters (Kim 2020). After the ruling party's electoral success, it wanted to fulfill its pledge to subsidize all people regardless of their income. However, the Minister of Finance stubbornly preferred a policy subsidizing only the bottom 70% income tier. In this situation, Moon supporters accused not the Minister but the ruling party of holding Moon back. This clearly shows that those zealous personal supporters of Moon do not identify their support of Moon with that of ruling party. Their remonstrance was so powerful that the ruling party eventually relinquished the initiative on the ERF following the government's proposal.

H2: The effect of relative party leader preference on the evaluation of government's efforts will be stronger as the level of CM increases among pure independents.

3.2. Research Design

To test the hypotheses, I used two post-election surveys conducted by The Korean Association of Electoral Studies (KAES) and Korean Social Science Data Center (KSDC) after the 2016 and the 2020 South Korean National Assembly elections.⁴ Each survey consists of nationally representative samples with 1200 respondents.

The dependent variable is *The Evaluation of the Government's Response to COVID-19 pandemic*. It was measured through an 11-point scale. The higher the value is, the more positively voters assess the government's response to the spread of the virus.

The main independent variable is *Relative Preference for Party Leaders*, or *RPPL*. It was calculated by the difference between preferences for two party leaders: President Moon for the ruling party and Hwang for the opposition party. Each preference for party leaders was measured using 11-

⁴ Park and Song (2012) points out that inconsistent measurement of partisanship in South Korea has led to problems in terms of validity and reliability of the analysis. However, my research is not constrained to the measurement problem, because two surveys not only used identical questions measuring partisanship but also were conducted by identical institutions. I expect that this consistency will strengthen the validity and reliability of measurement in this paper. Furthermore, this study also has an advantage of being able to be used for comparative studies with other countries in that KSDC's questions for measuring partisanship are identical to those of the Comparative Study of Electoral Studies (CSES).

point like-dislike scores, in which higher value indicates a more positive feeling toward the politician. Hence, the range of the independent variable goes from -10 to 10. The value -10 denotes an individual's exclusive preference for Hwang, while 10 indicates his or her exclusive preference for Moon.

However, the level of CM may moderate the effect of RPPL on voters' evaluations of the government's efforts in dealing with the pandemic. Hence, as a moderating variable, the *Cognitive Mobilization Index (CMI)* was constructed by combining the level of respondents' education with their level of interest in the election. I expect that independents with a higher CMI will show more biased partisan evaluations than those with a lower CMI.

Other variables that may influence the variables mentioned above were included as control variables in the linear regression model. *Ideological self-placement* refers to the respondent's self-reported ideological position on the 11-point scale for the liberal-conservative continuum. The individual's self-reported ideology is noted to affect the evaluation of the government (Ha and Gil 2020). Moreover, ideology, as an alternative to party cues, may influence the political attitudes of independents (Chung and Gil 2014). Thus, since the self-reported ideology may affect both the independent and the dependent variable, it was added as a control variable. Also, three variables regarding the COVID-19 were included: ① Under how much pressure or stress the respondent is feeling regarding the pandemic, ② how much fear

the respondent feels about the pandemic, and ③ how high the respondent thinks the risk of being infected is. Finally, sociodemographic variables such as age, gender, income level, and region were also considered.

As a dependent variable in the model is a continuous variable, I run a linear regression model using OLS estimator. Thus, the equation for the model can be put forward as follows:

$$Evaluation = \alpha + \beta_1 * RPPL + \beta_2 * CMI + \beta_3 * RPPL * CMI + \sum_{j=1}^n \gamma_j * Control_j + \epsilon$$

β_3 is the main focus in testing the hypotheses mentioned above. Also, I expect the coefficient of interaction terms to be larger than zero with statistical significance. This means that a respondent with a higher CMI has a more biased partisan evaluation than a one with a lower CMI. In other words, a statistically significant positive value of β_3 indicates that the more sophisticated independent voter is, the more likely he or she is to hold a biased partisan evaluation⁵.

⁵ I consider it as partisan bias if RPPL shows a crucial effect on independents' voters' evaluations of the government performance for the following reason: The effect shows pure impact of personal attachments to party leaders on the voters' evaluation of the government performance, since the voters' differing awareness of the state of the COVID-19 pandemic was controlled for the regression model. In other words, the effect shows how people's evaluations of the government's efforts were formed according to their different directional preferences for politicians, regardless of the personal impact that COVID-19 had on them. In this manner, even if it may be too strong to call it partisan bias, it still shows partisan attitudes among independents, in that their perceptions are heavily influenced by their partisan preferences for party leaders.

Yet, before running a linear regression, I pre-examine if apartisans display reasonable characteristics of holding biased partisan attitudes in political issues. For this purpose, I categorize respondents into four groups by partisan mobilization and cognitive mobilization, following Dalton (1984; 2007; 2013).

Partisan mobilization is measured by two-step questions. It results in three distinguishable groups: partisan identifiers, leaning independents, and pure independents. *Partisan identifiers* are the respondents who reported their feeling of closeness to a certain party. For respondents with no such feeling, I used a second question asking if they have a leaning attitude toward any specific political party. People with this attitude were classified as *Leaning independents*. Otherwise, they were categorized as *Pure independents*.

I also classified voters along with their degree of political sophistication. The level of CM is calculated by combining respondents' level of education with their level of interest in the election⁶. Since the range is from 2 to 8, respondents with a value under 6 were coded as "low sophistication"; otherwise, they were "high sophistication".

In turn, as Table 2 suggests, four groups were identified: Cognitive

⁶ There are many ways to measure a respondent's interest in politics. Dalton (2007) considers interest in public affairs. Kang (2012) and Chung and Gil (2014) both use the frequency of political discussion. In this research, I use interest in the 2020 election for comparison with the 2016 election survey. Although there was a question in the 2020 election survey directly asking the respondent's interest in politics, there was not in the 2016 survey. Therefore, to maintain consistency, I used the identical questions that were both used in the two election surveys.

Party Supporters (CPS), Ritual Party Supporters (RPS), apertisans, and apoliticals. It is noteworthy that this categorization contrasts to other South Korean studies using Dalton's concept of CM (Chung and Gil 2014; Kang 2012). Unlike those prior studies, leaning independents are not combined with pure independents, but with partisan identifiers. If 'a'partisan is to mean voters without partisanship, I believe that this is a better categorization since leaners are more like partisan identifiers than pure independents in terms of political attitudes and behaviors (Keith et al. 1992).

Table 2. Categorization of Voters

(N/%)		Cognitive Mobilization	
		High	Low
Partisan Mobilization	Partisan Identifiers Leaning Independents	Cognitive Party Supporter (CPS) (629/55.71)	Ritual Party Supporter (RPS) (202/17.89)
	Pure Independents	Apartisan (121/10.72)	Apolitical (177/15.68)

Chapter 4. Results

4.1. Who Are the Apartisans?

Table 3 compares the composition of pure independents between the 2016 and 2020 elections. The most dramatic change between the two elections came from apartisans. Although apartisans were the smallest group in the 2016 election, they were not in 2020 due to their soaring numbers. It tells us why scholars should focus on the political attitudes of apartisans.

Table 3. Independents between the 2016 and the 2020 election		
N (% among the total respondents)	The 2016 Election	The 2020 Election
Apartisans	55 (4.60)	171 (15.15)
Apoliticals	168 (14.06)	127 (11.25)

Table 4 compares socio-demographic characteristics among the four groups. To begin with, apartisans were more likely to be younger than party supporters. While voters aged 50s and older account for the largest portion among party supporters, pure independents mostly consist of younger voters under age of forty. Furthermore, CM voters show not only higher levels of education, but also higher income levels than those who were not cognitively mobilized. In sum, apartisans can be described as young voters with affluent political resources.

Table 5 shows that apartisans remain very critical in their political views despite their abundant resources. While most party supporters place themselves on either the liberal or the conservative side of the ideological

continuum, pure independents prefer to identify themselves as moderates or centrists who are neither liberal nor conservative. However, the implication of the centrist positioning may be different between apartisans and apoliticals, given their ideological consistency in policy positions. The former has ideologically consistent policy preferences, while the latter does not. Therefore, the centrist positioning of apartisans in the ideological continuum is less likely to be attributable to their lack of ability in understanding and organizing ideology. Instead, it may signal their dissatisfaction with political parties (Kang 2012). Furthermore, apartisans were the most critical voters of the Moon administration. The least portion of people evaluated the government positively among the apartisan group. Apartisans also had pessimistic evaluations on the state of the economy. Specifically, though not reported in the table, 64% of apartisans blamed the ruling party for the economic downturn, and this was the largest proportion among the four groups.

Finally, apartisans' dissatisfaction stretches to politics in general. They are the most discontented with current democracy. Yet, this pessimism says more about homogeneity among pure independents, and less about heterogeneity between apartisans and apoliticals.

What starkly contradicts apartisans with apoliticals is the level of engagement in politics. It is very interesting that apartisans are highly engaged in politics, given their deep dissatisfaction with it. They are even more active than Ritual Party Supporters (RPS). They are more likely to vote,

Table 4-2. Socio-demographic Characteristics of Four Groups

	Party Supporters		Pure Independents		χ^2 , ANOVA
	CPS	RPS	Apartisan	Apolitical	
Ideological Consistency in Policy Position (ICPP)***	0.43	-	0.22	-	-

Note:

* Income level is divided into two groups based on median income.

** Respondents are classified as liberals if they place themselves from 0 to 4; moderates 5; and conservatives from 6 to 10.

*** ICPP was calculated by correlation between economic and foreign policy positions. ICPP among RPS and apoliticals were not reported because they were both statistically insignificant.

Table 5. Ideology and Political Dissatisfaction

		Party Supporters		Pure Independents		χ^2 , ANOVA
		CPS	RPS	Apartisan	Apolitical	
Retrospective Evaluation	Socio-tropic Economy	1.61	1.46	1.40	1.46	F=5.84 Pr<0.001
	Pocketbook Economy	1.81	1.71	1.65	1.53	F=11.82 Pr<0.001
	Moon's government	2.71	2.53	2.28	2.32	F=14.97 Pr<0.001
	Satisfaction with Democracy	2.46	2.31	2.27	2.11	F=13.47 Pr<0.001

Table 6. Political Engagements

		Party Supporters		Pure Independents		χ^2 , ANOVA
		CPS	RPS	Apartisan	Apolitical	
Turnout (%)		84	45	69	15	F=138.97 Pr<0.001
Movement from nonvoter to voter (2016→2020) (%)	Candidate Voting	41.94	26.67	65.38	5.48	F=17.79 Pr<0.001
	Party Voting	51.22	21.21	58.06	5.06	F=20.60 Pr<0.001
Agreement on the statements	“It is important who gets the power”	4.21	3.68	3.80	3.08	F=55.18 Pr<0.001
	“It is important who to vote for”	4.26	3.78	3.92	3.16	F=58.30 Pr<0.001
Frequency of talking about politics		2.22	1.84	1.98	1.59	F=29.36 Pr<0.001

Given apartisans' high rate of engagement in politics, then the

following question would be about the source of their political information. If apartisans do not depend on party cues, then where do they acquire the political knowledge they need? Table 7 indicates that they mostly rely on social media. While RPS and apoliticals relatively prefer TV and radio, CM voters are disproportionate in their dependence on social networks services (SNS) and YouTube. Many scholars claim that internet-based media tends to accelerate selective exposure (Garrett 2009) and therefore instigates affective polarization (Iyengar et al. 2019; Lelkes et al. 2017; Jang and Han 2021). Considering these strands of the literature together with the table below, it is reasonable to think that apartisans' may hold partisan attitudes on political issues.

Table 7. Media usage

		Party Supporters		Pure Independents		χ^2 , ANOVA
		CPS	RPS	Apartisan	Apolitical	
Frequency of searching for news about politics		2.81	2.29	2.46	1.95	F=91.93 Pr<0.001
Media*	TV, Radio	18.44	29.70	22.31	36.72	$\chi^2=30.71$ Pr<0.001
	Newspaper	8.11	7.92	7.44	5.65	
	SNS & YouTube	73.45	62.38	70.25	57.63	
	Sum	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	
The number of media in use		3.22	2.63	3.07	2.29	F=17.81 Pr<0.001

Notes: *Respondents were asked to select the media they usually use when seeking political information and news about the 2020 election. 12 media were grouped into three categories. 'TV, Radio' includes terrestrial television channels, general programming channels, news channels, and radio broadcasts. The 'Newspaper' category consists of not only paper newspapers but also online ones. Finally, the 'SNS & YouTube' comprises SNS (i.e., Social Network Services), YouTube/Podcast, online portals, and mobile messengers.

Finally, I compared voters' level of affective polarization in the 2020 election with that of the 2016. The Affective Polarization Index (API) was calculated by using the spread of party or party leader like-dislike scores of each respondent (Wagner 2021).⁷ p refers to the political actor, which is a party or a party leader, and n denotes the number of those actors. As Table 8 indicates, apartisans' API for party leaders increased in 2020 while the index for party decreased. It clearly shows the difference from CPS and apoliticals, who have experienced an increase in both party API and party leader API. This result implies that apartisans may also become affectively polarized under polarized politics, depending on the preference not for party, but for party leaders.

$$API_i = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i,p}^n (\text{like}_{i,p} - \overline{\text{like}})^2}{n}}$$

⁷ Although Wagner (2021) suggests weighting polarization scores by parties' vote shares, I prefer the non-weighted index for the following reason. He argues that people weight the major party more than minor parties. However, even if his argument holds true, I think it is more reasonable for researchers to think that people may have already reflected their own weight on their response to like-dislike scores. Therefore, another weighting done by a researcher may become arbitrary and, therefore, needless since it may result in a double weighting error. Then, the double-weighted index is more what the researcher wants to see than the reality of it.

Table 8. Affective Polarization between 2016 and 2020

Affective Polarization		Party Supporters		Pure Independents	
		CPS	RPS	Apartisan	Apolitical
2016	Parties	2.08	2.81	1.70	2.57
	Party Leaders	1.78	1.92	1.08	2.06
2020	Parties	2.31	1.68	1.03	0.54
	Party Leaders	2.61	2.11	1.45	1.18
Changes	Parties	0.24	-1.12	-0.66	-2.03
	Party Leaders	0.82	0.19	0.37	-0.87

Note: These are political actors included when calculating API:

Party: (2016) Saenuri Party, Democratic Party, Justice Party, People Party

(2020) United Future Party, Democratic Party, Justice Party, People Party

The Party Leaders: (2016) President Park Geun-Hye, Moon Jae-In, Ahn Cheol-Soo

(2020) President Moon Jae-In, Hwang Gyeo-An, Ahn Cheol-Soo.

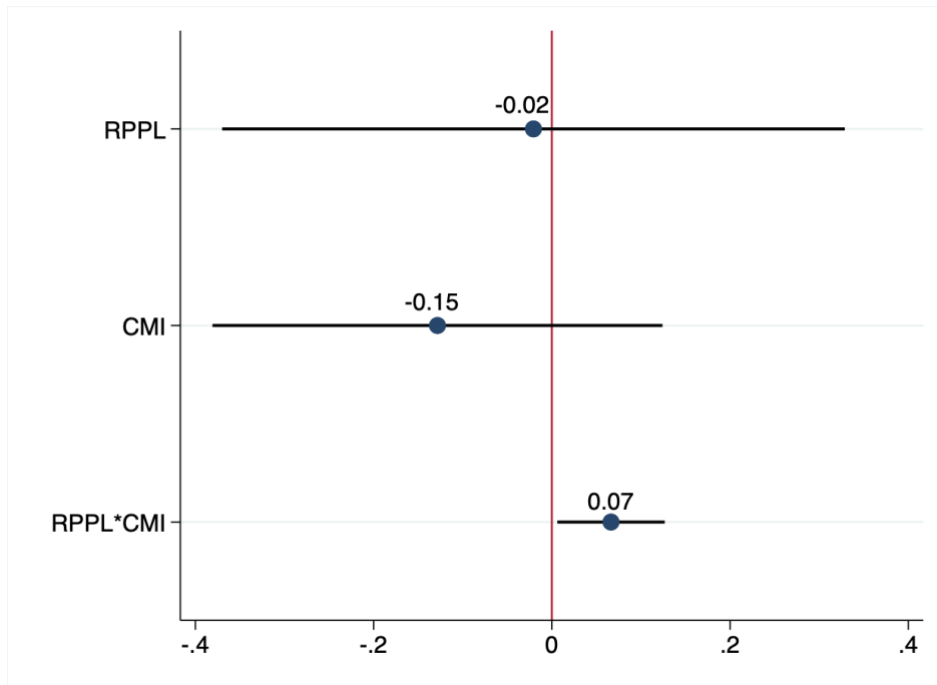
4.2. Partisan Bias in Apartisans' Evaluations

So far, I demonstrated the possibility that pure independent voters may hold partisan attitudes. Therefore, I ran a linear regression model using OLS estimator in order to see if apartisans display biased partisan attitudes when they evaluate the government's response to COVID-19 pandemic. The focus is on how the level of CM moderates the extent of partisan bias among pure independents.

As Figure 1 displays, an interaction term between *the Relative Preference for Party Leaders (RPPL)* and *Cognitive Mobilization Index (CMI)* proves to be statistically significant under 90% confidence interval. That is, the level of CM definitely moderates the effect of party leader preferences on

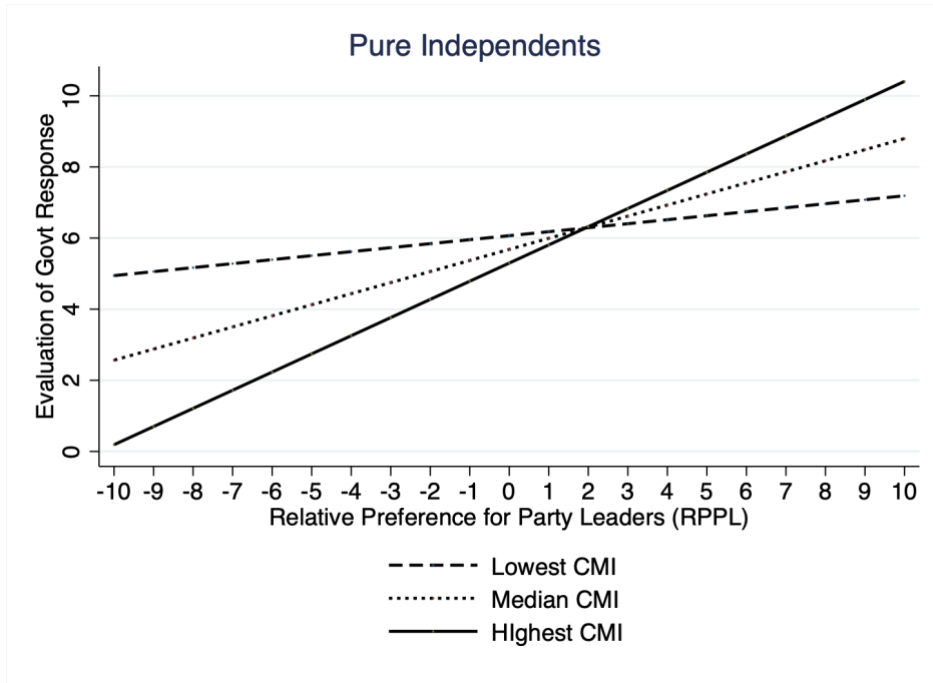
the assessment of the government performance. Figure 2 shows that the predictive power of the relative preference for party leaders, or RPPL on voters' evaluations was decisive among independents with the highest CMI. If an apartisan voter favors President Moon, then the individual is more likely to applaud the government, irrespective of personal stress caused by the pandemic. Likewise, a CM independent who disproportionately prefers the opposition party leader Hwang Gyeo-An, is more likely to reproach the government over COVID-19.

Figure 1. A Coefficient Plot: Moderating Effects of Cognitive Mobilization among Pure Independents



Note: The value of the coefficient is presented above each plot. Control variables are not reported since they all appeared to be statistically insignificant except for *Gender*. With regard to *Gender*, female voters were more likely to have a positive evaluation of government's response to COVID-19 than male voters were. The regression table is reported in Appendix 1.

Figure 2. Biased Partisan Attitudes of Pure Independents according to their CMI



Note: The graph presents the effect of RPPL on the evaluation of governmental performance among 3 voters with different CMI levels: the lowest (dashed lines), the highest (solid lines), and the median (dotted lines).

Chapter 5. Robustness Check

5.1. The Effect of the Preference for President Moon on the Evaluation of Government Performance

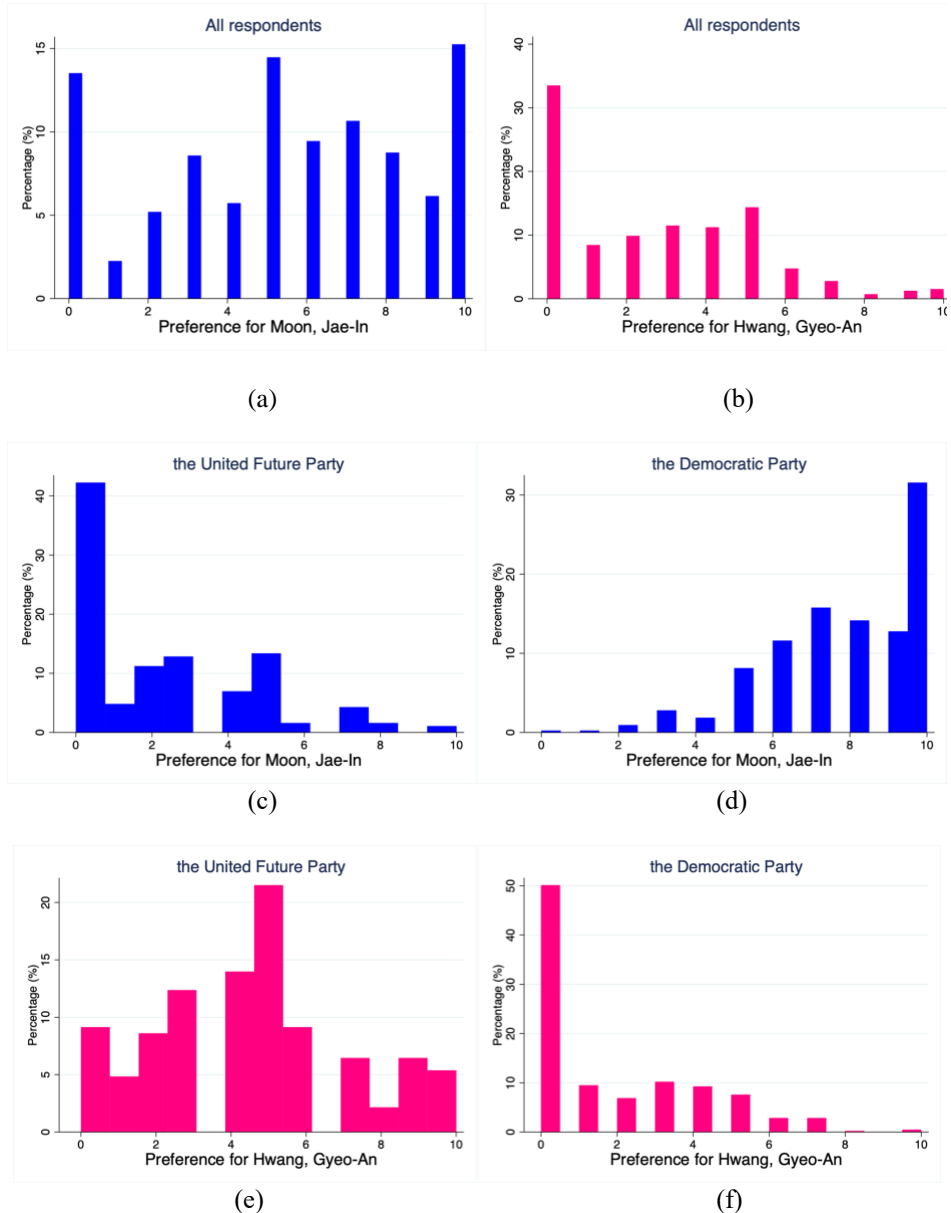
In this chapter, I conduct two kinds of robustness checks. First, I ran the same linear regression model with a different independent variable. In chapter 4, the independent variable is the relative preference for party leaders, or RPPL which calculated the difference between the preference for Hwang Gyeo-An and that of Moon Jae-In. However, Figure 3 suggests that preference for Hwang may not be a proper proxy measuring partisanship of the main opposition party.

Compared to an even distribution of preference for Moon among all respondents, the distribution of preference for Hwang is rather skewed to the right. This means that most voters have negative feelings for Hwang. This difference between Moon and Hwang becomes more obvious if the distributions are divided according to voters' party attachments. Preference for Moon is highly polarized among the two major party supporters. While most party supporters of the United Future Party (UFP) hate Moon, those of the Democratic Party (DP) mostly love him. Therefore, preference for Moon is a good proxy to measure polarized partisan attitudes.

Yet, the preference for Hwang is less polarized since many UFP party supporters also have negative feelings toward Hwang, just like DP party

supporters.

Figure 3. Distributions of Preferences for Hwang and Moon

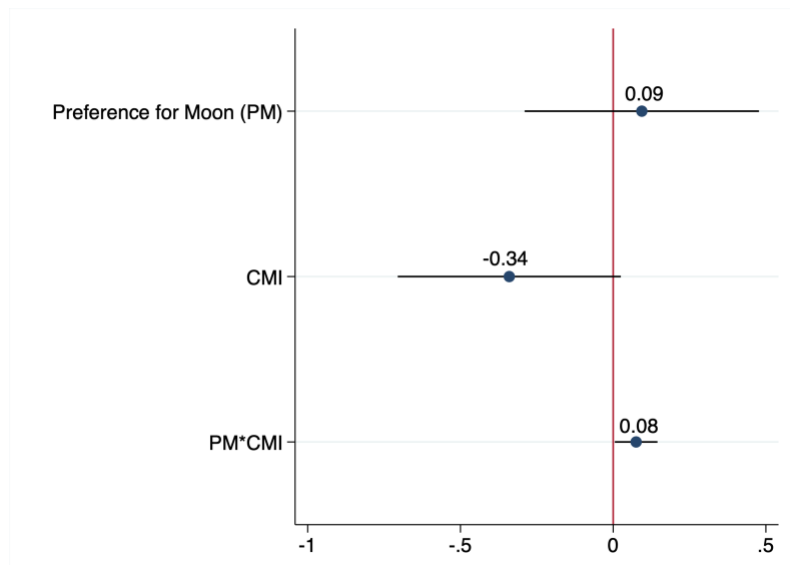


Note: Each panel displays a histogram of distribution of either preference for Hwang Gyeo-An or that of Moon Jae-In. Panel (a) and (b) depict distributions of Moon and Hwang, respectively, among all respondents. Panel (c) and (d) show distributions of Moon according to party supporters' partisanship. The former displays the distribution among the United Future Party (UFP) party supporters and the latter among those of the Democratic Party (DP). Finally, the last two panels depict distribution of Hwang according to party supporters' partisanship. Panel (e) shows the distribution among the UFP party supporters and the latter among those of the DP

Therefore, I ran another regression model using OLS estimator by replacing the original independent variable, the relative preference for party leaders with the preference for Moon. As mentioned in the research design, the preference was measured using an 11-point like-dislike score, in which a higher value indicates a more positive feeling toward Moon.

As Figure 4 depicts, the interaction term between the preference for Moon and the level of CMI proves to be statistically significant under 90% confidence level, and the coefficient is positive. Figure 5 describes how the effect of preference for Moon on the evaluation of government performance differs as CMI changes. Compared to independent voters with the lowest CMI level, the evaluation of government performance was heavily influenced by

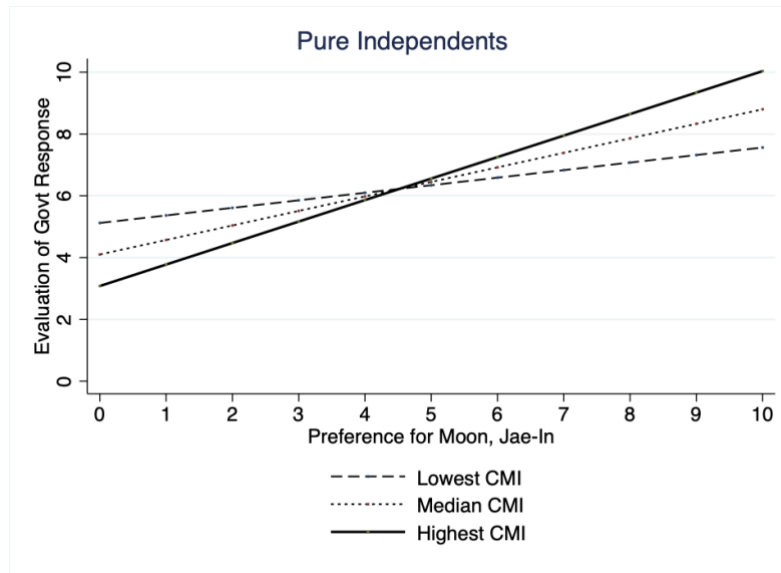
Figure 4. A Coefficient Plot of the First Robustness Check Model: Moderating Effect of Cognitive Mobilization among Pure Independents



Note: The value of the coefficient is presented above each plot. Control variables are not reported since they all appeared to be statistically insignificant. The regression table is reported in Appendix 2.

the preference for President Moon if an independent voter has the highest value of CMI.

Figure 5. The First Robustness Check: Partisan attitudes of Pure Independents according to their CMI



Note: Each line presents the effect of the preference for Moon Jae-In on the evaluation of governmental performance among 3 voters with different CMI levels: the lowest (dashed lines), the highest (solid lines), and the median (dotted lines).

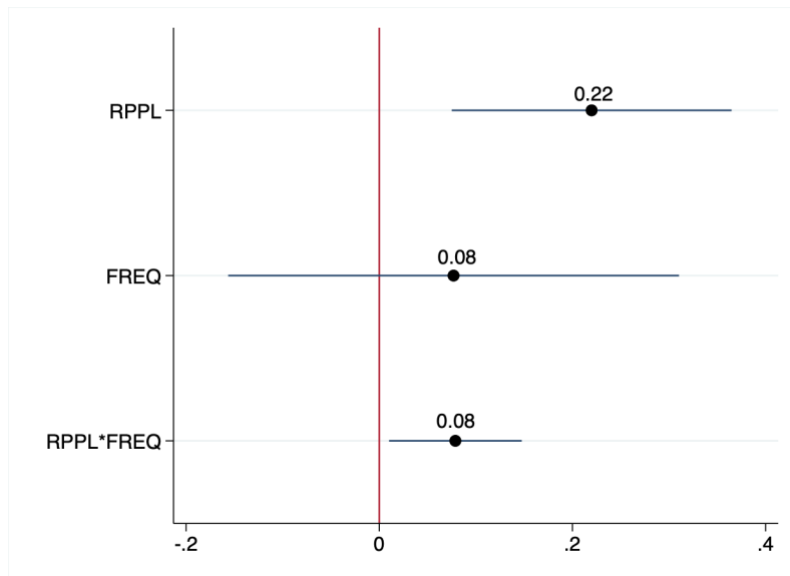
5.2. The Use of Social Media to Get Political Information as a Source of Biased Partisan Attitudes

I also ran a linear regression model among pure independents by replacing the moderating variable, or the level of CM with *the frequency of using social media to get political information*, or FREQ. The purpose of this second robustness check is to see if reliance on social media in order to acquire political information produces biased partisan attitudes among pure independents.

The new moderating variable *FREQ* was constructed by multiplying two variables. One is a binary variable that captures whether a respondent relied on social media to seek political information and news regarding the 2020 election. As presented in Table 7, respondents were asked to choose the media they relied on when seeking political information and news about the election. Respondents who chose social network services (SNS), YouTube/Podcast, online portals, and mobile messengers were coded to 1, and otherwise 0. The other variable deals with how frequently respondents rely on the media they chose when seeking to acquire political information. It was measured using a 4-point score in which a higher value indicates that the respondent more frequently relies on the media he or she chose to acquire political information. Therefore, by multiplying these two variables, a new moderative variable indicates how frequently respondents use social media to acquire political information.

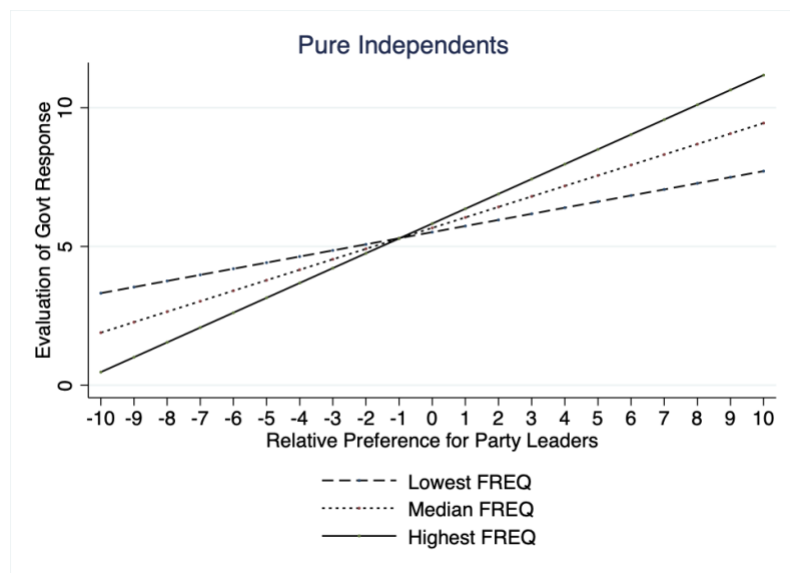
As Figure 6 and 7 display, the results reveal that dependence on social media in order to acquire political information is the factor that produces biased partisan attitudes, among pure independents, in relation to preferences for party leaders. The interaction term between the relative preference for party leaders and the frequency of using social media proves to be statistically significant and the coefficient is positive. That is, the evaluation of government performance regarding the COVID-19 issue shows starker contrast as the frequency of using social media to get political information increases.

Figure 6. A Coefficient Plot of the Second Robustness Check: Moderating Effect of Frequency of Using Social Media to Get Political Information among Pure Independents



Note: The value of the coefficient is presented above each plot. Control variables are not reported. The regression table is reported in Appendix 2.

Figure 7. The Second Robustness Check: Partisan attitudes of Pure Independents according to their FREQ



Note: Each line presents the effect of the relative preference for party leaders on the evaluation of governmental performance among 3 voters with different FREQ levels: the lowest (dashed lines), the highest (solid lines), and the median (dotted lines).

Chapter 6. Discussion

Given how often independents are described as having decisive power in elections, it is quite surprising that scholars remained indifferent to them, compared to their considerable interest in partisans. However, there are two reasons for scholars to pay attention to independents. First, party loyalty is waning under polarized political environments. Recent data shows that the share of party supporters is decreasing. On the other hand, independents are increasing their proportion among the electorate. Specifically, the numbers of cognitively mobilized pure independents who are highly engaged in politics are soaring. Second, contrary to partisans, independents are expected to be free from partisan bias due to their denial of party affiliation. In other words, they are expected to behave more like ‘rational voters’ who evaluate the incumbent’s performance apart from partisan bias.

However, I argue that the knowledgeable independents may also have partisan bias in their evaluation of the incumbent’s performance. There are two reasons for this claim. First, apartisans, or the cognitively mobilized independents, rely more on politicians’ personal cues than partisans do. Although they reject party attachment, they still have preferences for party leaders. It is the preferences for party leaders that lead independents to have partisan attitudes on political issues. Second, independents mostly acquire political information through social media. It is known that such media may accelerate a voter’s degree of partisan bias due to selective exposure. As a

result, even if independents do not have party identification, they may hold partisan attitudes due to their dependence on personal cues from party leaders. Moreover, since internet-based media tends to provoke partisan attitudes on political issues, independents with a high interest in politics are more likely to have biased partisan positions.

To test the partisan bias among sensible independents, I explore if relative preference for party leaders affects the voter's evaluation of the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, regardless of his or her stress regarding the pandemic. I also look as to whether the level of cognitive mobilization moderates the effect or not. I find that relative preference for party leaders makes a stark contrast to the voters' evaluation if they are cognitively mobilized. This result clearly displays the empirical evidence that pure independents may also hold biased partisan attitudes if they are politically sophisticated. These findings show stands in a stark contrast to Dalton's (2007; 2013) optimistic expectations given for apartisans.

The result has two implications in terms of political polarization. First, detachment from the political party may not result in voters' rationally evaluating policy. Although pure independents do not base their political decision on party cues, they acquire political information through social media, which tends to produce a partisan bias. Also, since independents rely more on personal cues from politicians, their issue positions may be heavily influenced by their preference for party leaders. Second, there should not be too much emphasis on the political sophistication as well. It is because

sophisticated independents are more likely to have partisan attitudes. These implications bode poorly for lowering the temperate of political debates. Political polarization undermines representative democracy as not only partisans but also independents become less likely to evaluate policies based on outcome, but instead who enacted the policies. Therefore, further research on factors that may moderate biased partisan attitudes other than the non-existence of partisanship or political sophistication, is required.

Bibliography

- Achen, Christopher H. and Larry M. Bartels. 2004. "Blind Retrospection Electoral Responses to Drought, Flu, and Shark Attacks." *Estudio/Working Paper* 2004/199 June 2004.
- Achen, Christopher H. and Larry M. Bartels. 2016. *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Arceneaux, Kevin, and Martin Johnson. 2013. *Changing Minds or Changing Channels? Partisan News in an Age of Choice*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bartels, Larry M. 2002. "Beyond the Running Tally: Partisan Bias in Political Perceptions." *Political Behavior* 24(2):117-150.
- Bisgaard, Martin. 2015. "Bias Will Find a Way: Economic Perceptions, Attributions of Blame, and Partisan-Motivated Reasoning during Crisis." *The Journal of Politics* 77(3): 849-960.
- Bullock John G., Alan S. Gerber, Seth J. Hill, and Gregory A. Huber. 2013. "Partisan Bias in Factual Beliefs about Politics" *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 10(4): 519-578
- Bullock, John G., and Gabriel Lenz. 2019. "Partisan Bias in Surveys" *Annual Review of Political Science* 22:325-342.
- Campbell, A., Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes. 1960. *The American Voter*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Chung Jin Min and Jung-ah Gil. 2014. "The Characteristics and Behaviors of Korean Independent Voters in the 2012 Presidential Election." *National Strategy*. 20(3): 135-162.
- Cole, Shawn, Andrew Healy, and Eric Werker. 2012. "Do Voters Demand Responsive Governments? Evidence from Indian Disaster Relief." *Journal of Development Economics* 97(2): 167-181.
- Dalton, Russell J. 1984. "Cognitive Mobilization and Partisan Dealignment

- in Advanced Industrial Democracies.” *The Journal of Politics*, 46(1): 264-284.
- Dalton, Russell J. 2007. “Partisan Mobilization, Cognitive Mobilization and the Changing American Electorate.” *Electoral Studies*, 26(2): 274-286.
- Dalton, Russell J. 2013. *Citizen Politics: Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press.
- Dalton, Russell J. 2016. “Party identification and Its Implications.” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*.
- Duefler Charles A. 2004. *Comprehensive Report of the Special Advisor to the DCI on Iraq’s WMD.: Regime strategy and WMD timeline events*. Vol.1. Central Intelligence Agency.
- Eriksson, Lina M. 2016. “Winds of Change: Voter Blame and Storm Gudrun in the 2006 Swedish Parliamentary Election.” *Electoral Studies* 41: 129-142.
- Fiorina, Morris P. 1981. *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Garrett, R. Kelly. 2009. “Echo Chambers Online? Politically Motivated Selective Exposure among Internet News Users.” *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 14(2): 265-285.
- Gasper, John T. and Andrew Reeves. 2011. “Make It Rain? Retrospection and the Attentive Electorate in the Context of Natural Disasters.” *American Journal of Political Science* 55(2): 340-355.
- Gil, Jung-ah and Won-Taek Kang. 2020. “The COVID-19 Crisis and the 2020 National Assembly Election in South Korea: Retrospective Voting or Partisan Bias?” *Korean Party Studies Review* 49: 101-140.
- Gil, Jung-ah. 2019. “How Trust in Government Influences Retrospective Voting in Local Elections : The Moderating Role of Partisan Bias.” *Korean Party Studies Review* 18(3): 31-69.

- Gil, Jung-ah. 2020. "Partisan Conflict in the 21st National Assembly Election: Explaining Partisan Blame Attribution for a Conflict between Satellite Parties." *Korean Political Science Review* 19(3): 5-37.
- Green, Steven. 1999. "Understanding Party Identification: A Social Identity Approach." *Political Psychology* 20(2): 393-403.
- Ha, Shang E. and Gil Jung-ah. 2020. "The Dark Sides of Political Interest: Explaining Trust in Government among Ideological Voters" *Korean Political Science Review* 54(2): 31-57.
- Heersink, Boris, Brenton D. Peterson, and Jeffery A. Jenkins. 2017. "Disasters and Elections: Estimating the Net Effect of Damage and Relief in Historical Perspective." *Political Analysis* 25: 260-268.
- Hillygus, D. Sunshine, and Todd Shields. 2007. *The Persuadable Voter: Wedge Issues in Presidential Campaigns*. Princeton, NJ : Princeton University Press.
- Holmberg, Sören. 1994. "Party Identification Compared across the Atlantic." In M. K. Jennings and T. Mann. (Eds.), *Elections and Home and Abroad*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Huddy, Leonie, Lilliana Mason, and Lene Aarøe. 2015. "Expressive Partisanship: Campaign Involvement, Political Emotion, and Partisan Identity." *American Political Science Review* 109(1):1-17.
- Iyengar, Shanto, Yphtach Lelkes, Matthew Levendusky, Neil Malhotra, and Sean J. Westwood. 2019. "The Origins and Consequences of Affective Polarization in the United States." *Annual Review of Political Science* 22: 129-146.
- Jacobson, Gary C. 2010. "Perception, Memory, and Partisan Polarization on the Iraq War." *Political Science Quarterly* 125(1): 31-56.
- Jang, Seung-Jin and Han Il Chang. 2020. "Non-Political Consequences of Partisan Polarization" *Korean Political Science Review*. 54(5): 153-175.

- Jang, Seung-Jin and Shang E. Ha. 2022. "The Nature of Party Identification of Korean Voters: Social Identity vs. Political Interest." *Korean Political Science Review* 56 (2): 37-58.
- Jang, Seung-Jin and Jeonghun Han. 2021. "Does YouTube Polarize Its Viewers? Analysis of the Survey on Subscribers to Major Political Channels" *Journal of Contemporary Politics* 14(2): 5-35.
- Kam, Cindy D. 2005. "Who Tosses the Party Line? Cues, Values, and Individual Differences." *Political Behavior* 27: 163-182.
- Kang, Won-Taek. 2012. "The Partisan Mobilization and the Cognitive Mobilization" In Chan Wook Park and Won-Taek Kang (Eds.), *Analyzing the 2012 National Assembly Election in South Korea*. Nanam (pp 204-230).
- Keith, Bruce. E., David B. Magleby, Candice J. Nelson, Elizabeth A. Orr, Mark C. Westlye, and Raymond E. Wolfinger. 1992. *The Myth of the Independent Voter*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Kim, Gidong and Jae Mook Lee. 2021. "Partisan Identity and Affective Polarization in South Korea" *Korean Political Science Review* 55(2): 57-87.
- Kim, Gidong and Jae Mook Lee. 2022. "Regional Identity, Partisan Identity, and Affective Polarization in South Korea." *Korean Part Studies Review* 21(2): 5-47.
- Kim, Myeong-il. 2020. "Moon's supporters are blaming the ruling party for holding Moon back on the ERF issue" *The Korean Economic Daily (Hankyung)* April 21st.
<https://www.hankyung.com/politics/article/2020042138507>
- Kim, Sung-Youn. 2015. "Polarization, Partisan Bias, and Democracy – Evidence from the 2012 Korean Presidential Election Panel Data." *Journal of Democracy and Human Rights* 15(3):459-491.
- Klar, Samara. 2014. "Identity and Engagement among Political

- Independents in America” *Political Psychology* 35(4): 577-591.
- Lodge, Milton, and Charles S. Taber. .2000. “Three Steps Toward a Theory of Motivated Political Reasoning”. In A. Lupia, M. D. McCubbins, and S. L. Popkin (Eds), *Elements of Reason* (pp. 183-213). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Lebo, Matthew. J., and Daniel Cassino. 2018. “The Aggregated Consequences of Motivated Reasoning in the Dynamics of Partisan Presidential Approval.” *Political Psychology* 28 (6): 719-746.
- Lee Hyun-Chool. 2001. “The Voting Behavior of Independent Voters: The Case of the 16th Congressional Election” *Korean Political Science Review* 34(4): 137-160.
- Lee, Sangkyung. 2021. “A Study on the New Normal-era Political Campaigns Due to Covid-19 — About the U.S. Untact Campaign and Korea's implications —.” *Seoul Law Review* 28(4): 591-634.
- Lelkes, Yphtach, Gaurav Sood, and Shanto Iyengar. 2017. “The Hostile Audience: The Effect of Access to Broadband Internet on Partisan Affect.” *American Journal of Political Science* 61(1): 5-20.
- Lodge, Milton, and Charles S. Taber. 2013. *The Rationalizing Voter*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Magleby, D. B., Nelson, C. J., & Westlye, M. C. (2011). “The Myth of the Independent Voter Revisited.” In P. Sniderman & B. Highton (Eds.) *Facing the Challenge of Democracy: Explorations in the Analysis of Public Opinion and Political Participation* (pp. 238-266). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press
- Malhotra, Neil and Alexander G. Kuo. 2009. “Emotions as Moderators of Information Cue Use: Citizen Attitudes toward Hurricane Katrina.” *American Political Research* 37(2): 301-326.
- Malhotra, Neil. 2008. “Partisan Polarization and Blame Attribution in a Federal System: The Case of Hurricane Katrina.” *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 38(4): 651-670.

- Park, Won-ho and Jungmin Song. 2012. "Do Parties Still Matter: Independent Voter in Korean Elections" *Journal of Korean Politics* 2:115-143.
- Quealy, Kevin. 2017. "The More Education Republicans Have, the Less They Tend to Believe in Climate Change." *The New York Times*, November 14th.
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/11/14/upshot/climate-change-by-education.html>
- Reeves, Andrew. 2011. "Political Disaster: Unilateral Powers, Electoral Incentives, and Presidential Disaster Declarations." *Journal of Politics* 73(4): 1142-1151.
- Rudolph, Thomas J. 2003. "Who's Responsible for the Economy? The Formation and Consequences of Responsibility Attributions." *American Journal of Political Science* 47(4): 698-713.
- Rudolph, Thomas J. 2006. "Triangulating Political Responsibility: The Motivated Formation of Responsibility Judgements." *Political Psychology* 27 (1): 99-122.
- Shin, Jungsub. 2020. "The Effect of COVID-19 on Vote Choice in the 2020 Korean Legislative Election" *Journal of Korean Politics* 29(3): 155-182.
- So, Soon-Chang and Hyun Keun. "Independent Voters and Party Politics in the Korean Election" *Korean Policy Sciences Review* 10(2): 47-75.
- Taber, Charles. S., and Milton Lodge. 2006. "Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs." *American Journal of Political Science* 50 (3): 755-769.
- Tajfel, H., Turner, J. C., Austin, W. G., & Worchel, S. 1979. "An integrative theory of intergroup conflict." In W. G. Austin, & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Turner, J. C., Brown, R. J., and Tajfel, H. .1979. "Social comparison and

group interest in ingroup favouritism”. *European Journal of Social Psychology* 9(2): 187-204.

Wagner, Markus. 2021. “Affective Polarization in Multiparty Systems.” *Electoral Studies*. 69: 102199.

국문 초록

비(非)당파층은 당파성을 띠지 않는가? - 비당파층의 당파적 태도에 관하여 -

김도훈

서울대학교 사회과학대학

정치학전공

이 연구는 무당파층 역시 당파적으로 편향적인 태도를 지닐 가능성이 있는지에 대해 탐구한다. 과연 무당파층은 당파적 편향으로부터 자유로운가? 사실 그동안 당파적 편향과 관련한 대부분의 선행연구들이 당파적 지지자들을 분석하는 데 초점을 맞추어 온 결과, 양극화 된 정치상황에서 무당파의 정치적 태도나 행태에 대한 학문적 관심은 상대적으로 적었다.

본 연구는 일반적인 기대와 달리, 인지적 동원수준이 높은 무당파층 또한 정치적으로 양극화된 환경에서는 당파적으로 편향적인 정치태도를 가질 수 있다고 주장한다. 달튼 (Dalton 1984; 2007; 2013) 등은 그동안 비(非)당파층, 또는 인지적으로 동원됨에 따라 정치적 세련도가 높은 무당파층은 정당 단서를 거부하므로 정부의 업적을 합리적으로 평가할 수 있을 것으로 기대했다. 그러나, 무당파층이 정치적 태도를 형성하는 데 있어 정치인 개인적 특성과 소셜 미디어의 영향을 크게 받는다는 점을 고려한다면 이들 역시 당파적으로 편향된 정치태도로부터 자유로울 수 없다는 것이 이 글의 주장이다.

이를 확인하기 위해 2020년 제21대 국회의원선거 설문조사 자료를 이용하여 과연 높은 수준의 인지적 동원능력이 무당파층

유권자들로 하여금 정부의 코로나19 대응을 합리적으로 평가하도록 만드는지를 관찰하였다. 분석결과, 무당파층의 경우 정당지도자에 대한 선호가 정부의 업적 평가에 커다란 영향을 미치며, 특히 이러한 효과는 정치적 세련도가 높은 비당파층에게서 더 크게 나타났다. 이는 기존의 상식과 달리 무당파층 역시 높은 정치적 세련도 그 자체만으로는 당파적 편향으로부터 자유롭기 쉽지 않음을 보여준다.

키워드: 당파적 편향, 비당파층, 정치양극화, 인지적 동원, 코로나19

학번: 2019-25071

APPENDIX

Table 9. A Main Linear Regression Table using OLS Estimator (for pure independents)

Independent Variables	β (S.E)
Relative Preference for Party Leaders (RPPL)	-0.0206 (0.212)
Cognitive Mobilization Index (CMI)	-0.128 (0.153)
RPPL * CMI	0.0664* (0.0365)
Fear of being infected	-0.1587 (0.2433)
Stress on the pandemic	0.0406 (0.0788)
Seriousness of the pandemic	0.0451 (0.2511)
Ideological self-placement	-0.0592 (0.1064)
Age	-0.0006 (0.0112)
Male	-0.7444** (0.3236)
Incheon/Gyeonggi	0.3590 (0.4336)
Daejeon/Sejong/Chungcheong	0.4123 (0.5996)
Gwangju/Jeolla	0.5612 (0.6754)
Daegu/Gyeongbuk	-0.2445 (0.5986)
Busan/Ulsan/Gyeongnam	-0.0484 (0.5295)
Gangwon	0.8233 (1.0275)
Income level	-0.0402 (0.0673)
constant	7.0092*** (1.3232)
N	236
R-squared	0.230
* p<0.1 **p<0.05 ***p<0.01	

Table 10. A Linear Regression Table using OLS Estimator for Robustness Checks (for pure independents)

Independent Variables	β (S.E)	
	(1)	(2)
Preference for Moon Jae-In (PM)	0.0938 (.232)	0.220** (0.0877)
Cognitive Mobilization Index (CMI)	-0.340 (.221)	
PM * CMI	0.0752* (.0423)	
Frequency of using social media to get political information (FREQ)		0.0769 (0.141)
RPPL * FREP		0.0788* (0.0416)
Fear of being infected	-0.136 (.215)	-0.232 (0.241)
Stress on the pandemic	0.0496 (0.0710)	0.0260 (0.0783)
Seriousness of the pandemic	0.0251 (0.219)	0.0325 (0.250)
Ideological self-placement	-0.112 (0.0937)	-0.0458 (0.106)
Age	0.00394 (0.00996)	-0.00137 (0.0111)
Male	-0.377 (0.293)	-0.870*** (0.324)
Incheon/Gyeonggi	0.359 (0.390)	0.263 (0.434)
Daejeon/Sejong/Chungcheong	0.163 (0.526)	0.337 (0.597)
Gwangju/Jeolla	0.420 (0.587)	0.456 (0.667)
Daegu/Gyeongbuk	-0.179 (0.562)	-0.181 (0.599)
Busan/Ulsan/Gyeongnam	0.106 (0.476)	0.0746 (0.527)
Gangwon	0.994 (0.978)	0.818 (-1.021)
Income level	0.0105 (0.0612)	-0.0477 (0.0650)
constant	6.086*** (1.516)	6.633*** (1.133)
N	265	236
R-squared	0.279	0.239
* p<0.1 **p<0.05 ***p<0.01		



저작자표시-비영리-변경금지 2.0 대한민국

이용자는 아래의 조건을 따르는 경우에 한하여 자유롭게

- 이 저작물을 복제, 배포, 전송, 전시, 공연 및 방송할 수 있습니다.

다음과 같은 조건을 따라야 합니다:



저작자표시. 귀하는 원저작자를 표시하여야 합니다.



비영리. 귀하는 이 저작물을 영리 목적으로 이용할 수 없습니다.



변경금지. 귀하는 이 저작물을 개작, 변형 또는 가공할 수 없습니다.

- 귀하는, 이 저작물의 재이용이나 배포의 경우, 이 저작물에 적용된 이용허락조건을 명확하게 나타내어야 합니다.
- 저작권자로부터 별도의 허가를 받으면 이러한 조건들은 적용되지 않습니다.

저작권법에 따른 이용자의 권리는 위의 내용에 의하여 영향을 받지 않습니다.

이것은 [이용허락규약\(Legal Code\)](#)을 이해하기 쉽게 요약한 것입니다.

[Disclaimer](#)

Master's Thesis of Political Science

Are 'A'partisans Non-partisans?

– Partisan Attitudes of Apartisans –

비(非)당파층은 당파성을 띠지 않는가?

– 비당파층의 당파적 태도에 관하여 –

February 2023

Graduate School of Social Sciences

Seoul National University

Political Science Major

Do-Hoon Kim

Are ‘A’partisans Non-partisans?

– Partisan Attitudes of Apartisans –

Thesis Advisor Kang, Won-Taek

Submitting a master’s thesis of Political Science

January 2023

Graduate School of Social Sciences

Seoul National University

Political Science Major

Do-Hoon Kim

Confirming the master’s thesis written by

Do-Hoon Kim

January 2023

Chair Park, Won-ho (Seal)

Vice Chair Kang, Won-Taek (Seal)

Examiner Hahn, Kyusup (Seal)

Abstract

Are ‘A’partisans Non-partisans? Partisan Attitudes of Apartisans

Do-Hoon Kim

Department of Political Science

The Graduate School of Social Sciences

Seoul National University

Are political independents free from partisan bias? Our understanding of independents’ political attitudes in a polarized environment remains limited since previous studies exclusively focused on partisans’ attitudes. I argue that contrary to common belief, well-informed independents may also display partisan bias in a politically polarized environment. Politically sophisticated independents, or apartisans are expected to rationally evaluate government performance. However, their reliance on personal cues from politicians and social media to acquire political information may lead them to having biased partisan stances on polarized political issues. Using the 2020 South Korean National Assembly election survey data, I explore if cognitive mobilization makes independents rationally assess the government’s responses to COVID-19. I find that the preference for party leaders plays a crucial role in independents’ assessment of government policies, especially among the most sophisticated independents. This result suggests a counterintuitive implication that neither political sophistication nor detachment from political

parties may efficiently deter voters from partisan bias.

Keyword : Partisan Bias, Apartisan, Political Polarization, Cognitive Mobilization, COVID19

Student Number : 2019-25071

Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction	1
1.1. Research Background.....	1
1.2. Purpose of Research.....	3
Chapter 2. Literature Review	6
2.1. Partisan Bias: An Exclusive Property of Partisans?.....	6
2.2. Cognitive Mobilization: Why the Independents May Hold Biased Partisan Attitudes.....	8
Chapter 3. Data and Method	11
3.1. Hypotheses.....	11
3.2. Research Design.....	14
Chapter 4. Results.....	19
4.1. Who Are the Apartisans?.....	19
4.2. Partisan Bias in Apartisans' Evaluations.....	26
Chapter 5. Robustness Check.....	29
5.1. The Effect of the Preference for President Moon on the Evaluation of Government Performance.....	29
5.2. The Use of Social Media to Get Political Information as a Source of Biased Partisan Attitudes.....	32
Chapter 6. Discussion	35
Bibliography.....	38
Abstract in Korean	45
Appendix 	47

Tables

Table 1. Changes in the proportion among voters between the 2016 and 2020 elections	3
Table 2. Categorization of Voters	18
Table 3. Independents between the 2016 and the 2020 election.....	19
Table 4. Socio-demographic Characteristics of Four Groups.....	21
Table 5. Ideology and Political Dissatisfaction	23
Table 6. Political Engagements.....	23
Table 7. Media usage	24
Table 8. Affective Polarization between 2016 and 2020	26
Table 9. A Main Linear Regression Table using OLS Estimator (for pure independents).....	47
Table 10. A Linear Regression Table using OLS Estimator for Robustness Checks (for pure independents).....	48

Figures

Figure 1. A Coefficient Plot: Moderating Effects of Cognitive Mobilization among Pure Independents.....	27
Figure 2. Partisan Attitudes of Party Supporters and Pure Independents according to their CMI	28
Figure 3. Distributions of Preferences for Hwang and Moon	30

Figure 4. A Coefficient Plot of the First Robustness Check Model: Moderating Effect of Cognitive Mobilization among Pure Independents	31
Figure 5. The First Robustness Check: Partisan attitudes of Pure Independents according to their CMI	32
Figure 6. A Coefficient Plot of the Second Robustness Check: Moderating Effect of Frequency of Using Social Media to Get Political Information among Pure Independents	34
Figure 7. The Second Robustness Check: Partisan attitudes of Pure Independents according to their FREQ.....	34

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

Partisan bias is one of the most crucial problems in politically polarized environments. The normative power of representative democracy partly lies in the ability of rational voters to rationally reward or punish the incumbent based on their evaluation of the politician's performance (Fiorina 1981). By doing so, voters can hold the incumbent accountable and responsive by reelecting or rejecting them. However, politically polarized partisans filter and update information exclusively depending on their party identification. Specifically, they tend to accept new information only if it fits their partisan preference, or confirmation bias, while they discount or ignore the value of the information if it does not, or the discounting bias (Achen and Bartels 2016; Bartels 2002). These "rationalizing voters" (Lodge and Taber 2013) are problematic in that they weaken one of the most powerful normative values of democracy. Since partisans tend to evaluate policy outcomes in a way that conforms to their party preference, politicians are less incentivized to stay alert to public opinion or appeal to voters beyond their most vocal supporters. Candidates who do not appeal to these partisans are at risk of losing the nomination to stand for election on their party's ticket but may then find it difficult to persuade other voters after embracing political polarization. In short, in a politically polarized world, the normative power of representative democracy is waning with voters' excessive favoritism of their

own preferred party (Lebo and Cassino 2007; Rudolph 2003).

What about political independents who do not have such party attachments? Are they free from partisan bias? The answer remains unclear since most prior studies have exclusively focused on partisans' attitudes in polarized politics (Druckman et al. 2021; Druckman et al. 2021; Green et al. 2002; Huddy et al. 2015; Iyengar et al. 2012; Iyengar and Westwood 2015). Since independents lack partisan identity, they have usually been excluded from discussion of partisan bias, without being tested. As a result, our understanding of independents' political attitudes in a polarized environment is very limited.

A more thorough examination on independents' political attitudes is required in "the age of polarization" (Lupton et al. 2017). Table 1 indicates that, contrary to concerns of increasing polarization and partisan sorting, the share of self-identified independents is increasing. In particular, the bulk of the increase came from those pure independents who deny attachment to any specific political party. Yet, the number of the leaning independents, those who admit leaning toward a particular party, is relatively stable. Moreover, the number of self-identified partisans fell to under 30% of the total electorate in the 2020 South Korean National Assembly election. This is a very puzzling story, in that parties' influence on their electorates is apparently waning even in a most politically polarized environment.

TABLE 1. Changes in the proportion among voters between the 2016 and 2020 elections.

	The 2016 election (%): A	The 2020 election (%): B	Changes (%p): B-A
Partisan Identifiers (Major Parties*)	40.17	28.58	-11.59
Partisan Identifiers & Leaning Independents (Major Parties)	61.83	52.00	-9.83
Leaning Independents & Pure Independents	50.12	61.56	+11.44
Pure Independents	18.66	26.40	+7.74

Note:

* Major Parties refer to the Democratic Party and the Saenuri Party (2016) in South Korea. The latter changed its name to the United Future Party in 2020.

Source: “The survey on voter’s political awareness in the 20th/21st National Assembly Election” conducted by the Korean Association of Electoral Studies (KAES) and Korean Social Science Data Center (KSDC) in the 2016 and 2020 elections.

1.2. Purpose of Research

This paper focuses on cognitively mobilized (hereafter, CM) independents, dubbed “apartisans” by Dalton (1984; 2007; 2013). Due to their high level of education and interest in politics, apartisans are able to acquire and process political information without depending on party cues. They are, in this manner, expected to rationally evaluate the performance of government, staying any partisan bias.

However, are apartisans free from partisan bias? I argue that apartisans may also hold biased partisan attitudes under polarized politics. The lack of stated party loyalty among independents should not be reason alone for scholars to assume that those voters are free from any partisan bias.

I suggest two reasons for this claim. First, they are more susceptible to personal traits or images of politicians than partisans are (Dalton 2007; 2013). Thus, they are subject to manipulation or incitement by politicians (Holmberg 1994). Second, apartisans mainly depend on social media to acquire political knowledge as an alternative to party cues (Chung and Gil 2014). Yet internet-based media tends to provoke affective polarization and partisan bias among the public in a polarized environment (Iyengar et al. 2019; Lelkes et al. 2017; Jang and Han 2021). In short, notwithstanding their denial of party loyalty, apartisans may have biased partisan issue positions due to their reliance on candidate cues and their use of social media. In this vein, apartisans may not be ‘non-partisan’ after all.

To examine whether apartisans are free from biased partisan attitudes, I explore if the preference for party leaders affects independents’ evaluations of government performance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, the moderating effect of the level of CM on the formation of partisan issue positions is tested. Then I compare the moderating effect between independents and party supporters. As a result, this paper suggests two key findings. First, CM independents may also have biased partisan issue positions due to their preference for party leaders. Second, CM independents may be more biased in their attitudes on political issues along with preferences for party leaders, compared to CM party supporters.

These findings have two implications. The one is that staying detached from the political party itself does not eliminate the possibility of

holding bias in partisan attitudes. The other is that CM may also result in partisan bias not only for partisans but also for apartisans in the polarized environment. These implications are in stark contrast to Dalton's (2013) positive anticipation of the growing number of CM independents. CM may drop independents into partisan spheres under polarization. These implications bode poorly for lowering the temperate of political debates. Political polarization undermines representative democracy as not only partisans but also independents become less likely to evaluate policies based on outcome, but instead who enacted the policies. Future research may further address the moderating factors of partisan bias other than political sophistication and detachment from party loyalty.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1. Partisan Bias: An Exclusive Property of Partisans?

Citizens need to make objective evaluations of the incumbent's performance if they are to hold the politician accountable. However, voters often hold contrasting factual beliefs in a way that conforms to their party attachment (Bullock et al. 2013; Bullock and Lenz 2019). For example, American voters showed a wide divergence, according to their party attachment, on their beliefs whether Iraq had weapons of mass destruction (Jacobson 2010) despite the U.S. government's confirmation that Iraq did not have them (Duefler 2005). Similar patterns appear regarding numerous issues: the state of the economy (Bartels 2002) and climate change (Quealy 2017). A large body of literature gives empirical evidence that partisans also diverge in their tendency of blame attribution (Bisgaard 2015; Malhotra 2008; Rudolph 2003; Rudolph 2006; Gil 2020).

Scholars often use social identity theory to explain partisans' gaps in their political views (Greene 1999). According to this theory, people have a motivational need to divide the world into a dichotomous way: 'us' versus 'them' (Tajfel et al. 1979; Turner and Tajfel 1979). Also, they have perceptual bias favoring the group they belong to (in-group favoritism) while denouncing the group they do not (out-group hostility). Partisanship plays a key role as a social identity in distinguishing the in-group from the out-group (Huddy et al. 2015; Greene 1999; Kim and Lee 2021; Jang and Ha 2022).

Partisanship here refers to a voter's affective psychological identification with their preferred political party (Campbell et al. 1960). Thus, for example, Republicans may think that unemployment rate sharply increased during the Clinton administration partly due to their desire to denigrate the achievements of the out-group, the Democratic Party.¹

However, arguments trying to explain voters' divergent opinions based on social identity theory have a key limitation. The applicability of the assertions is limited to partisans who have a partisan identity. In other words, the theory tells nothing about those political independents who do not display party identity.² Then, what explains the variance among independents' political views? Early scholars did not pay much attention to independents since independents were considered to be uninformed, unsophisticated, and most importantly, not politically engaged (Campbell et al. 1960; So and Hyun 2006).

A turning point came following a series of studies which placed an emphasis on heterogeneity among independents (Hillygus and Shields 2008; Magleby et al. 2011; Lee 2001; Park and Song 2012). In *The Myth of the Independent Voter*, Keith et al. (1992) distinguish leaning independents from pure independents. The former is distinct from the latter in that the leaning

¹ It remains difficult for scholars to conclude that this kind of thinking reflects the respondents' true belief in political objects. See Bullock et al. (2013) and Bullock and Lenz (2019) for alternative explanations.

² Klar (2014) argues that independents have their own distinct identity. However, many scholars consider that independents are more heterogeneous rather than homogenous (Keith et al. 1992; Hillygus and Shields 2008; Magleby et al. 2011; Lee 2001; Park and Song 2012).

independents tend to lean toward a particular party, while pure independents do not. The authors find that the political attitudes and behaviors of leaning independents are more analogous to partisan identifiers than pure independents. Since then, researchers have begun to consider the possibility of leaning independents' manifesting partisan bias.

Still, pure independents have been expected to display little, if any, partisan bias. However, there are several reasons why they may also hold bias in their partisan attitudes.

2.2. Cognitive Mobilization: Why the Independents May Hold Biased Partisan Attitudes

Dalton (1984; 2007; 2013) suggested a new typology regarding partisanship. He points out two social developments that have made cognitive mobilization (CM) among the non-identifiers available. One is voters' much higher level of education compared to the 1950s. The other is the low cost of acquiring political information owing to the spread of mass media. These social changes have dramatically enhanced voters' ability to acquire and process complex political information. As a result, apartisans, or cognitively mobilized (CM) independents depend less on party cues and more on their own political knowledge when they make political decisions. Apartisan voter is a new type of independent voter, in that they are sophisticated and informed, contrary to the traditional type of unengaged and uninformed independent

voter as profiled by Campbell et al. (1960). They are highly engaged in politics with their access to abundant political resources.

Since apartisans do not base their political decisions on party cues, they are expected to be relatively free from partisan bias. In this manner, they are assumed to be “rational independent[s]” (Dalton 2007: 280) who correctly evaluate the incumbent’s performance, apart from partisan bias. Dalton (2013: 204), therefore, anticipates that CM will produce “a deliberative public” close to the ideal of classic democracy.

Contrary to Dalton’s expectation, I argue that apartisans may also be susceptible to partisan bias in terms of issue positions. To begin with, independents are still subject to the influence of candidate’s personal traits or public image (Dalton 2007; 2013). In this manner, independents may be more susceptible to manipulation or incitement by politicians (Holmberg 1994:113-114). Therefore, notwithstanding their denial of affiliation with any specific political party, apartisans may still possess partisan attitudes on political issues owing to their preferences for party leaders or candidates. Independents’ lack of preference for any political party does not necessarily mean that they also have no preference for any party leaders or candidates.

Moreover, apartisans’ source of political knowledge may lead them to biased partisan stances. CM independents tend to rely heavily on social media as an alternative to party cues (Chung and Gil 2014). Yet, such internet-based media is subject to selective exposure (Garrett 2009) and tends to provoke affective polarization among the public in a polarized environment

(Iyengar et al. 2019; Lelkes et al. 2017; Jang and Han 2021). In sum, CM independents may not be free from partisan bias in a polarized context because of their reliance on personal cues from politicians and frequent use of social media as a source of political information.

Chapter 3. Data and Method

3.1. Hypotheses

Are independents, especially apartisans, free from partisan bias when they decide their stances on political issues? To address this research question, I propose, in this paper, two empirically testable hypotheses regarding COVID-19 issues.

The 2020 South Korean National Assembly Election is a salient example to explore how independents in a polarized environment form their opinions on political issues. South Korea was also at its peak of COVID-19 infections during the election. The main controversy in the election, therefore, was centered on the government's response to the pandemic. Shin (2020) finds that voters' assessment of governmental performance dealing with the virus had a significant effect on voters' vote choice. Yet, his findings tell us nothing about how the voters' appraisals were established.

How were these evaluations formed? Since voters are not always perfectly informed about political issues, they often use heuristics and cues to evaluate political objects. Party cues are one of the most often used heuristics (Kam 2005). Gil and Kang (2020) also point out that party attachment may have played a decisive role in evaluations of the government among partisans in the 2020 election. Partisans' views on COVID-19 were colored by their party ties. For instance, while supporters of the ruling party praised on the government's effort to reduce the spread of COVID-19, partisans of the main

opposition party were negative in their evaluations. The same pattern is also demonstrated on the voters' attribution of blame. Most supporters of the ruling party ascribed the outbreak of the contagion to a certain religious group's laxity in observing social distancing. On the contrary, opposition party supporters criticized the government as incompetent in dealing with the spread of the virus.

However, such partisan evaluations may not be limited to partisans. I argue that apartisans may also utilize their partisan preference when they evaluate the government's efforts. The difference between partisans and apartisans, in this case, lies in the sources from which they derive their preferences. Unlike partisans, independents do not base their political decision primarily on the party cues. Alternatively, independents rely more on personal cues from politicians. In this manner, independents may be susceptible to partisan bias in evaluating government performance with their preferences for party leaders. For example, independents who were extremely in favor of President Moon Jae-In may positively evaluate the government's response to the pandemic, regardless of their individual level of stress caused by COVID-19. Likewise, independents supportive of Hwang Gyeo-An, the leader of the main opposition party, may castigate the government even if they do not feel threatened by the virus. Thus, the first hypothesis examines if relative preference for party leaders affected independents' assessments of

government performance during the pandemic.³

H1: For pure independents, voters who prefer President Moon to Hwang, the leader of the main opposition party are more likely to positively evaluate the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, political sophistication may influence the extent to which independents rely on personal cues from party leaders when they establish their issue positions. This tendency may appear more salient among the more knowledgeable independents, who frequently use social media to get political information (Chung and Gil 2014). It must be noted that the use of social media was more important than ever in the 2020 election for acquiring political information. Due to COVID-19, most electoral campaigns were conducted through online media (Lee 2021). Yet, apolitical people are often unfamiliar with using social media (Chung and Gil 2014). Even if they are familiar, such voters are more likely to use it for entertainment purposes rather than for politics (Arceneaux and Johnson 2013). In this vein, partisan attitudes on people's evaluation of government performance are more likely to be salient among more educated independents.

³ Indeed, there are sufficient reasons to believe, in the 2020 election, that there were numerous 'personal' supporters (not party supporters) of either Moon or Hwang. For example, controversy over the range of the Emergency Relief Fund (ERF) is a good example with respect to Moon supporters (Kim 2020). After the ruling party's electoral success, it wanted to fulfill its pledge to subsidize all people regardless of their income. However, the Minister of Finance stubbornly preferred a policy subsidizing only the bottom 70% income tier. In this situation, Moon supporters accused not the Minister but the ruling party of holding Moon back. This clearly shows that those zealous personal supporters of Moon do not identify their support of Moon with that of ruling party. Their remonstrance was so powerful that the ruling party eventually relinquished the initiative on the ERF following the government's proposal.

H2: The effect of relative party leader preference on the evaluation of government's efforts will be stronger as the level of CM increases among pure independents.

3.2. Research Design

To test the hypotheses, I used two post-election surveys conducted by The Korean Association of Electoral Studies (KAES) and Korean Social Science Data Center (KSDC) after the 2016 and the 2020 South Korean National Assembly elections.⁴ Each survey consists of nationally representative samples with 1200 respondents.

The dependent variable is *The Evaluation of the Government's Response to COVID-19 pandemic*. It was measured through an 11-point scale. The higher the value is, the more positively voters assess the government's response to the spread of the virus.

The main independent variable is *Relative Preference for Party Leaders*, or *RPPL*. It was calculated by the difference between preferences for two party leaders: President Moon for the ruling party and Hwang for the opposition party. Each preference for party leaders was measured using 11-

⁴ Park and Song (2012) points out that inconsistent measurement of partisanship in South Korea has led to problems in terms of validity and reliability of the analysis. However, my research is not constrained to the measurement problem, because two surveys not only used identical questions measuring partisanship but also were conducted by identical institutions. I expect that this consistency will strengthen the validity and reliability of measurement in this paper. Furthermore, this study also has an advantage of being able to be used for comparative studies with other countries in that KSDC's questions for measuring partisanship are identical to those of the Comparative Study of Electoral Studies (CSES).

point like-dislike scores, in which higher value indicates a more positive feeling toward the politician. Hence, the range of the independent variable goes from -10 to 10. The value -10 denotes an individual's exclusive preference for Hwang, while 10 indicates his or her exclusive preference for Moon.

However, the level of CM may moderate the effect of RPPL on voters' evaluations of the government's efforts in dealing with the pandemic. Hence, as a moderating variable, the *Cognitive Mobilization Index (CMI)* was constructed by combining the level of respondents' education with their level of interest in the election. I expect that independents with a higher CMI will show more biased partisan evaluations than those with a lower CMI.

Other variables that may influence the variables mentioned above were included as control variables in the linear regression model. *Ideological self-placement* refers to the respondent's self-reported ideological position on the 11-point scale for the liberal-conservative continuum. The individual's self-reported ideology is noted to affect the evaluation of the government (Ha and Gil 2020). Moreover, ideology, as an alternative to party cues, may influence the political attitudes of independents (Chung and Gil 2014). Thus, since the self-reported ideology may affect both the independent and the dependent variable, it was added as a control variable. Also, three variables regarding the COVID-19 were included: ① Under how much pressure or stress the respondent is feeling regarding the pandemic, ② how much fear

the respondent feels about the pandemic, and ③ how high the respondent thinks the risk of being infected is. Finally, sociodemographic variables such as age, gender, income level, and region were also considered.

As a dependent variable in the model is a continuous variable, I run a linear regression model using OLS estimator. Thus, the equation for the model can be put forward as follows:

$$Evaluation = \alpha + \beta_1 * RPPL + \beta_2 * CMI + \beta_3 * RPPL * CMI + \sum_{j=1}^n \gamma_j * Control_j + \epsilon$$

β_3 is the main focus in testing the hypotheses mentioned above. Also, I expect the coefficient of interaction terms to be larger than zero with statistical significance. This means that a respondent with a higher CMI has a more biased partisan evaluation than a one with a lower CMI. In other words, a statistically significant positive value of β_3 indicates that the more sophisticated independent voter is, the more likely he or she is to hold a biased partisan evaluation⁵.

⁵ I consider it as partisan bias if RPPL shows a crucial effect on independents' voters' evaluations of the government performance for the following reason: The effect shows pure impact of personal attachments to party leaders on the voters' evaluation of the government performance, since the voters' differing awareness of the state of the COVID-19 pandemic was controlled for the regression model. In other words, the effect shows how people's evaluations of the government's efforts were formed according to their different directional preferences for politicians, regardless of the personal impact that COVID-19 had on them. In this manner, even if it may be too strong to call it partisan bias, it still shows partisan attitudes among independents, in that their perceptions are heavily influenced by their partisan preferences for party leaders.

Yet, before running a linear regression, I pre-examine if apartisans display reasonable characteristics of holding biased partisan attitudes in political issues. For this purpose, I categorize respondents into four groups by partisan mobilization and cognitive mobilization, following Dalton (1984; 2007; 2013).

Partisan mobilization is measured by two-step questions. It results in three distinguishable groups: partisan identifiers, leaning independents, and pure independents. *Partisan identifiers* are the respondents who reported their feeling of closeness to a certain party. For respondents with no such feeling, I used a second question asking if they have a leaning attitude toward any specific political party. People with this attitude were classified as *Leaning independents*. Otherwise, they were categorized as *Pure independents*.

I also classified voters along with their degree of political sophistication. The level of CM is calculated by combining respondents' level of education with their level of interest in the election⁶. Since the range is from 2 to 8, respondents with a value under 6 were coded as "low sophistication"; otherwise, they were "high sophistication".

In turn, as Table 2 suggests, four groups were identified: Cognitive

⁶ There are many ways to measure a respondent's interest in politics. Dalton (2007) considers interest in public affairs. Kang (2012) and Chung and Gil (2014) both use the frequency of political discussion. In this research, I use interest in the 2020 election for comparison with the 2016 election survey. Although there was a question in the 2020 election survey directly asking the respondent's interest in politics, there was not in the 2016 survey. Therefore, to maintain consistency, I used the identical questions that were both used in the two election surveys.

Party Supporters (CPS), Ritual Party Supporters (RPS), apertisans, and apoliticals. It is noteworthy that this categorization contrasts to other South Korean studies using Dalton's concept of CM (Chung and Gil 2014; Kang 2012). Unlike those prior studies, leaning independents are not combined with pure independents, but with partisan identifiers. If 'a'partisan is to mean voters without partisanship, I believe that this is a better categorization since leaners are more like partisan identifiers than pure independents in terms of political attitudes and behaviors (Keith et al. 1992).

Table 2. Categorization of Voters

(N/%)		Cognitive Mobilization	
		High	Low
Partisan Mobilization	Partisan Identifiers Leaning Independents	Cognitive Party Supporter (CPS) (629/55.71)	Ritual Party Supporter (RPS) (202/17.89)
	Pure Independents	Apartisan (121/10.72)	Apolitical (177/15.68)

Chapter 4. Results

4.1. Who Are the Apartisans?

Table 3 compares the composition of pure independents between the 2016 and 2020 elections. The most dramatic change between the two elections came from apartisans. Although apartisans were the smallest group in the 2016 election, they were not in 2020 due to their soaring numbers. It tells us why scholars should focus on the political attitudes of apartisans.

Table 3. Independents between the 2016 and the 2020 election		
N (% among the total respondents)	The 2016 Election	The 2020 Election
Apartisans	55 (4.60)	171 (15.15)
Apoliticals	168 (14.06)	127 (11.25)

Table 4 compares socio-demographic characteristics among the four groups. To begin with, apartisans were more likely to be younger than party supporters. While voters aged 50s and older account for the largest portion among party supporters, pure independents mostly consist of younger voters under age of forty. Furthermore, CM voters show not only higher levels of education, but also higher income levels than those who were not cognitively mobilized. In sum, apartisans can be described as young voters with affluent political resources.

Table 5 shows that apartisans remain very critical in their political views despite their abundant resources. While most party supporters place themselves on either the liberal or the conservative side of the ideological

continuum, pure independents prefer to identify themselves as moderates or centrists who are neither liberal nor conservative. However, the implication of the centrist positioning may be different between apartisans and apoliticals, given their ideological consistency in policy positions. The former has ideologically consistent policy preferences, while the latter does not. Therefore, the centrist positioning of apartisans in the ideological continuum is less likely to be attributable to their lack of ability in understanding and organizing ideology. Instead, it may signal their dissatisfaction with political parties (Kang 2012). Furthermore, apartisans were the most critical voters of the Moon administration. The least portion of people evaluated the government positively among the apartisan group. Apartisans also had pessimistic evaluations on the state of the economy. Specifically, though not reported in the table, 64% of apartisans blamed the ruling party for the economic downturn, and this was the largest proportion among the four groups.

Finally, apartisans' dissatisfaction stretches to politics in general. They are the most discontented with current democracy. Yet, this pessimism says more about homogeneity among pure independents, and less about heterogeneity between apartisans and apoliticals.

What starkly contradicts apartisans with apoliticals is the level of engagement in politics. It is very interesting that apartisans are highly engaged in politics, given their deep dissatisfaction with it. They are even more active than Ritual Party Supporters (RPS). They are more likely to vote,

and to put emphasis on both the vote choice and the result of the election. Moreover, *apartisans* more frequently talk about political issues with their neighbors than *RPS* do. In contrast, *apoliticals* have no interest in participating in politics. Their turnout is low, and they seldom talk about politics since they do not care about election results.

Table 4-1. Socio-demographic Characteristics of Four Groups

	Party Supporters			Pure Independents		χ^2 , ANOVA
	CPS	RPS	Apartisan	Apolitical		
Age (%)	20s	13.83	11.88	23.97	24.86	$\chi^2=248.63$ Pr<0.001
	30s	14.15	15.84	22.31	23.73	
	40s	19.71	20.30	19.01	20.90	
	50s	22.26	26.73	11.57	12.99	
	60s & older	30.05	25.25	23.14	17.51	
Income Level*	Sum	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	$\chi^2=29.23$ Pr<0.001
	Low	58.51	70.79	60.33	78.53	
	High	41.49	29.21	39.67	21.47	
Ideological Self-Placement**	Sum	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	$\chi^2=26.81$ Pr<0.001
	Liberal	49.76	37.13	23.97	21.47	
	Moderate	20.83	35.15	53.72	63.28	
	Conservative	29.41	27.72	22.31	15.25	
	Sum	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	

Table 4-2. Socio-demographic Characteristics of Four Groups

	Party Supporters		Pure Independents		χ^2 , ANOVA
	CPS	RPS	Apartisan	Apolitical	
Ideological Consistency in Policy Position (ICPP)***	0.43	-	0.22	-	-

Note:

* Income level is divided into two groups based on median income.

** Respondents are classified as liberals if they place themselves from 0 to 4; moderates 5; and conservatives from 6 to 10.

*** ICPP was calculated by correlation between economic and foreign policy positions. ICPP among RPS and apoliticals were not reported because they were both statistically insignificant.

Table 5. Ideology and Political Dissatisfaction

		Party Supporters		Pure Independents		χ^2 , ANOVA
		CPS	RPS	Apartisan	Apolitical	
Retrospective Evaluation	Socio-tropic Economy	1.61	1.46	1.40	1.46	F=5.84 Pr<0.001
	Pocketbook Economy	1.81	1.71	1.65	1.53	F=11.82 Pr<0.001
	Moon's government	2.71	2.53	2.28	2.32	F=14.97 Pr<0.001
	Satisfaction with Democracy	2.46	2.31	2.27	2.11	F=13.47 Pr<0.001

Table 6. Political Engagements

		Party Supporters		Pure Independents		χ^2 , ANOVA
		CPS	RPS	Apartisan	Apolitical	
Turnout (%)		84	45	69	15	F=138.97 Pr<0.001
Movement from nonvoter to voter (2016→2020) (%)	Candidate Voting	41.94	26.67	65.38	5.48	F=17.79 Pr<0.001
	Party Voting	51.22	21.21	58.06	5.06	F=20.60 Pr<0.001
Agreement on the statements	“It is important who gets the power”	4.21	3.68	3.80	3.08	F=55.18 Pr<0.001
	“It is important who to vote for”	4.26	3.78	3.92	3.16	F=58.30 Pr<0.001
Frequency of talking about politics		2.22	1.84	1.98	1.59	F=29.36 Pr<0.001

Given apartisans' high rate of engagement in politics, then the

following question would be about the source of their political information. If apartisans do not depend on party cues, then where do they acquire the political knowledge they need? Table 7 indicates that they mostly rely on social media. While RPS and apoliticals relatively prefer TV and radio, CM voters are disproportionate in their dependence on social networks services (SNS) and YouTube. Many scholars claim that internet-based media tends to accelerate selective exposure (Garrett 2009) and therefore instigates affective polarization (Iyengar et al. 2019; Lelkes et al. 2017; Jang and Han 2021). Considering these strands of the literature together with the table below, it is reasonable to think that apartisans' may hold partisan attitudes on political issues.

Table 7. Media usage

		Party Supporters		Pure Independents		χ^2 , ANOVA
		CPS	RPS	Apartisan	Apolitical	
Frequency of searching for news about politics		2.81	2.29	2.46	1.95	F=91.93 Pr<0.001
Media*	TV, Radio	18.44	29.70	22.31	36.72	$\chi^2=30.71$ Pr<0.001
	Newspaper	8.11	7.92	7.44	5.65	
	SNS & YouTube	73.45	62.38	70.25	57.63	
	Sum	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	
The number of media in use		3.22	2.63	3.07	2.29	F=17.81 Pr<0.001

Notes: *Respondents were asked to select the media they usually use when seeking political information and news about the 2020 election. 12 media were grouped into three categories. 'TV, Radio' includes terrestrial television channels, general programming channels, news channels, and radio broadcasts. The 'Newspaper' category consists of not only paper newspapers but also online ones. Finally, the 'SNS & YouTube' comprises SNS (i.e., Social Network Services), YouTube/Podcast, online portals, and mobile messengers.

Finally, I compared voters' level of affective polarization in the 2020 election with that of the 2016. The Affective Polarization Index (API) was calculated by using the spread of party or party leader like-dislike scores of each respondent (Wagner 2021).⁷ p refers to the political actor, which is a party or a party leader, and n denotes the number of those actors. As Table 8 indicates, apartisans' API for party leaders increased in 2020 while the index for party decreased. It clearly shows the difference from CPS and apoliticals, who have experienced an increase in both party API and party leader API. This result implies that apartisans may also become affectively polarized under polarized politics, depending on the preference not for party, but for party leaders.

$$API_i = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i,p}^n (like_{i,p} - \overline{like})^2}{n}}$$

⁷ Although Wagner (2021) suggests weighting polarization scores by parties' vote shares, I prefer the non-weighted index for the following reason. He argues that people weight the major party more than minor parties. However, even if his argument holds true, I think it is more reasonable for researchers to think that people may have already reflected their own weight on their response to like-dislike scores. Therefore, another weighting done by a researcher may become arbitrary and, therefore, needless since it may result in a double weighting error. Then, the double-weighted index is more what the researcher wants to see than the reality of it.

Table 8. Affective Polarization between 2016 and 2020

Affective Polarization		Party Supporters		Pure Independents	
		CPS	RPS	Apartisan	Apolitical
2016	Parties	2.08	2.81	1.70	2.57
	Party Leaders	1.78	1.92	1.08	2.06
2020	Parties	2.31	1.68	1.03	0.54
	Party Leaders	2.61	2.11	1.45	1.18
Changes	Parties	0.24	-1.12	-0.66	-2.03
	Party Leaders	0.82	0.19	0.37	-0.87

Note: These are political actors included when calculating API:

Party: (2016) Saenuri Party, Democratic Party, Justice Party, People Party

(2020) United Future Party, Democratic Party, Justice Party, People Party

The Party Leaders: (2016) President Park Geun-Hye, Moon Jae-In, Ahn Cheol-Soo

(2020) President Moon Jae-In, Hwang Gyeo-An, Ahn Cheol-Soo.

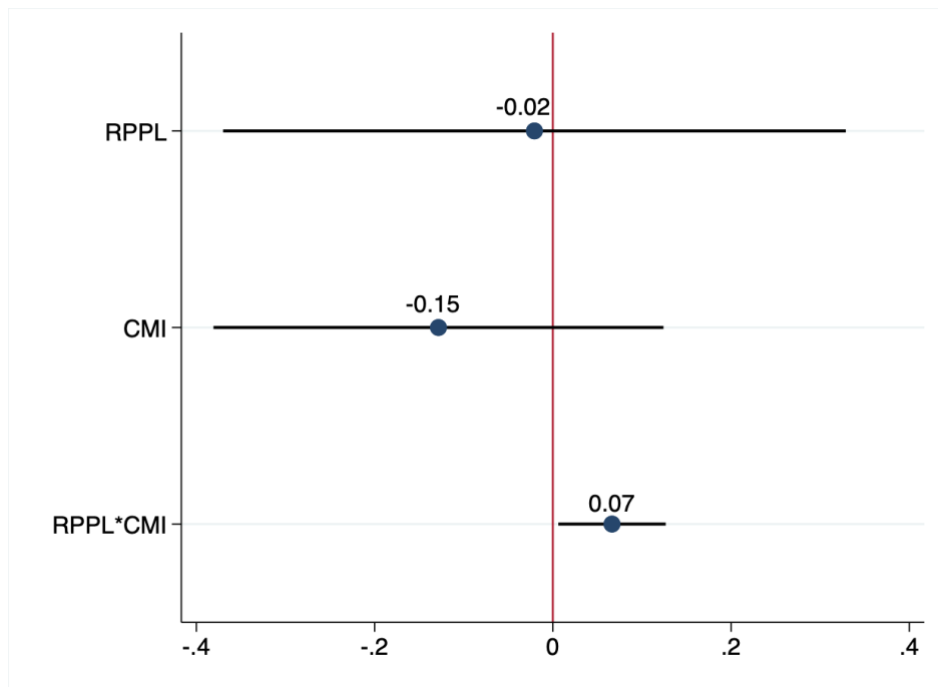
4.2. Partisan Bias in Apartisans' Evaluations

So far, I demonstrated the possibility that pure independent voters may hold partisan attitudes. Therefore, I ran a linear regression model using OLS estimator in order to see if apartisans display biased partisan attitudes when they evaluate the government's response to COVID-19 pandemic. The focus is on how the level of CM moderates the extent of partisan bias among pure independents.

As Figure 1 displays, an interaction term between *the Relative Preference for Party Leaders (RPPL)* and *Cognitive Mobilization Index (CMI)* proves to be statistically significant under 90% confidence interval. That is, the level of CM definitely moderates the effect of party leader preferences on

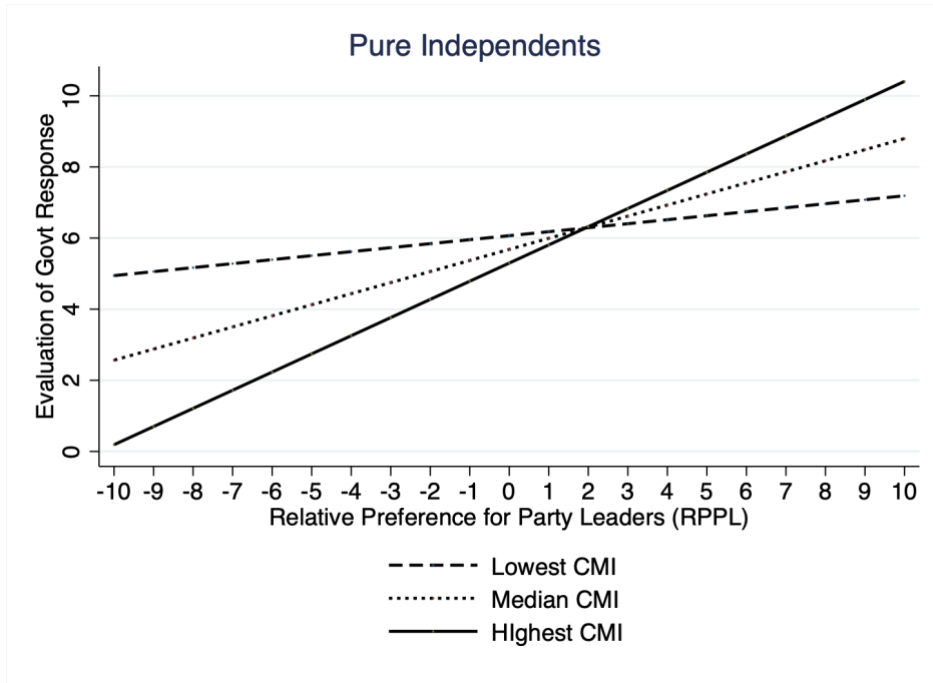
the assessment of the government performance. Figure 2 shows that the predictive power of the relative preference for party leaders, or RPPL on voters' evaluations was decisive among independents with the highest CMI. If an apartisan voter favors President Moon, then the individual is more likely to applaud the government, irrespective of personal stress caused by the pandemic. Likewise, a CM independent who disproportionately prefers the opposition party leader Hwang Gyeo-An, is more likely to reproach the government over COVID-19.

Figure 1. A Coefficient Plot: Moderating Effects of Cognitive Mobilization among Pure Independents



Note: The value of the coefficient is presented above each plot. Control variables are not reported since they all appeared to be statistically insignificant except for *Gender*. With regard to *Gender*, female voters were more likely to have a positive evaluation of government's response to COVID-19 than male voters were. The regression table is reported in Appendix 1.

Figure 2. Biased Partisan Attitudes of Pure Independents according to their CMI



Note: The graph presents the effect of RPPL on the evaluation of governmental performance among 3 voters with different CMI levels: the lowest (dashed lines), the highest (solid lines), and the median (dotted lines).

Chapter 5. Robustness Check

5.1. The Effect of the Preference for President Moon on the Evaluation of Government Performance

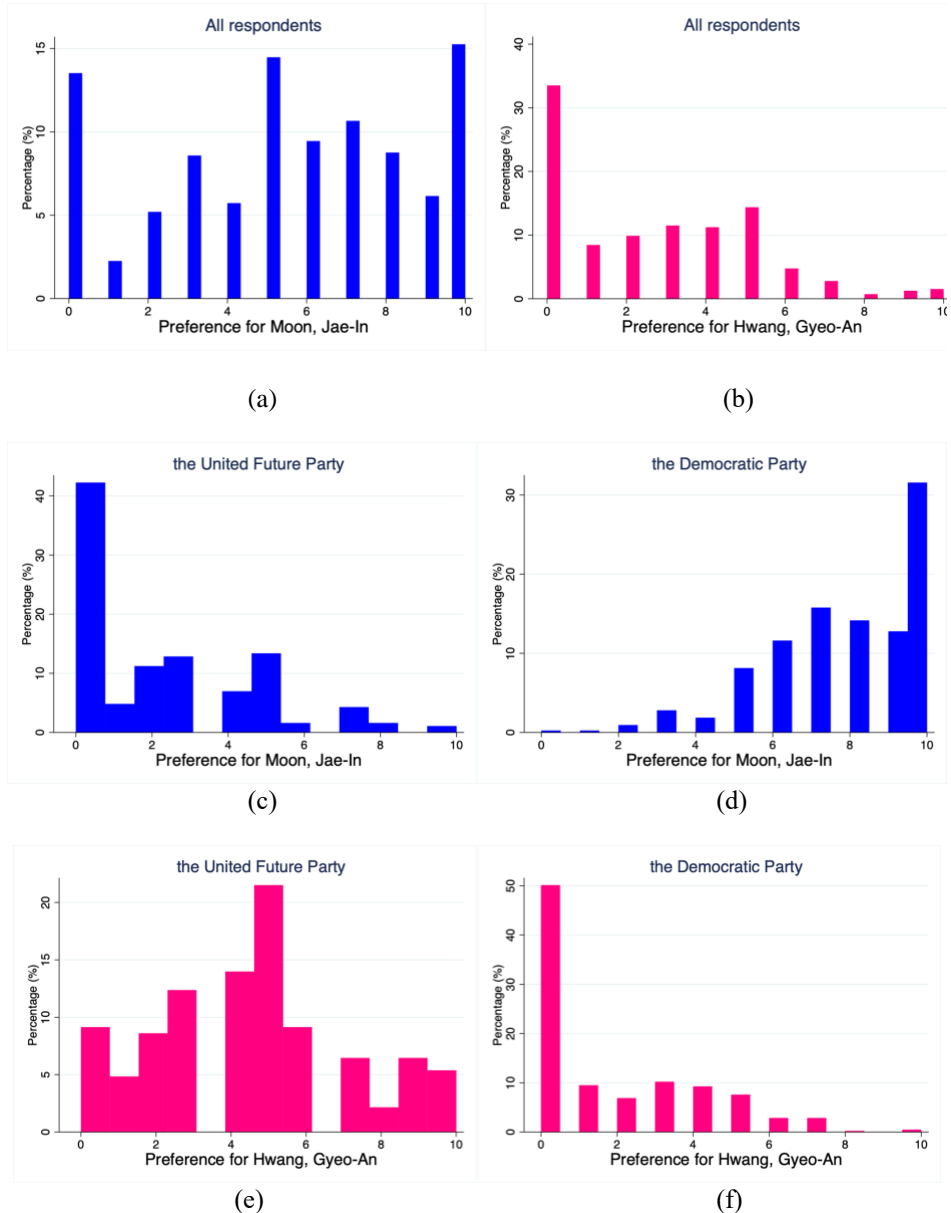
In this chapter, I conduct two kinds of robustness checks. First, I ran the same linear regression model with a different independent variable. In chapter 4, the independent variable is the relative preference for party leaders, or RPPL which calculated the difference between the preference for Hwang Gyeo-An and that of Moon Jae-In. However, Figure 3 suggests that preference for Hwang may not be a proper proxy measuring partisanship of the main opposition party.

Compared to an even distribution of preference for Moon among all respondents, the distribution of preference for Hwang is rather skewed to the right. This means that most voters have negative feelings for Hwang. This difference between Moon and Hwang becomes more obvious if the distributions are divided according to voters' party attachments. Preference for Moon is highly polarized among the two major party supporters. While most party supporters of the United Future Party (UFP) hate Moon, those of the Democratic Party (DP) mostly love him. Therefore, preference for Moon is a good proxy to measure polarized partisan attitudes.

Yet, the preference for Hwang is less polarized since many UFP party supporters also have negative feelings toward Hwang, just like DP party

supporters.

Figure 3. Distributions of Preferences for Hwang and Moon

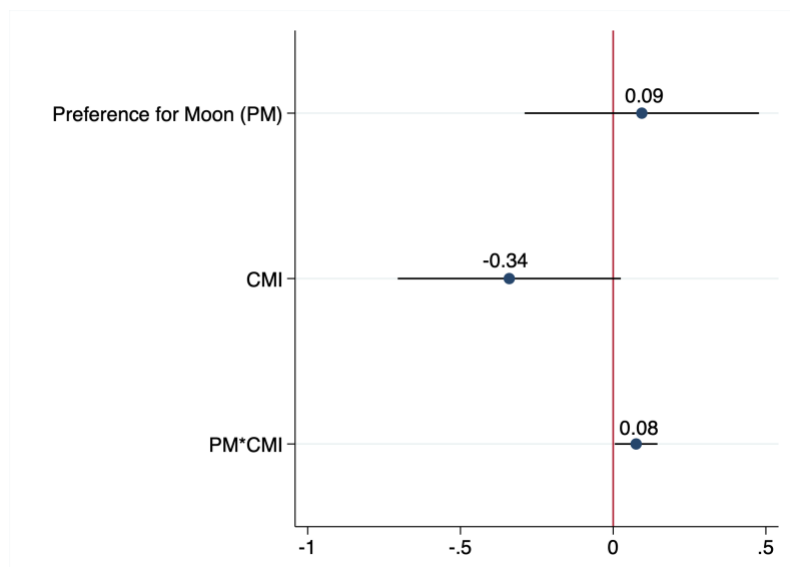


Note: Each panel displays a histogram of distribution of either preference for Hwang Gyeo-An or that of Moon Jae-In. Panel (a) and (b) depict distributions of Moon and Hwang, respectively, among all respondents. Panel (c) and (d) show distributions of Moon according to party supporters' partisanship. The former displays the distribution among the United Future Party (UFP) party supporters and the latter among those of the Democratic Party (DP). Finally, the last two panels depict distribution of Hwang according to party supporters' partisanship. Panel (e) shows the distribution among the UFP party supporters and the latter among those of the DP

Therefore, I ran another regression model using OLS estimator by replacing the original independent variable, the relative preference for party leaders with the preference for Moon. As mentioned in the research design, the preference was measured using an 11-point like-dislike score, in which a higher value indicates a more positive feeling toward Moon.

As Figure 4 depicts, the interaction term between the preference for Moon and the level of CMI proves to be statistically significant under 90% confidence level, and the coefficient is positive. Figure 5 describes how the effect of preference for Moon on the evaluation of government performance differs as CMI changes. Compared to independent voters with the lowest CMI level, the evaluation of government performance was heavily influenced by

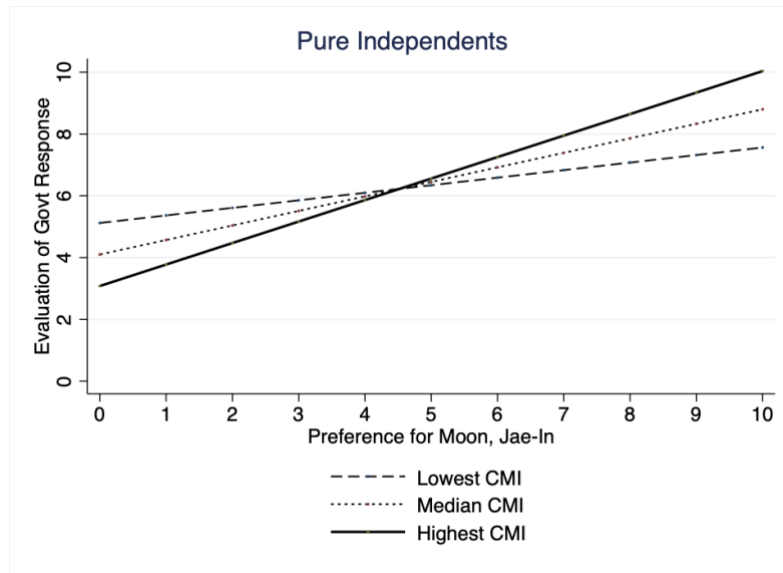
Figure 4. A Coefficient Plot of the First Robustness Check Model: Moderating Effect of Cognitive Mobilization among Pure Independents



Note: The value of the coefficient is presented above each plot. Control variables are not reported since they all appeared to be statistically insignificant. The regression table is reported in Appendix 2.

the preference for President Moon if an independent voter has the highest value of CMI.

Figure 5. The First Robustness Check: Partisan attitudes of Pure Independents according to their CMI



Note: Each line presents the effect of the preference for Moon Jae-In on the evaluation of governmental performance among 3 voters with different CMI levels: the lowest (dashed lines), the highest (solid lines), and the median (dotted lines).

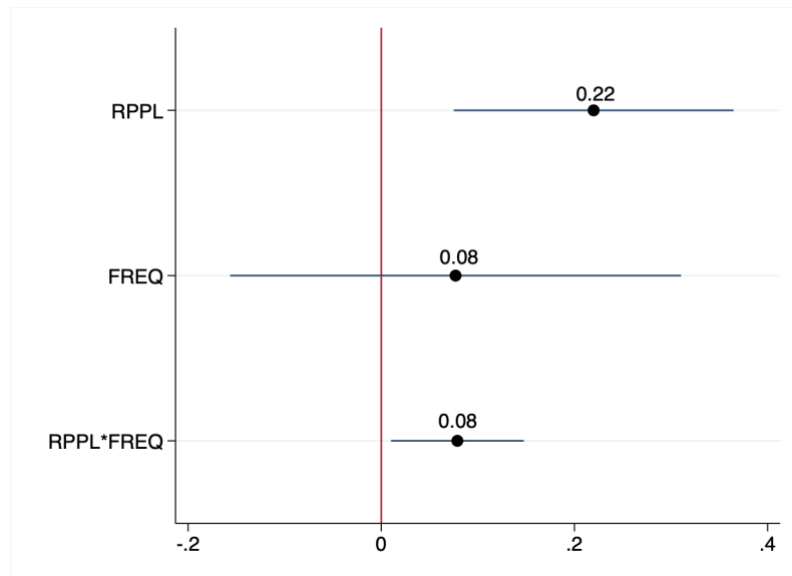
5.2. The Use of Social Media to Get Political Information as a Source of Biased Partisan Attitudes

I also ran a linear regression model among pure independents by replacing the moderating variable, or the level of CM with *the frequency of using social media to get political information*, or FREQ. The purpose of this second robustness check is to see if reliance on social media in order to acquire political information produces biased partisan attitudes among pure independents.

The new moderating variable *FREQ* was constructed by multiplying two variables. One is a binary variable that captures whether a respondent relied on social media to seek political information and news regarding the 2020 election. As presented in Table 7, respondents were asked to choose the media they relied on when seeking political information and news about the election. Respondents who chose social network services (SNS), YouTube/Podcast, online portals, and mobile messengers were coded to 1, and otherwise 0. The other variable deals with how frequently respondents rely on the media they chose when seeking to acquire political information. It was measured using a 4-point score in which a higher value indicates that the respondent more frequently relies on the media he or she chose to acquire political information. Therefore, by multiplying these two variables, a new moderative variable indicates how frequently respondents use social media to acquire political information.

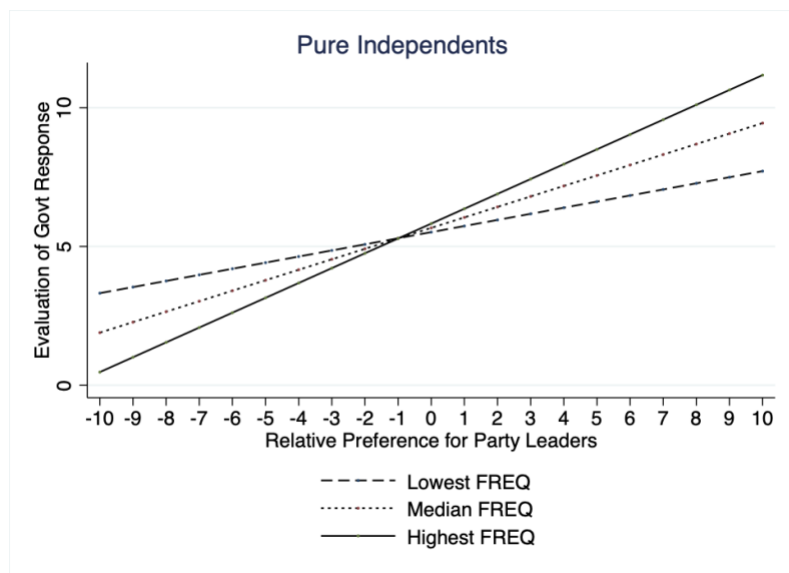
As Figure 6 and 7 display, the results reveal that dependence on social media in order to acquire political information is the factor that produces biased partisan attitudes, among pure independents, in relation to preferences for party leaders. The interaction term between the relative preference for party leaders and the frequency of using social media proves to be statistically significant and the coefficient is positive. That is, the evaluation of government performance regarding the COVID-19 issue shows starker contrast as the frequency of using social media to get political information increases.

Figure 6. A Coefficient Plot of the Second Robustness Check: Moderating Effect of Frequency of Using Social Media to Get Political Information among Pure Independents



Note: The value of the coefficient is presented above each plot. Control variables are not reported. The regression table is reported in Appendix 2.

Figure 7. The Second Robustness Check: Partisan attitudes of Pure Independents according to their FREQ



Note: Each line presents the effect of the relative preference for party leaders on the evaluation of governmental performance among 3 voters with different FREQ levels: the lowest (dashed lines), the highest (solid lines), and the median (dotted lines).

Chapter 6. Discussion

Given how often independents are described as having decisive power in elections, it is quite surprising that scholars remained indifferent to them, compared to their considerable interest in partisans. However, there are two reasons for scholars to pay attention to independents. First, party loyalty is waning under polarized political environments. Recent data shows that the share of party supporters is decreasing. On the other hand, independents are increasing their proportion among the electorate. Specifically, the numbers of cognitively mobilized pure independents who are highly engaged in politics are soaring. Second, contrary to partisans, independents are expected to be free from partisan bias due to their denial of party affiliation. In other words, they are expected to behave more like ‘rational voters’ who evaluate the incumbent’s performance apart from partisan bias.

However, I argue that the knowledgeable independents may also have partisan bias in their evaluation of the incumbent’s performance. There are two reasons for this claim. First, apartisans, or the cognitively mobilized independents, rely more on politicians’ personal cues than partisans do. Although they reject party attachment, they still have preferences for party leaders. It is the preferences for party leaders that lead independents to have partisan attitudes on political issues. Second, independents mostly acquire political information through social media. It is known that such media may accelerate a voter’s degree of partisan bias due to selective exposure. As a

result, even if independents do not have party identification, they may hold partisan attitudes due to their dependence on personal cues from party leaders. Moreover, since internet-based media tends to provoke partisan attitudes on political issues, independents with a high interest in politics are more likely to have biased partisan positions.

To test the partisan bias among sensible independents, I explore if relative preference for party leaders affects the voter's evaluation of the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, regardless of his or her stress regarding the pandemic. I also look as to whether the level of cognitive mobilization moderates the effect or not. I find that relative preference for party leaders makes a stark contrast to the voters' evaluation if they are cognitively mobilized. This result clearly displays the empirical evidence that pure independents may also hold biased partisan attitudes if they are politically sophisticated. These findings show stands in a stark contrast to Dalton's (2007; 2013) optimistic expectations given for apartisans.

The result has two implications in terms of political polarization. First, detachment from the political party may not result in voters' rationally evaluating policy. Although pure independents do not base their political decision on party cues, they acquire political information through social media, which tends to produce a partisan bias. Also, since independents rely more on personal cues from politicians, their issue positions may be heavily influenced by their preference for party leaders. Second, there should not be too much emphasis on the political sophistication as well. It is because

sophisticated independents are more likely to have partisan attitudes. These implications bode poorly for lowering the temperate of political debates. Political polarization undermines representative democracy as not only partisans but also independents become less likely to evaluate policies based on outcome, but instead who enacted the policies. Therefore, further research on factors that may moderate biased partisan attitudes other than the non-existence of partisanship or political sophistication, is required.

Bibliography

- Achen, Christopher H. and Larry M. Bartels. 2004. "Blind Retrospection Electoral Responses to Drought, Flu, and Shark Attacks." *Estudio/Working Paper* 2004/199 June 2004.
- Achen, Christopher H. and Larry M. Bartels. 2016. *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Arceneaux, Kevin, and Martin Johnson. 2013. *Changing Minds or Changing Channels? Partisan News in an Age of Choice*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bartels, Larry M. 2002. "Beyond the Running Tally: Partisan Bias in Political Perceptions." *Political Behavior* 24(2):117-150.
- Bisgaard, Martin. 2015. "Bias Will Find a Way: Economic Perceptions, Attributions of Blame, and Partisan-Motivated Reasoning during Crisis." *The Journal of Politics* 77(3): 849-960.
- Bullock John G., Alan S. Gerber, Seth J. Hill, and Gregory A. Huber. 2013. "Partisan Bias in Factual Beliefs about Politics" *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 10(4): 519-578
- Bullock, John G., and Gabriel Lenz. 2019. "Partisan Bias in Surveys" *Annual Review of Political Science* 22:325-342.
- Campbell, A., Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes. 1960. *The American Voter*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Chung Jin Min and Jung-ah Gil. 2014. "The Characteristics and Behaviors of Korean Independent Voters in the 2012 Presidential Election." *National Strategy*. 20(3): 135-162.
- Cole, Shawn, Andrew Healy, and Eric Werker. 2012. "Do Voters Demand Responsive Governments? Evidence from Indian Disaster Relief." *Journal of Development Economics* 97(2): 167-181.
- Dalton, Russell J. 1984. "Cognitive Mobilization and Partisan Dealignment

- in Advanced Industrial Democracies.” *The Journal of Politics*, 46(1): 264-284.
- Dalton, Russell J. 2007. “Partisan Mobilization, Cognitive Mobilization and the Changing American Electorate.” *Electoral Studies*, 26(2): 274-286.
- Dalton, Russell J. 2013. *Citizen Politics: Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press.
- Dalton, Russell J. 2016. “Party identification and Its Implications.” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*.
- Duefler Charles A. 2004. *Comprehensive Report of the Special Advisor to the DCI on Iraq’s WMD.: Regime strategy and WMD timeline events*. Vol.1. Central Intelligence Agency.
- Eriksson, Lina M. 2016. “Winds of Change: Voter Blame and Storm Gudrun in the 2006 Swedish Parliamentary Election.” *Electoral Studies* 41: 129-142.
- Fiorina, Morris P. 1981. *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Garrett, R. Kelly. 2009. “Echo Chambers Online? Politically Motivated Selective Exposure among Internet News Users.” *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 14(2): 265-285.
- Gasper, John T. and Andrew Reeves. 2011. “Make It Rain? Retrospection and the Attentive Electorate in the Context of Natural Disasters.” *American Journal of Political Science* 55(2): 340-355.
- Gil, Jung-ah and Won-Taek Kang. 2020. “The COVID-19 Crisis and the 2020 National Assembly Election in South Korea: Retrospective Voting or Partisan Bias?” *Korean Party Studies Review* 49: 101-140.
- Gil, Jung-ah. 2019. “How Trust in Government Influences Retrospective Voting in Local Elections : The Moderating Role of Partisan Bias.” *Korean Party Studies Review* 18(3): 31-69.

- Gil, Jung-ah. 2020. "Partisan Conflict in the 21st National Assembly Election: Explaining Partisan Blame Attribution for a Conflict between Satellite Parties." *Korean Political Science Review* 19(3): 5-37.
- Green, Steven. 1999. "Understanding Party Identification: A Social Identity Approach." *Political Psychology* 20(2): 393-403.
- Ha, Shang E. and Gil Jung-ah. 2020. "The Dark Sides of Political Interest: Explaining Trust in Government among Ideological Voters" *Korean Political Science Review* 54(2): 31-57.
- Heersink, Boris, Brenton D. Peterson, and Jeffery A. Jenkins. 2017. "Disasters and Elections: Estimating the Net Effect of Damage and Relief in Historical Perspective." *Political Analysis* 25: 260-268.
- Hillygus, D. Sunshine, and Todd Shields. 2007. *The Persuadable Voter: Wedge Issues in Presidential Campaigns*. Princeton, NJ : Princeton University Press.
- Holmberg, Sören. 1994. "Party Identification Compared across the Atlantic." In M. K. Jennings and T. Mann. (Eds.), *Elections and Home and Abroad*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Huddy, Leonie, Lilliana Mason, and Lene Aarøe. 2015. "Expressive Partisanship: Campaign Involvement, Political Emotion, and Partisan Identity." *American Political Science Review* 109(1):1-17.
- Iyengar, Shanto, Yphtach Lelkes, Matthew Levendusky, Neil Malhotra, and Sean J. Westwood. 2019. "The Origins and Consequences of Affective Polarization in the United States." *Annual Review of Political Science* 22: 129-146.
- Jacobson, Gary C. 2010. "Perception, Memory, and Partisan Polarization on the Iraq War." *Political Science Quarterly* 125(1): 31-56.
- Jang, Seung-Jin and Han Il Chang. 2020. "Non-Political Consequences of Partisan Polarization" *Korean Political Science Review*. 54(5): 153-175.

- Jang, Seung-Jin and Shang E. Ha. 2022. "The Nature of Party Identification of Korean Voters: Social Identity vs. Political Interest." *Korean Political Science Review* 56 (2): 37-58.
- Jang, Seung-Jin and Jeonghun Han. 2021. "Does YouTube Polarize Its Viewers? Analysis of the Survey on Subscribers to Major Political Channels" *Journal of Contemporary Politics* 14(2): 5-35.
- Kam, Cindy D. 2005. "Who Tosses the Party Line? Cues, Values, and Individual Differences." *Political Behavior* 27: 163-182.
- Kang, Won-Taek. 2012. "The Partisan Mobilization and the Cognitive Mobilization" In Chan Wook Park and Won-Taek Kang (Eds.), *Analyzing the 2012 National Assembly Election in South Korea*. Nanam (pp 204-230).
- Keith, Bruce. E., David B. Magleby, Candice J. Nelson, Elizabeth A. Orr, Mark C. Westlye, and Raymond E. Wolfinger. 1992. *The Myth of the Independent Voter*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Kim, Gidong and Jae Mook Lee. 2021. "Partisan Identity and Affective Polarization in South Korea" *Korean Political Science Review* 55(2): 57-87.
- Kim, Gidong and Jae Mook Lee. 2022. "Regional Identity, Partisan Identity, and Affective Polarization in South Korea." *Korean Part Studies Review* 21(2): 5-47.
- Kim, Myeong-il. 2020. "Moon's supporters are blaming the ruling party for holding Moon back on the ERF issue" *The Korean Economic Daily (Hankyung)* April 21st.
<https://www.hankyung.com/politics/article/2020042138507>
- Kim, Sung-Youn. 2015. "Polarization, Partisan Bias, and Democracy – Evidence from the 2012 Korean Presidential Election Panel Data." *Journal of Democracy and Human Rights* 15(3):459-491.
- Klar, Samara. 2014. "Identity and Engagement among Political

- Independents in America” *Political Psychology* 35(4): 577-591.
- Lodge, Milton, and Charles S. Taber. .2000. “Three Steps Toward a Theory of Motivated Political Reasoning”. In A. Lupia, M. D. McCubbins, and S. L. Popkin (Eds), *Elements of Reason* (pp. 183-213). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Lebo, Matthew. J., and Daniel Cassino. 2018. “The Aggregated Consequences of Motivated Reasoning in the Dynamics of Partisan Presidential Approval.” *Political Psychology* 28 (6): 719-746.
- Lee Hyun-Chool. 2001. “The Voting Behavior of Independent Voters: The Case of the 16th Congressional Election” *Korean Political Science Review* 34(4): 137-160.
- Lee, Sangkyung. 2021. “A Study on the New Normal-era Political Campaigns Due to Covid-19 — About the U.S. Untact Campaign and Korea's implications —.” *Seoul Law Review* 28(4): 591-634.
- Lelkes, Yphtach, Gaurav Sood, and Shanto Iyengar. 2017. “The Hostile Audience: The Effect of Access to Broadband Internet on Partisan Affect.” *American Journal of Political Science* 61(1): 5-20.
- Lodge, Milton, and Charles S. Taber. 2013. *The Rationalizing Voter*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Magleby, D. B., Nelson, C. J., & Westlye, M. C. (2011). “The Myth of the Independent Voter Revisited.” In P. Sniderman & B. Highton (Eds.) *Facing the Challenge of Democracy: Explorations in the Analysis of Public Opinion and Political Participation* (pp. 238-266). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press
- Malhotra, Neil and Alexander G. Kuo. 2009. “Emotions as Moderators of Information Cue Use: Citizen Attitudes toward Hurricane Katrina.” *American Political Research* 37(2): 301-326.
- Malhotra, Neil. 2008. “Partisan Polarization and Blame Attribution in a Federal System: The Case of Hurricane Katrina.” *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 38(4): 651-670.

- Park, Won-ho and Jungmin Song. 2012. "Do Parties Still Matter: Independent Voter in Korean Elections" *Journal of Korean Politics* 2:115-143.
- Quealy, Kevin. 2017. "The More Education Republicans Have, the Less They Tend to Believe in Climate Change." *The New York Times*, November 14th.
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/11/14/upshot/climate-change-by-education.html>
- Reeves, Andrew. 2011. "Political Disaster: Unilateral Powers, Electoral Incentives, and Presidential Disaster Declarations." *Journal of Politics* 73(4): 1142-1151.
- Rudolph, Thomas J. 2003. "Who's Responsible for the Economy? The Formation and Consequences of Responsibility Attributions." *American Journal of Political Science* 47(4): 698-713.
- Rudolph, Thomas J. 2006. "Triangulating Political Responsibility: The Motivated Formation of Responsibility Judgements." *Political Psychology* 27 (1): 99-122.
- Shin, Jungsub. 2020. "The Effect of COVID-19 on Vote Choice in the 2020 Korean Legislative Election" *Journal of Korean Politics* 29(3): 155-182.
- So, Soon-Chang and Hyun Keun. "Independent Voters and Party Politics in the Korean Election" *Korean Policy Sciences Review* 10(2): 47-75.
- Taber, Charles. S., and Milton Lodge. 2006. "Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs." *American Journal of Political Science* 50 (3): 755-769.
- Tajfel, H., Turner, J. C., Austin, W. G., & Worchel, S. 1979. "An integrative theory of intergroup conflict." In W. G. Austin, & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Turner, J. C., Brown, R. J., and Tajfel, H. .1979. "Social comparison and

group interest in ingroup favouritism”. *European Journal of Social Psychology* 9(2): 187-204.

Wagner, Markus. 2021. “Affective Polarization in Multiparty Systems.” *Electoral Studies*. 69: 102199.

국문 초록

비(非)당파층은 당파성을 띠지 않는가? - 비당파층의 당파적 태도에 관하여 -

김도훈

서울대학교 사회과학대학

정치학전공

이 연구는 무당파층 역시 당파적으로 편향적인 태도를 지닐 가능성이 있는지에 대해 탐구한다. 과연 무당파층은 당파적 편향으로부터 자유로운가? 사실 그동안 당파적 편향과 관련한 대부분의 선행연구들이 당파적 지지자들을 분석하는 데 초점을 맞추어 온 결과, 양극화 된 정치상황에서 무당파의 정치적 태도나 행태에 대한 학문적 관심은 상대적으로 적었다.

본 연구는 일반적인 기대와 달리, 인지적 동원수준이 높은 무당파층 또한 정치적으로 양극화된 환경에서는 당파적으로 편향적인 정치태도를 가질 수 있다고 주장한다. 달튼 (Dalton 1984; 2007; 2013) 등은 그동안 비(非)당파층, 또는 인지적으로 동원됨에 따라 정치적 세련도가 높은 무당파층은 정당 단서를 거부하므로 정부의 업적을 합리적으로 평가할 수 있을 것으로 기대했다. 그러나, 무당파층이 정치적 태도를 형성하는 데 있어 정치인 개인적 특성과 소셜 미디어의 영향을 크게 받는다는 점을 고려한다면 이들 역시 당파적으로 편향된 정치태도로부터 자유로울 수 없다는 것이 이 글의 주장이다.

이를 확인하기 위해 2020년 제21대 국회의원선거 설문조사 자료를 이용하여 과연 높은 수준의 인지적 동원능력이 무당파층

유권자들로 하여금 정부의 코로나19 대응을 합리적으로 평가하도록 만드는지를 관찰하였다. 분석결과, 무당파층의 경우 정당지도자에 대한 선호가 정부의 업적 평가에 커다란 영향을 미치며, 특히 이러한 효과는 정치적 세련도가 높은 비당파층에게서 더 크게 나타났다. 이는 기존의 상식과 달리 무당파층 역시 높은 정치적 세련도 그 자체만으로는 당파적 편향으로부터 자유롭기 쉽지 않음을 보여준다.

키워드: 당파적 편향, 비당파층, 정치양극화, 인지적 동원, 코로나19

학번: 2019-25071

APPENDIX

Table 9. A Main Linear Regression Table using OLS Estimator (for pure independents)

Independent Variables	β (S.E)
Relative Preference for Party Leaders (RPPL)	-0.0206 (0.212)
Cognitive Mobilization Index (CMI)	-0.128 (0.153)
RPPL * CMI	0.0664* (0.0365)
Fear of being infected	-0.1587 (0.2433)
Stress on the pandemic	0.0406 (0.0788)
Seriousness of the pandemic	0.0451 (0.2511)
Ideological self-placement	-0.0592 (0.1064)
Age	-0.0006 (0.0112)
Male	-0.7444** (0.3236)
Incheon/Gyeonggi	0.3590 (0.4336)
Daejeon/Sejong/Chungcheong	0.4123 (0.5996)
Gwangju/Jeolla	0.5612 (0.6754)
Daegu/Gyeongbuk	-0.2445 (0.5986)
Busan/Ulsan/Gyeongnam	-0.0484 (0.5295)
Gangwon	0.8233 (1.0275)
Income level	-0.0402 (0.0673)
constant	7.0092*** (1.3232)
N	236
R-squared	0.230
* p<0.1 **p<0.05 ***p<0.01	

Table 10. A Linear Regression Table using OLS Estimator for Robustness Checks (for pure independents)

Independent Variables	β (S.E)	
	(1)	(2)
Preference for Moon Jae-In (PM)	0.0938 (.232)	0.220** (0.0877)
Cognitive Mobilization Index (CMI)	-0.340 (.221)	
PM * CMI	0.0752* (.0423)	
Frequency of using social media to get political information (FREQ)		0.0769 (0.141)
RPPL * FREP		0.0788* (0.0416)
Fear of being infected	-0.136 (.215)	-0.232 (0.241)
Stress on the pandemic	0.0496 (0.0710)	0.0260 (0.0783)
Seriousness of the pandemic	0.0251 (0.219)	0.0325 (0.250)
Ideological self-placement	-0.112 (0.0937)	-0.0458 (0.106)
Age	0.00394 (0.00996)	-0.00137 (0.0111)
Male	-0.377 (0.293)	-0.870*** (0.324)
Incheon/Gyeonggi	0.359 (0.390)	0.263 (0.434)
Daejeon/Sejong/Chungcheong	0.163 (0.526)	0.337 (0.597)
Gwangju/Jeolla	0.420 (0.587)	0.456 (0.667)
Daegu/Gyeongbuk	-0.179 (0.562)	-0.181 (0.599)
Busan/Ulsan/Gyeongnam	0.106 (0.476)	0.0746 (0.527)
Gangwon	0.994 (0.978)	0.818 (-1.021)
Income level	0.0105 (0.0612)	-0.0477 (0.0650)
constant	6.086*** (1.516)	6.633*** (1.133)
N	265	236
R-squared	0.279	0.239
* p<0.1 **p<0.05 ***p<0.01		