

## Political engagement or disaffection? The impact of partisan dealignment and cognitive mobilization on Mexicans' political attitudes in the 2018 presidential campaign

*¿Compromiso o desafección política? El impacto del desalineamiento partidista y la movilización cognitiva sobre las actitudes políticas de los mexicanos en la campaña presidencial de 2018*

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Political engagement and disaffection patterns are analyzed among four relevant groups of citizens based on their levels of partisanship and cognitive mobilization. The results reveal significant between-group differences, with those with a higher degree of cognitive mobilization (cognitive partisans and apartisans) exhibiting superior levels of internal political efficacy and less political apathy than groups with low values on this variable (ritual partisans and apoliticals).

**KEYWORDS:** Cognitive mobilization, partisan dealignment, political engagement, political disaffection, election campaigns.

*Se analizaron los patrones de compromiso y desafección políticos entre cuatro grupos relevantes de ciudadanos a partir de sus niveles de partidismo y de movilización cognitiva. Los resultados revelan diferencias significativas entre grupos, con aquellos con mayor grado de movilización cognitiva (partidistas cognitivos y apartidistas) exhibiendo niveles superiores de eficacia política interna, así como menor apatía política cuando se les compara con los grupos con bajos valores en esta variable (partidistas rituales y apolíticos). PALABRAS CLAVE: Movilización cognitiva, desalineamiento partidista, compromiso político, desafección política, campañas electorales.*

*Os padrões de comprometimento e descontentamento político entre quatro grupos relevantes de cidadãos foram analisados com base em seus níveis de partidismo e mobilização cognitiva. Os resultados revelam diferenças significativas entre os grupos, com aqueles com maior grau de mobilização cognitiva (partidários e não partidários cognitivos) apresentando níveis mais elevados de eficácia política interna, bem como menor apatia política quando comparados com grupos com valores baixos nesta variável (partidários rituais e apolítico).*

*PALAVRAS CHAVE: Mobilização cognitiva, desalinhamento partidário, compromisso político, desafeto político, campanhas eleitorais.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Party identification has long been a key concept in the literature on public opinion and political behavior in the United States and many other democracies around the world (Campbell et al., 1960; Dalton, 2000a, 2020; Gunther et al., 2016; Lupu, 2015; Nadeau et al., 2017; Weisberg & Greene, 2003)<sup>2</sup> since it is considered a powerful heuristic that helps voters interpret, organize and process large amounts of information from various sources to evaluate political phenomena and objects and make political decisions, particularly during elections. Despite the relevance of party identification, a growing number of old and new democracies have experienced a significant decline in the number of voters who identify with a political party (Dalton, 1984, 2000b, 2013, 2020; Cisneros, 2020; Mair, 2013; Mair et al., 2004). This partisan dealignment has generated concern among scholars of political participation, who warn that it can lead to less political involvement among citizens (Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000; Klar & Krupnikov, 2016; Mair, 2013).

This concern is largely due to the findings of pioneering studies on party identification and electoral participation. *The American Voter* (Campbell et al., 1960) and several subsequent studies indicated that, compared to partisan voters, nonpartisan (independent) voters exhibited lower levels of electoral participation and activism in campaigns. However, more recently (Dalton, 1984), showed that the degree to which independent voters are involved in politics is not necessarily limited and depends largely on their levels of cognitive mobilization (CM). This type of mobilization, unlike that generated by party identification, is associated with socioeconomic modernization, particularly greater access to sources of political information (due to technological changes and the wider availability of media) and to higher levels of education and interest in politics among younger generations (Dalton, 1984, 2020; Donovan, 2017).

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<sup>2</sup> From this point forward, I use the terms *party identification*, *partisanship*, *partisan attachment* and *partisan loyalties* synonymously.

Together, these developments generate greater resources and cognitive skills among citizens, reducing the need for partisanship as a heuristic for information processing and political decision-making (Dalton, 2012, 2013). As Dalton contends (2013), CM “may yield a new type of nonpartisan: unaligned but also politically engaged” (p. 39). The relationship between CM and partisanship has been analyzed using the *Cognitive-Partisan Index* (Cog-Partisan Index) (Dalton, 1984, 2012, 2013, 2020), which combines the presence or absence of partisanship with an indicator of CM composed of measures of citizens’ educational attainment and interest in politics. Under this schema, it is possible to distinguish four types of citizens: *ritual partisans*, *cognitive partisans*, *apartisans* and *apolitical independents* (Table 1).

TABLE 1  
PARTY MOBILIZATION AND COGNITIVE MOBILIZATION

		Party mobilization	
		Independent (pure or inclined)	Partisan (strong or weak)
Cognitive mobilization	High	<b>Apartisan:</b> citizens who do not identify with any political party but are interested in politics and thus are able to make political decisions without necessarily depending on the cues that parties provide.	<b>Cognitive partisan:</b> highly sophisticated citizens who base their knowledge of politics on both their party ties and their ability to process political information themselves.
	Low	<b>Apolitical:</b> citizens who do not identify with any political party but do not have the cognitive ability to “digest” political information on their own.	<b>Ritual partisan:</b> citizens mobilized in political action mainly because of their strong attachment to a party.

Sources: Adapted from Dalton (1984, p. 270; 2012, p. 38; 2013, p. 40; 2020, pp. 198-199) and Donovan (2017).

The use of this index shows that voters without party identification are not a homogeneous group. For example, along with cognitive partisans, apartisans exhibited higher levels of political knowledge and subjective political efficacy than apoliticals and ritual partisans in Dalton's comparative study (2013) of the United States and Europe. Similarly, comparative studies of Latin America show that apartisans exhibit levels of support for democracy (Gimenes & Borba, 2017), news consumption, political knowledge and electoral and nonelectoral participation superior to those of apolitical independents and very similar to those exhibited by partisans (Cisneros, 2020). In general, these findings suggest that CM may be gradually becoming more relevant than partisan loyalties as an explanatory factor of citizen political engagement.

Other (more media-centric) theories of CM also emphasize the mobilizing effect of media and political communications on civic attitudes and citizen engagement. One of the most prominent theoretical approaches is the theory of the virtuous circle (Norris, 2000a, 2000b), which argues that:

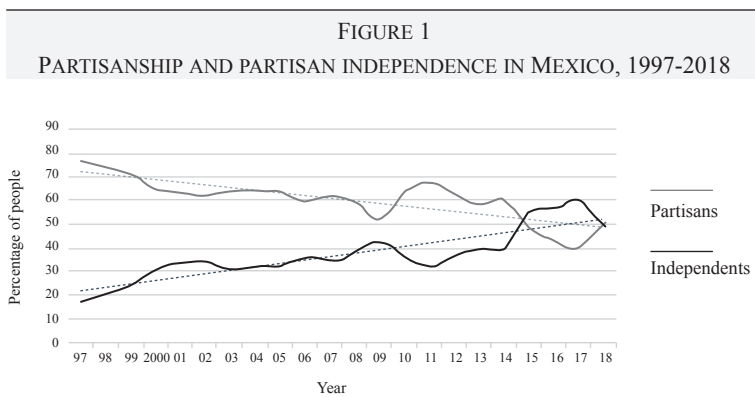
... when people are exposed to campaign communications through the media and new media technologies, they tend to increase their levels of political interest and knowledge, their feelings of subjective political efficacy and political and social trust, as well as their involvement in communal and campaign activity (Díaz Jiménez, 2017, p. 126).

The assumptions of both approaches to CM are addressed in this study.

### *Partisan dealignment in Mexico*

Several studies show that partisanship is of central importance to understanding patterns of political engagement of the Mexican electorate. Similar to their counterparts in many old and new democracies (Gunther et al., 2016; Nadeau et al., 2017), Mexican partisans tend to vote for the party with which they identify (Moreno, 2009; Somuano Ventura, 2014; Somuano Ventura & Ortega Ruiz,

2003). They are also more likely than independents to vote on election day (Buendía & Somuano, 2003; Moreno, 2009; Temkin Tedwab & Flores-Ivich, 2014), to be interested in public affairs and share political information, and to become involved in campaign and protest activities (Somuano Ventura, 2014). However, like many other democracies, Mexico has experienced a profound process of partisan dealignment in recent decades (Díaz Jiménez, 2019; Moreno, 2018). The proportion of partisan citizens decreased from approximately three-quarters of the electorate in 1997 to only half in 2018 (Figure 1).



Sources: 1997: *ITAM-Arcop* survey reported in Moreno (2009, 2012); 1998-2009: annual averages obtained from *Reforma* Newspaper surveys reported in Moreno (2009, 2012). For 2010 onward, the annual averages of the electoral surveys of *Buendia & Laredo*, reported in Díaz Jiménez (2019), are used.

The significant increase in the share of independent voters has had various consequences for elections and electoral behavior, largely because independents seem to be more likely than partisans to delay their voting decision (Díaz Jiménez, 2019) and to be more susceptible to media and campaign effects (Greene, 2015). Therefore, it is important to understand the relevant characteristics of this segment of the electorate beyond its electoral behavior. Among these characteristics are the levels of political engagement or disaffection.

### *Partisanship and cognitive mobilization in Mexico*

The relationship between partisanship and CM and the consequences of this relationship for political culture and citizen participation in the Mexican case constitute a relevant but developing research agenda (Meixueiro, 2014; Ortega et al., 2011; Somuano Ventura, 2014; Temkin Yedwab et al., 2008). Some studies, for example, suggest that the proportion of cognitive partisans and apartisans increased from 2006 to 2012 while the percentage of apoliticals and ritual partisans decreased during the same period (Meixueiro, 2014; Somuano Ventura, 2014). However, such studies do not provide evidence of significant contrasts in the level of political engagement between groups with high and low degrees of CM. And although some previous analyses have documented relevant differences in some civic attitudes and modes of political participation among the cog-partisan groups (Temkin Yedwab et al., 2008), there are other possible significant between-group differences in political orientations that have not yet been sufficiently explored.

This research seeks to contribute to the study of the consequences of the loosening of partisan attachments and growing cognitive mobilization that has occurred throughout the country in recent decades for patterns of political engagement and disaffection among Mexicans. On the one hand, it is of particular interest to examine whether this dealignment (and the consequent decline in parties' mobilization capacity) may foster a significant decrease in the attitudinal components of political engagement and a possible increase in the levels of political disaffection among the population. On the other hand, it is also important to examine whether CM is able to gradually take the place of partisanship as a mobilizing factor of civic attitudes among the population.

### *Political engagement and political disaffection as dependent variables*

Political engagement is a complex and multidimensional concept that refers to the active involvement of citizens in politics and public affairs (Delli Carpini, 2004; Putnam, 1993). Certainly, the most visible aspects of political engagement are the actions of citizens "intended directly or indirectly to affect the selection of elected representatives and/or the

development, implementation, or enforcement of public policy through government” (Delli Carpini, 2004, p. 397) (behavioral dimensions). However, it is also true that the set of attitudes, values, resources and skills that encourage and enable the political participation of individuals, including their levels of political interest, knowledge, efficacy and trust (attitudinal dimensions), are also relevant components of the concept (Delli Carpini, 2004; Moy & Hussain, 2011; Verba et al., 1997).

Among the various political attitudes that favor citizen participation in contemporary democracies are political knowledge and efficacy. The first is understood as the information that citizens acquire and remember about the various actors, processes and institutions of the political system, and the second is understood as “the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, i.e., that it is worthwhile to perform one’s civic duties” (Campbell et al., 1954, p. 187). Political efficacy is also a significant predictor of various forms of political participation (Dalton, 2020). The specialized literature distinguishes between internal efficacy, understood as the degree of confidence that citizens have in their abilities to understand politics and participate effectively in it (Craig et al., 1990), and external efficacy, which refers to citizens’ perception of the capacity and willingness of government and political institutions to respond to their demands and needs (responsiveness) (Balch, 1974; Campbell et al., 1960; Converse, 1972). Another relevant civic attitude is political trust, which “refers to citizens’ assessments of the core institutions of the polity” (Zmerli et al., 2007, p. 41). More specifically, this attitude “entails a positive evaluation of the most relevant attributes that makes each political institution trustworthy, such as credibility, fairness, competence, transparency in its policy-making, and openness to competing views” (Levi & Stoker, in Zmerli et al., 2007, p. 41).

Political disaffection is also a difficult concept to define and operationalize (de Vreese, 2005; de Vreese & Semetko, 2002). It has often been defined in opposition to attitudes of political interest, efficacy and trust. In general, it may be defined as “a certain estrangement of members of the polity from both its core political institutions and, more generally, from politics” (Gunther & Montero, 2006, p. 49; Gunther

et al., 2007, p. 33) and as the “subjective feeling of powerlessness, cynicism, and lack of confidence in the political process, politicians, and democratic institutions” (Torcal & Montero, 2006, p. 6).

Based on previous research (Maldonado Hernández, 2013; Torcal, 2003; Torcal & Montero, 2006; Yamamoto & Kushin, 2014), this study identifies five different (though interrelated) dimensions of political disaffection: *political disengagement*, *institutional disaffection*, *political cynicism*, *political apathy* and *political skepticism*. Political disengagement refers to a set of “attitudes related to a general distrust of politics and to the respondent’s lack of engagement with the political process” (Torcal & Montero, 2006, p. 6). And institutional disaffection focuses on “beliefs about the lack of responsiveness of political authorities and institutions, and citizens’ lack of confidence in the political institutions” (Torcal & Montero, 2006, p. 7). A related concept is political cynicism, which is also defined as a generalized distrust of the political system (Austin & Pinkleton, 1995, 1999). Cynical citizens tend to view politics as personally irrelevant; therefore, they generally refrain from participating in the political process (Austin & Pinkleton, 1995, 1999; Crotty & Jacobson, 1980). Political apathy is also another relevant component of disaffection and is defined as indifference, lack of interest and/or lack of attention toward politics (Bennett, 1986).

Both political cynicism and apathy are usually considered components of disaffection with negative implications for citizens’ democratic engagement, since they can reinforce each other in a *spiral of political disaffection* (Austin & Pinkleton, 1995, 1999; Pinkleton & Austin, 2004). However, as Yamamoto and Kushin (2014) note, not all dimensions of political disaffection have negative consequences for democracy; some of them, such as political skepticism, may even have some positive effects (Austin & Pinkleton, 1995). Skepticism can be defined as a lack of trust in the political process but without the refusal to participate in it (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997). In contrast to political apathy and cynicism, skepticism stimulates the search for, verification of and contrasting of information from various channels of political communication (such as traditional and social media); therefore, it may be considered as a more positive aspect of disaffection (Austin & Pinkleton, 1999; Pinkleton & Austin, 2001).



### *Research questions*

Drawing on the literature on cognitive mobilization and political disaffection, the following research questions are posed:

- RQ1: Are there any significant differences in the levels of political knowledge, efficacy and trust between the cog-partisan groups?
- RQ2: Are there any significant differences in the levels of political cynicism, apathy and skepticism between the cog-partisan groups?

According to theories of CM, the erosion of partisan loyalties does not necessarily result in a decline in civic attitudes since the possible loss of the mobilizing effect of partisanship in the behavioral and attitudinal components of political engagement could be gradually compensated by an increase in the levels of CM, particularly among younger generations. Similarly, it is also expected that growing levels of CM could limit the increase in the negative dimensions of political disaffection, such as political cynicism and apathy, as proposed in the following hypotheses:

- H1. Cog-partisan groups with high CM (cognitive partisans and apartisans) will tend to show higher levels of political knowledge, efficacy and trust than groups with low CM (apolitical independents and ritual partisans).
- H2. Cog-partisan groups with high CM will tend to show lower levels of political cynicism and apathy than groups with low CM.
- H3. Cog-partisan groups with high CM will tend to show higher levels of political skepticism than groups with low CM.

## METHOD

### *Design and sample*

To test the above hypotheses, multivariate statistical analyses were carried out using the postelection wave of a panel study, a survey design widely used in studies of public opinion, political communication and

political behavior (Eveland & Morey, 2011; de Vreese & Semetko, 2002; Iyengar & Vavreck, 2012).<sup>3</sup>

## STUDY VARIABLES

### *Dependent variables*

A number of indicator scales of various attitudinal dimensions of political engagement were constructed, drawing on the *political engagement-disengagement* continuum (based on political knowledge and internal political efficacy) and the *political engagement-institutional disaffection* continuum (based on external political efficacy and institutional trust). I also developed attitudinal scales of specific dimensions of political disaffection, such as political cynicism, apathy and skepticism.

### *Independent and control variables*

*Cognitive-Partisan Index.* Dalton's (1984, 2013, 2020) procedure was followed by combining indicators of respondents' levels of education and political interest to create an additive index of CM. After that, I classified panel participants into two groups according to their levels of CM (low and high) and then combined both groups with the presence or absence of a party identification declared by respondents in the first wave of the panel study. Participants in the study were finally classified into four groups: *cognitive partisans* ( $n = 245$ , 35%), *ritual partisans* ( $n = 125$ , 17.8%), *apartisans* ( $n = 173$ , 24.7%) and *apolitical independents* ( $n = 156$ , 22.3%). Additionally, indicator scales of political information consumption (in traditional and social media) and political conversation (offline and online) were also developed,

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<sup>3</sup> To carry out the study, the public polling company *Survey Sampling International* (SSI) was hired to obtain a representative sample of the Mexican electorate ( $\geq 18$  years old). The poll was conducted after election day, from July 9<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>. A total of 701 interviewees participated in this wave and in two previous waves. Regarding the sample composition, 54.8% were men ( $n = 384$ ), and 45.2% were women ( $n = 317$ ); the participants were between 18 and 80 years old ( $M = 42.07$ ,  $SD = 13.37$ ). The sample included participants from all states and with different educational and income levels.

as these are often relevant predictors of civic attitudes, according to previous studies on the mobilization effects of mass media in Mexico (Díaz Jiménez, 2017; Díaz Jiménez & Muñoz, 2017). Age and income scales and a *dummy* variable for gender were also developed as control variables.

## ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Tables 2 and 3 show the results of a series of multiple linear regression models analyzing the impact of partisanship and CM (the cog-partisan categories with apolitical independents as the reference category), the consumption of political information through traditional and social media, and offline and online political conversation on attitudinal dimensions of political engagement and disaffection. The models also include social controls (gender, age and income).

### *Political engagement or disengagement?*

I first examine the *political engagement-political disengagement* continuum. It should be noted that positive standardized regression coefficients in Table 2 indicate that the variable in question is positively associated with that particular dimension of citizens' political engagement while negative coefficients indicate that the variable is related to political disaffection. In general, the results of the models provide evidence of a more relevant role of CM than of partisan identification as a predictor of political orientations among the population, given that, unlike ritual partisans, cognitive partisans and apartisans showed higher levels of internal political efficacy than apolitical independents (Table 2).

In other words, in the case of this first dimension, specifically regarding the internal efficacy component, it can be concluded that cognitive partisans and apartisans are significantly more politically engaged (effective) than apolitical independents, even after controlling for a number of social and political information consumption variables. Therefore, CM clearly favors political engagement rather than disengagement among citizens. It is important to note that other variables in the model, such as attention to political information in traditional

TABLE 2  
MULTIPLE LINEAR REGRESSION MODELS OF CIVIC POLITICAL ATTITUDES

	Political engagement–political disengagement		Political engagement–institutional disaffection	
	Political knowledge	Internal political efficacy	External political efficacy	Political trust
Study variables	$\beta$	$\beta$	$\beta$	$\beta$
Gender (1 = male)	.051	.143***	-.004	-.026
Age	.069	-.037	.132**	-.136**
Income	.090*	.032	.024	-.033
Attention to politics in traditional media	-.022	.108*	.053	.250***
Social media use	.074	.063	-.049	.161**
Offline political conversation	-.011	.149**	.042	-.063
Online political conversation	-.084	.133*	-.017	-.032
Cognitive partisan	.046	.200***	-.153*	.189**
Apartisan	.061	.164***	-.049	.052
Ritual partisan	-.020	.079	-.049	.118*
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.014	.264	.020	.154

Source: The author using data from the panel study.

Note: The data in the table are standardized regression coefficients (\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ). The sample size changes for each analysis depending on the number of missing observations for the variables.

media and interpersonal and interactive political conversation, also contribute to increasing citizen engagement. However, it is also noteworthy that neither partisanship nor CM have any significant impact on political knowledge.

#### *Political engagement or institutional disaffection?*

On the other hand, regarding the *political engagement-institutional disaffection* continuum, partisanship proved to be a more relevant

predictor of the observed variation in the levels of political trust than CM. The regression analysis results indicate that cognitive and ritual partisans have significantly higher levels of institutional trust than apartisans and apolitical independents, even after controlling by social background and political information consumption variables.

The findings are similar to those of previous comparative studies of Latin America (Cisneros, 2020) showing that it is partisan identification and not CM that has a more relevant role in fostering citizens' trust in political institutions. However, it is worth mentioning that consumption of political information in traditional and social media was also a strong predictor of political trust among citizens. This finding lends support to theories of CM that emphasize the mobilization effects of political communications on citizens' political involvement (Norris, 2000a, 2000b). In the case of external political efficacy, partisanship and CM are both significant predictors of this civic attitude, but its impact is negative. Cognitive partisans show significantly lower levels of external efficacy than apolitical independents; interestingly, the latter group shows the highest degree of this variable.

### *Political cynicism, apathy and skepticism*

Regarding the analysis of the three dimensions of political disaffection as dependent variables of the study, the results of regression models show that, with the exception of political apathy, neither partisanship nor CM seem to be relevant explanatory variables of such orientations. There is no statistically significant association between cog-partisan categories and political disaffection dimensions while controlling for the other variables in the model. Only age is positively and significantly associated with political cynicism, and the only significant predictor of political skepticism is offline political conversation (Table 3).

However, in the case of political apathy, CM is a relevant explanatory variable since both cognitive partisans and apartisans seem to be significantly less apathetic than apolitical independents. Therefore, the results suggest that along with age, variables such as high levels of CM and political information consumption in social media contributed to significantly reducing the levels of political apathy of the Mexican electorate in 2018 (Table 3). However, an interesting finding is that

high levels of online political conversation seem to be significantly associated with greater political apathy among citizens.

It should be noted that, in general, the results of the analyses suggest that except for political apathy, the effects of partisanship and CM are rather limited as an explanation for political disaffection among Mexicans. Moreover, the R squared values of the models are very low in all cases, which suggests that even in the case of political apathy, partisanship and CM have a modest role in explaining the total observed variation in these three dimensions of disaffection.

TABLE 3  
MULTIPLE LINEAR REGRESSION MODELS OF DIMENSIONS OF  
POLITICAL DISAFFECTION

	Political cynicism	Political apathy	Political skepticism
Study variables	$\beta$	$\beta$	$\beta$
Gender (1 = male)	-.012	.069	.004
Age	.152***	-.083*	.050
Income	.006	-.077	.031
Attention to politics in traditional media	.043	.034	.061
Social media use	-.090	-.133*	-.009
Offline political conversation	.050	-.017	.198*
Online political conversation	-.031	.210**	.071
Cognitive partisan	-.004	-.187**	-.008
Apartisan	.032	-.135*	.042
Ritual partisan	-.031	-.084	-.086
R <sup>2</sup> adjusted	.023	.037	.092

Source: The author with data from the panel study.

Note: The data in the table are standardized regression coefficients (\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ). The sample size changes for each analysis, depending on the number of missing observations for the variables.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The Mexican electorate has significantly dealigned from political parties over the last two decades. The proportion of citizens identifying with political parties decreased from 77% in 1997 to only half of the electorate in 2018. The consequent increase in the independent electorate poses important challenges in the effort to identify the similarities and differences between partisan and independent voters relating to civic attitudes and political disaffection patterns.

The present study analyzed these differences based on the presence or absence of partisan ties (partisan versus independent) and levels of CM (low or high) among voters. Previous research contends that partisan dealignment may be associated with the erosion of political engagement and a possible increase in levels of political disaffection among citizens. However, other studies argue that the decline in partisanship and party mobilization may be gradually being replaced by an increase in CM among citizens. Therefore, it is expected that compared to individuals with low levels of education and interest in politics, those with higher levels of CM will show higher levels of political engagement and lower levels of political disaffection.

The results of a series of multiple regression models show some significant differences between voters with high and low levels of CM in the attitudinal dimensions of political engagement and political disaffection analyzed in the study. For instance, along with cognitive partisans, apartisans show higher levels of internal political efficacy than independents with low CM.

Other variables, such as attention to politics in traditional media and interpersonal and interactive political conversation, are also relevant predictors of this political attitude. Therefore, CM variables seem to be more important than partisanship for encouraging citizens' feelings of internal political efficacy, as is the case in advanced democracies in North America and Europe. However, another relevant finding is that, in contrast to their counterparts in advanced democracies, apartisans do not exhibit significantly higher levels of political knowledge than apolitical independents do.

The results also suggest that when the analysis focuses on other relevant civic orientations, such as external political efficacy and institutional trust, partisanship seems to be a more relevant explanatory variable. However, it should be also noted that in the case of institutional trust, the consumption of political information through both traditional and social media is also a relevant predictor, which provides additional evidence for theories about the mobilizing effect of mediated political communication on citizens' political engagement.

Regarding the attitudinal components of political disaffection analyzed in the study, neither CM nor partisanship are found to be significant predictors of these variables, except for political apathy. Both groups with high CM (apartisans and cognitive partisans) display lower levels of political apathy than apolitical independents. However, while it is true that unlike political cynicism and skepticism, CM seems to have a statistically significant impact on reducing the levels of political apathy among the respondents, the effect size is rather moderate.

In sum, the results show that, with the exception of political apathy, there are no significant differences among the four cog-partisan groups on any of the dimensions of political disaffection. Regarding this dimension of disaffection, the analyses show that independent voters are not necessarily politically apathetic. The degree of political apathy among citizens who lack partisan attachments depends to some extent on their levels of CM (given that apartisans exhibit significantly lower levels of this variable than apolitical independents). Similarly, the consumption of political information in the media during the campaign is another variable making a significant contribution to reducing the levels of apathy among citizens.

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