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Winners' bliss, losers' discontent: the impact of affective polarization on satisfaction with
democracy in Europe

MA Thesis

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Authorship Declaration

I have prepared this thesis independently. All the views of other authors, as well as data from literary sources and elsewhere, have been cited.

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Abstract

Scholars worldwide increasingly argue that polarization is intensifying, impacting democratic processes. The issue of increasing polarization has been proven to be concerning and threatening, leading to violent political behavior, as evident in the case of the US Capitol storming. Yet, the academic debate surrounding this issue is itself deeply polarized. There is significant discussion about the nature of polarization, with the affective perspective on polarization emerging as a noteworthy alternative paradigm. Furthermore, there are assertions that claims regarding affective polarization's undermining of democratic norms are speculative. This polarized academic debate, lack of empirical evidence, the primary focus of the research on the US, and the knowledge gap regarding the impact of affective polarization on democratic satisfaction among electoral winners and losers serve as the catalyst for this thesis. This study, examining 33 different elections across 25 European polities, illuminates the contrast in democratic satisfaction between electoral winners and losers. It highlights that electoral losers, who are strongly attached to their party, experience a significant decline in their perception of democracy's function in their country. In comparison, such a tendency was not observed among the winners. However, a thorough exploration of each case demonstrates varying effects of the relationship.

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Introduction

The ability to find a compromise between opposing parties is one of the fundamental characteristics of a healthy and stable democracy. Achieving this might be challenging in a situation of a new electoral reality, which might be an obnoxious experience for those who end up on the losing side of the elections. However, losing is an inevitable part of the electoral cycle since democratic political systems are designed in a way to divide citizens into groups of winners and losers in the aftermath of every election with varying degrees of how these groups of majority and minority are treated (Anderson & Guillory, 1997).

Still, what holds significance is that accepting this new reality from the losing side is paramount for the solidity and continuity of a democratic regime, requiring that electoral losers voluntarily adhere to the peaceful transfer of power to newly elected authorities. Nevertheless, this process might be challenged if the losing side finds election results unacceptable for certain reasons, e.g., lack of representation or legitimacy, further threatening the whole political system. Thus, at least partial losers' consent should be present to sustain the democratic agenda since it is "one of the central, if not *the* central, requirement of the democratic bargain" (Anderson et al., 2005, p. 2).

This phenomenon has been thoroughly examined in academic papers, framing it as a winner-loser gap in political support, with those who vote for the losing party experiencing a severe decrease in this indicator after the election results become certain (Halliez & Thornton, 2023). In times of increasing polarization fueled by affective ties, the effect of being an electoral loser diminishes losers' willingness to accept new government policies due to higher stakes in their perception of political competition, which might culminate with violent political behavior to trigger political change, as evident in the case of the US Capitol (Ward & Tavits, 2019). This is explained by the assimilation of party success with personal, pronounced among affectively polarized partisans, who, as Mason (2015) described, disrespectfully agree with opposing positions.

Consequently, studying affective polarization (hereafter AP) has become increasingly urgent in contemporary scholarship. Over the past decade, the literature on this subject has experienced exponential growth, reflecting a heightened interest in understanding the phenomenon of escalating animosity between partisan groups across various national and political contexts (Enders, 2021; Harteveld & Wagner, 2023; Iyengar et al., 2012, 2019; Iyengar & Westwood, 2015;

Kingzette et al., 2021; Reiljan, 2020; Wagner, 2021). AP, so to say, has emerged as a modern political zeitgeist that characterizes contemporary politics. A search on AP in the SCOPUS database among titles, keywords, and abstracts demonstrates an explosion of academic research visualized in Figure 1¹.

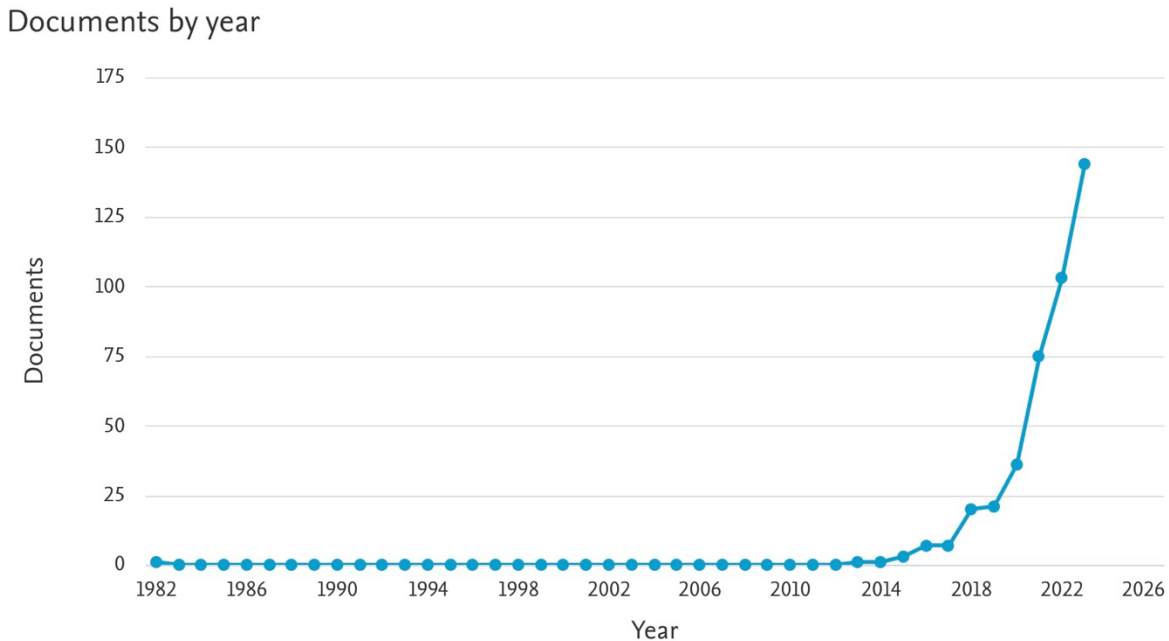


Figure 1. Publications on AP between 1982 and 2023 years in the SCOPUS database

This paradigm shift in studying political polarization challenges the traditional lens of ideological perspectives and underscores the paramount importance of understanding affective dynamics in contemporary political discourse. One of the overarching findings across studies on AP pinpoints that co-partisans propensity to view each other positively while having hostile attitudes toward supporters of different parties has drastically increased over time. This emotional division exceeds ideological differences and severely challenges democratic processes, governmental efficiency, and political trust (Gidengil et al., 2022; Hetherington & Rudolph, 2015; Orhan, 2022).

In the foundational piece by Iyengar et al. (2012), which catalyzed scholarly attention to AP, researchers highlighted its detrimental effects on democratic endurance. Polarized individuals

¹ The search included American and British English versions of polarization/polarisation to enlarge the search results. To conduct the same search, follow this inquiry in SCOPUS: TITLE-ABS-KEY ({affective polarization} OR {affective polarisation})

skeptical of the motives of the opposing party exhibit lower satisfaction with democratic institutions, as evidenced by declining indicators of satisfaction with democracy (hereafter SwD)² particularly pronounced among electoral losers (Iyengar et al., 2012). Moreover, recent studies, such as that by Kingzette et al. (2021), have revealed the politicization of democratic norms, wherein AP undermines core democratic principles. Affectively polarized partisans exhibit a tendency to oppose constitutional protections when their party holds power but support them when their party is in opposition, thus eroding the foundational pillars of the political system (Kingzette et al., 2021, p. 663).

These findings are of paramount importance, demonstrating how biases among affectively polarized partisans can harm democratic legitimacy. In this case, following established democratic procedures, e.g., transferring power in the aftermath of the election, is no longer a priority but the party that dictates to partisans what is “right” and “wrong.” Such a threatening tendency becomes more prominent if large groups in society are highly polarized and find themselves in a losing position, so elites in power exploit partisan cleavages fueled by affective biases to manipulate democratic norms.

Nevertheless, given the prominence of research on AP, the scholarly debate on its impact on democratic support is polarized itself, with some scholars remaining skeptical and labeling this strand of the literature as speculation (for reviews of the evidence, see Broockman et al., 2023). Consequently, the unresolved puzzle surrounding the impact of affective polarization on electoral winners and losers’ satisfaction with democracy necessitates further investigation. The only study I identified that shed light on this phenomenon was conducted by Janssen (2023) in a specific national context, namely, the United Kingdom (UK) elections in 2015 and 2019. Thus, a significant gap remains in understanding its implications with traditional multi-party systems, particularly in European democracies. To put plainly, we know almost nothing about this relationship when it comes to multi-party systems, and the strand of the literature of AP, while

² In this paper, the terms 'satisfaction with democracy' and 'democratic satisfaction' are used interchangeably

having significant progress in the direction of democratic impact, has been severely understudied in the context of the winner-loser gap.³

Thus, given the importance of investigating this relationship and filling the gap in our knowledge of cross-national comparison based on the individual level, the central research question leading this thesis is how affective polarization influences electoral winners' and losers' satisfaction with democracy. Consequently, this thesis serves as an enlargement of Janssen's (2023) study, and in a similar manner, the findings contribute to both AP literature and the winner-loser gap literature, providing new knowledge of this complex interplay.

The study incorporates the traditional framework of political support, of which SwD is only one of the components. Drawing theoretical insights from Eastonian (1975) study and the work of Norris (2017), this research serves as a starting point for a further investigation of AP's impact on the whole framework of political support as the results of the relationship between AP and SwD are not complete enough to make judgments about the threat for the whole political system. The initial theoretical expectations are formulated so that SwD will be diminished among polarized electoral losers while polarized electoral winners will exhibit higher levels of SwD. This theoretical assumption is consistent with the literature and mainly based on the idea that winning *and* losing means much more to the affectively polarized partisans as emotionally, they are more invested and care deeply more than those who are neutral to the out-groups (Ward & Tavits, 2019).

To support my theoretical claims and answer my research question, in the empirical analysis, I utilize logistic regression analysis based on cross-sectional post-election data gathered in the period between 2016 and 2021 from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) Module 5, encompassing 33 elections in 25 European polities, namely Albania, Austria, Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia,

³ This is evident once again in the search in the SCOPUS database on AP and democracy that resulted in 176 documents with the following inquiry TITLE-ABS-KEY ({affective polarization} OR {affective polarisation} AND "democ*") allowing to find papers with keywords such as democracy, democratic, etc. Meanwhile, a similar search but on the winner-loser gap with the following inquiry TITLE-ABS-KEY ({affective polarization} OR {affective polarisation} AND "win* los*") resulted only in 2 documents.

Sweden and Türkiye. This method of extensive data analysis enables a thorough examination across numerous countries, facilitating cross-national comparability at the individual level. The selection of cases was based on the criteria of being located in Europe, so the study sought to incorporate all countries from CSES Module 5, meeting this criterion for examination.

The thesis is structured in the following way. In the next chapter, I provide a detailed discussion of the concepts, conceptualizing them individually for a comprehensive construction of a theoretical framework. Firstly, the concept of AP is discussed from the perspective of social identity theory. Further, constructing the theoretical framework upon which the research is built encompasses literature on political support, including Eastonian's (1975) framework. After that, electoral winners and losers are defined, followed by a discussion of the gap between them. Finally, the literature review culminates with a solid theoretical background, allowing me to put the research hypotheses forward.

Having constructed a conceptual framework, the next chapter focuses on the study's methodology. Specifically, in this part, I argue for a preferred course of measurement for the concepts, given my data, and discuss approaches in the literature and limitations in my study. Methodology explains how electoral winners and losers are coded, how AP and SwD will be calculated, and how empirical analysis will be conducted. Finally, the analysis follows, incorporating visual presentations of the findings and explanations of the received results. Following that, the conclusion and discussion for future research conclude the thesis.

Chapter 1: Nexus of affective polarization and winner-loser gap in the context of multi-party systems

This part of the thesis outlines existing knowledge about the key concepts and constructs the conceptual framework for my research. In this chapter, I critically analyze and identify gaps within the conducted studies to enhance our understanding of AP, SwD, electoral winners and losers, the winner-loser gap, and their relationship. The exploration of theoretical foundations incorporates the literature that focuses on Europe and the United States, where most of the knowledge on AP has been accumulated (see Figure 2). The literature review is structured so that each concept is systematically conceptualized, exploring their interplay and culminating in the formulation of hypotheses based on these literature discussions.

Documents by country or territory

Compare the document counts for up to 15 countries/territories.

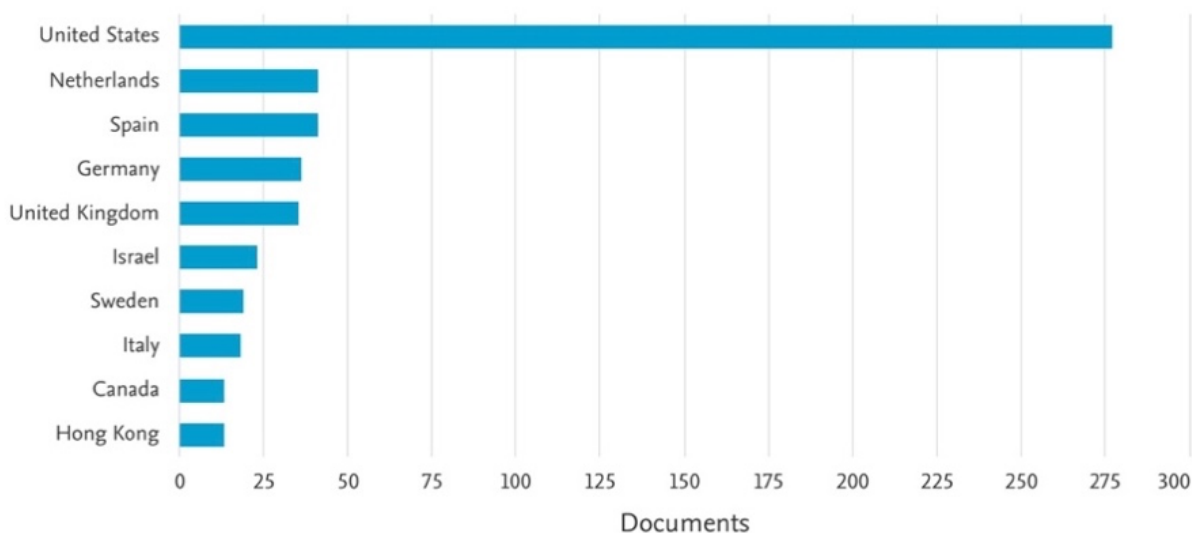


Figure 2. *The number of academic papers published on AP by country or territory based on the SCOPUS database*

The objective of this section is to set a strong theoretical ground, which first and foremost aims to construct the theoretical framework that will serve as a solid and concrete foundation for further building the hypotheses. The initial stage of achieving this goal derives from conceptualizing polarization in general. Thus, following a ladder of abstraction proposed by Sartori (1970), I strive

to form concepts consciously by approaching them from a more abstract perspective and adding more attributes to define the concepts systematically, climbing the ladder and employing necessary features to make them theoretically clear to the reader. In this chapter, in addition to a discussion of critical literature and reflection, I include different visual examples to better comprehend the concepts discussed.

1.1. Affective polarization as social identity

As social creatures, we humans tend to group with those similar to us, our characteristics, ideas and views about the world. Such groupness is inherently for humankind and an integral part of social behavior. Since the very beginning of humanity, this tendency to identify with certain groups has been driven by the need for humans to unite to survive. As we have evolved into modern civilizations, group identification is no longer driven by previously outlined need. It has shifted to more complex collective identities that in the political domain manifest as ideological currents or beliefs. For instance, there are far more chances to meet people identifying with left or right ideological camps rather than with tribes. This distinction into social groups is again part of human nature.

Moving on now to consider polarization, it can be broadly defined as a distinction between groups *into opposite extremes*, which is characterized by three features: distance between the groups (namely, how far or close the groups are on a certain continuum, e.g., ideological, affective, etc.), homogeneity (an in-group feature defined by the quality of resemblance among the group members), and size of these groups (Esteban & Ray, 1994, p. 824). All three features defining polarization are central and facilitate the extent to which clusters differ, with the size of the groups holding specific weights. Usually, in society, segregation into groups occurs on certain criteria, e.g., a particular set of values or attributes one aligns with being a part of the group, manifesting similarities within the in-group (the group one identifies with) and, not less importantly, dissimilarities to the out-group (the group one does not identify with). In simplified language, people like things they find in common with a certain group, providing them with a sense of pleasure, safety, and security, leading to closer bonds with that group than others.

To grasp the polarization process conceptually, one might analogize it to the separation of tectonic plates, where they diverge from each other, akin to a crack forming and widening between them.

Continuing from the abstraction, polarization resembles societal fracture, manifesting as an increasing inability to find common ground and fostering the perception of opposing groups as adversaries rather than collaborators. It is vital to emphasize that polarization can occur very easily as “(...) the mere fact of division into groups is enough to trigger discriminatory behavior,” as suggested in a well-known social identity theory elucidated by Tajfel (1970, p. 96). Similarly, Esteban & Ray (1994, p. 820) perceive a potential threat in the emergence of sizable opposing groups, concluding that the increasing divide between social groups may even lead to social unrest. Expanding further on the topic, this phenomenon has been termed by Abramowitz (2010) as the disappearing center, meaning that people are moving further away from each other, attributing it to two-way interaction between polarization among elites that facilitates greater citizen engagement and polarization among engaged citizens who influence their representative polarization views. Hence, this phenomenon is likely to be perceived as problematic but necessitates a precise definition, which I will elaborate on later in this section.

For visual comprehension, Figure 3 depicts a society where most members are centered around a continuum, indicated by a more intense color in the middle. This means that citizens in this type of society have mostly centered stances on issues. This suggests that people can find common ground despite being slightly positioned on different sides of the continuum. Still, there is enough critical mass in the center from both groups. Additionally, a slight defragmentation of society from the center is portrayed, as indicated by small pixels, representing some group members polarizing to opposite sides.

In contrast, Figure 4 represents the final consolidation of fragmented parts of society onto opposite sides that visually captures the previously mentioned term "disappearing center." In this society, citizens are divided into opposing camps, characterized by a "Manichean view," which means perception of the world through the prism of **“good versus evil”** or **“us versus them.”** Consequently, a polarized society would be characterized by sizeable groups concentrated on opposite sides of a certain continuum rather than equally distributed among the range.

By comparing Figure 3 and Figure 4, it becomes apparent that polarization is higher in the latter case. Figure 3 represents more similarity between groups reflected in more tense color in the middle and not a significant color difference between the groups. In contrast, Figure 4 depicts a

clear distinction between two opposing units reflected in different colors. In other words, society is more polarized when the groups are more similar within and different across. Esteban & Ray (1994, p. 820) contend that societies characterized by more prominent manifestations of in-group homogeneity and out-group heterogeneity are likely to face potential tensions between groups, leading to social revolt or rebellion.

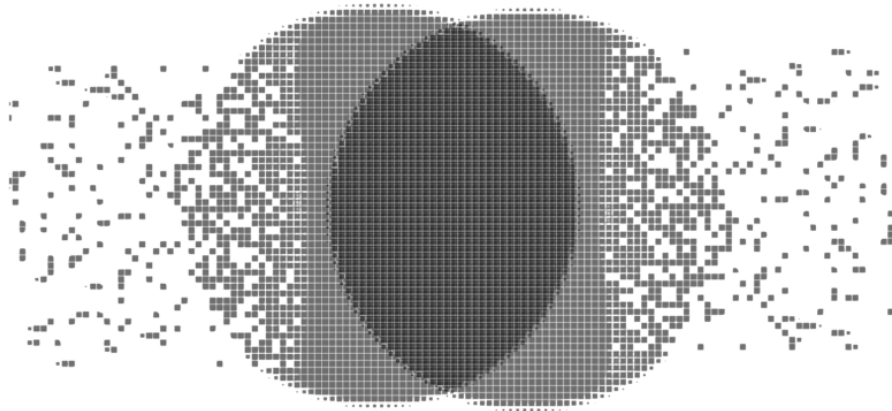


Figure 3. *A visual example of centered society*



Figure 4. *A visual depiction of "disappearing center" or polarization process*

"As the struggle proceeds, 'the whole society breaks up more and more into two hostile camps, two great, directly antagonistic classes: bourgeoisie and proletariat.' The classes polarize, so that they become internally more homogeneous and more and more sharply distinguished from one another in wealth and power" (Deutsch, 1971, p. 44).

Incorporating Deutsch's (1971) perspective into Esteban & Ray's (1994) work provided an argument for the conceptual distinction between their theory and the theory of economic inequality. Central to this argument was the recognition that economic inequality might be low in societies while polarization is high. This insight sharpens the polarization framework by suggesting that societies cluster on dimensions that go far beyond just economic wealth or income and expand to more complex and multifaceted issues such as racial, religious, or nationalistic conflicts, which also require a group identification and not a mere distribution based on one's salary (Esteban & Ray's, 1994, p. 822). Therefore, the polarization framework sheds additional light on understanding intergroup clashes, which, as argued, serves as a prism for looking at deeply ingrained and fundamental aspects of groups' division.

One might inquire if polarization is considered a social phenomenon; what relevance does it hold to the political realm? The answer to this question might be derived from one of the causes that lead to an increased level of social polarization, which is *partisan-ideological sorting*, which means that partisan and political identities are more aligned than they were ever before, accelerating partisan biases or strong emotions such as anger (Mason, 2015, p. 128). Identifying partisanship as a social identity, Mason (2015) further explains, "the connection between partisan and party is an emotional and social one, as well as a logical one" (p. 129). This suggests that political party has become a vital element of one's social identity; therefore, its success influences one's perceptions, values, and ideas about the world that are aligned with the party's (Ward & Tavits, 2019, p. 2). To put it another way, the in-party is one of the key elements that make up polarized partisans' *social construction of reality* (a term proposed by Luckmann & Berger, 1966) and, therefore, its success, as well as its loss, has a vital impact on one's perception of the world. Mason (2015) suggests that understanding partisanship in this context is akin to recognizing that "a partisan behaves more like a sports fan than like a banker choosing an investment." (p. 129).

*"Broadly speaking, **political** polarisation thus describes the formation or existence of clusters based on attributes relevant to the political sphere, such as ideology or political identities, while societal polarisation refers to divisions based on socio-economic or socio-cultural characteristics such as income, ethnic background, education, cultural identities, social status, etc" (Röllicke, 2023, p. 5).*

Redirecting the focus to the tenets of social identity theory elucidated by Tajfel (1970), it is crucial to highlight that a central presumption of this theory is that groups have hostile attitudes towards out-groups and the favor towards in-groups. Running experiments based on unimportant criteria for intergroup categorization (in the first experiment, subjects were assigned to a group based on the estimation of number of dots shown on the screen, and in the second, based on aesthetic preference for art) led to the striking and remarkable results of out-group discrimination with a high statistical significance in both cases.

Moreover, Coser (1956) differentiated intergroup clash into two types: the “rational” and the “irrational,” with the former being christened by Tajfel (1970) as “a means to an end” (p. 96), reflected in the natural competition between groups that have competing interests, and the latter as “an end in itself” (p. 96), reflected in the conflict as its end goal for expressing emotional tensions. Given the fact that political polarization occurs on much deeper ground than estimation of number of dots or preference for art the outcomes of a distinction carry a completely different weight and consequences.

The concept of AP is built upon the social identity theory described previously, which has challenged the long-standing perspective of political polarization studied and primarily associated through the lens of ideological polarization (hereafter IP) which links to the Coser's (1956) distinction between rational and irrational intergroup clashes. The perspective of left-right ideology on political issues is perhaps one of the most famous examples of polarization between the groups in society. Continuing from this point, the literature reflects divergent viewpoints among scholars regarding the extent and existence of polarization, but it highly depends on the *nature* of polarization being discussed (see Fiorina et al., 2008; Fiorina & Abrams, 2008 versus Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008; Hetherington, 2001).

For instance, while ideological polarization increased due to better partisan ideological sorting, i.e., Democrats became more liberal and Republicans more conservative than they were 50 years ago, this has not led to a significant change in polarization on issues that remained relatively moderate and “the result is an electorate that may agree on many things, but nonetheless cannot get along” (Mason, 2015, p. 129). Roughly speaking, being a part of a Democrat or Republican political party conveys specific worldviews and values that individuals align with and endorse.

Nevertheless, as stated in the beginning of the paragraph IP paradigm was challenged in the foundational piece, by Iyengar et al., (2012) who argued for an alternative definition for political polarization, based on the social identity theory in the center of which is not ideology, but affect.

Iyengar's et al., (2012) work has been seminal in the development of AP literature with many contributions following (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015; Janssen, 2023; Reiljan, 2020; Wagner, 2021, 2024). However, it is crucial to underscore that before, the affective test of polarization had already been employed by Hetherington & Weiler (2009) and Richardson (1991) who framed the concept as “party loyalty,” showing that loathing across party lines in the European multi-party context compared to the US two-party system might be even more intense based on the long-standing hostilities and complex issues among partisans. Another significant milestone in the evolution of literature within the European context was marked by a ground-breaking research by Reiljan (2020), who further emphasized the presence of AP in European multi-party systems, particularly in Central Eastern and Southern Europe, with the prevailing results over the long-believed, strongly polarized United States, where the primary focus of the research has lied as evident in Figure 2.

Drawing attention back to conceptual differences between AP and IP it is vital to assert that while these concepts are closely related, they are different in their nature and can exist independently (Reiljan, 2020). According to Reiljan (2020), AP, similarly to IP, derives from homogeneity within and heterogeneity across; however, the attitudes toward both in-group and out-group define this type of polarization. Therefore, the affective test of polarization requires (1) positive evaluation of the in-party, as well as (2) negative evaluation of the out-party (Iyengar et al., 2012; Janssen, 2023; Reiljan, 2020). Hence, the scale of AP mirrors the degree of divergence in how each group evaluates the other, and the larger distance suggests the larger degree of AP (the more partisan likes in-party and dislikes out-parties, the more polarized one is).

Consequently, affect is a key measure of polarization in the context of party identification and not ideology since IP requires a certain degree of knowledge about political party's stances, while affect represents emotional and social attachment (Iyengar et al., 2012). Similar to the social identity theory, Iyengar et al. (2012) demonstrate that “the mere act of identifying with a political party is sufficient to trigger negative evaluations of the opposition” (p. 407). The traditional

definition of AP from the work by Iyengar et al. (2012), defines it as ‘the extent to which partisans view each other as a disliked out-group’ (p. 406). In his study, Reiljan (2020) has defined AP as “a tendency among party supporters (partisans) to view other party/parties as a disliked out-group(s), while holding positive ingroup feelings for one’s own party” (p. 376).

Having conceptually distinguished between the concepts of IP and AP, one should also recognize polarization on various levels, namely mass and elite polarization. Earlier in this chapter, I referred to the work by Abramowitz (2010), who raised a chicken-and-egg concern regarding the cyclical relationship between polarized elites who foster citizen engagement and conversely engaged citizens who shape their representative's polarization views. According to Reiljan (2020), in case of IP, both sides of electoral competition, namely demand and supply sides have been examined in the studies. However, in case of AP due to the limited data on elites, the concept has been examined primarily as a demand side assessed through the party supporters attitudes (ibid.). Therefore, in this thesis, similar to the previous studies, the concept of AP is treated as a demand side, thus the one on the mass level.

Furthermore, it is essential to address several critical points about the AP concept. Among these, the focus on multi-party systems stands out as particularly relevant for my study. Notably, the concept of AP, frequently referenced in the context of the United States, encounters a challenge when applied to the European context, which manifested not only in finding appropriate measures but also in conceptual rigorousness (Röllicke, 2023). As the scope of studies on AP expands geographically, there is a need for conceptual tools and critical conceptual approaches to grasp it. As Sartori (1970) articulated, the so-called “travelling problem” arises, leading to *conceptual stretching*. To overcome the conceptual ambiguities in the scholarly discourses, Röllicke (2023) conducted an extensive literature review, which analyzed 78 articles specifically within a multi-party context.

In her work, Röllicke (2023) outlines three main conceptual ambiguities regarding the concept of AP in a multi-party context, namely, the target of dislike (who or what is the outgroup?), the essence of the feeling of dislike (what exactly is the dislike?) and understanding polarization in affective dimension. Let me address these ambiguities one by one, starting with explaining the meaning of the out-group in the context of this study given the lack of unified definition for multi-

party studies as most of the academics utilized Iyengar's et al. (2012) seminal definition presented earlier (Röllicke, 2023). Thus, in the context of multi-party system, first of all, one should recognize various directions of AP proposed by Röllicke (2023):

- towards **political parties**, in this case “[a]ffective polarisation refers to the extent to which citizens feel more negatively toward other political parties than toward their own” (Boxell et al., 2020, p. 2).
- towards **partisans that support opposing parties**, “dislike voters of the other party and view their co-partisans positively” (Knudsen, 2021, p. 34).
- towards **citizens with other political identities**, “[a]ffective polarisation generally refers to a situation of antipathy between citizens based on their respective political identities” (Harteveld, Mendoza, et al., 2022, p. 707).

As can be observed, depending on the direction of AP, its definition differs. This is also evident in definitions proposed by Reiljan (2020) and Iyengar et al. (2012). In other words, it suggests that despite correlations between the affect towards different targets, the nature of the concept is not the same (Kekkonen et al., 2022; Knudsen, 2021). Based on Harteveld's et al. (2022) account of *vertical* and *horizontal* consequences of AP, Röllicke (2023) proposed similar classification for the direction of (dis)like as shown in Figure 5. Such distinguishment hints at different directions of AP, namely vertical – at political parties or elites, and horizontal – towards fellow citizens, which is consequently categorized into various groups depending on belonging to a certain political party, ideology, or social identity. Furthermore, this classification can be distinguished as partisan-to-party and partisan-to-partisan directions. Thus, in light of this critical conceptual review of AP, it is imperative to clarify previous point made about prevailing results of AP among Central and Eastern European countries compared to the United States (Reiljan, 2020).

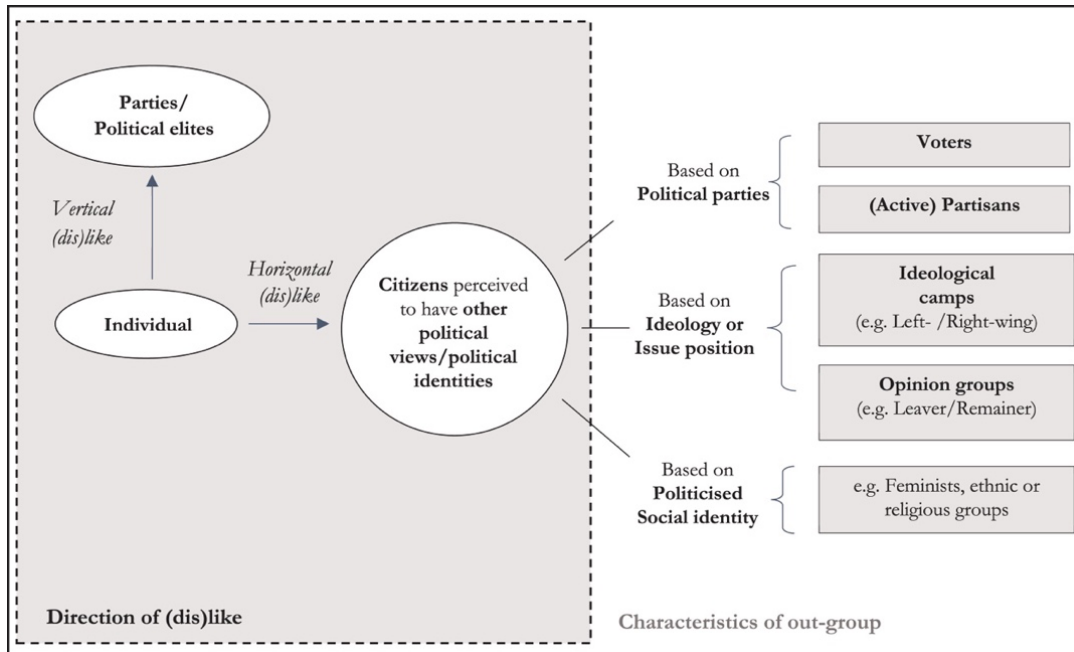


Figure 5. *Vertical and horizontal directions of (dis)like.* Source: Röllicke (2023)

Specifically, given the focus of Reiljan's (2020) study on attitudes towards political parties, in this instance comparability between cases is applicable only on vertical dimension, while the same statement can not be made about horizontal. In other words, while partisans in Central and Eastern European countries (dis)like opposing political parties and like their own more compared to the US, this does not necessarily mean that there is the same tendency towards out-partisans. This distinguishment also clarifies understanding the concept's primary attachment to the US electorate, given that political identity constitutes a large part of one's social identity in America, leading to increased bias among partisans while having relatively moderate results of affect towards political parties compared to Europe. Consequently, for conceptual clarity the focus of this study is on the direction towards political parties, and not partisans or differing political identities.

The second conceptual ambiguity, according to Röllicke (2023), stems from an interchangeable use of "dislike" with other emotions, such as hate, animosity (e.g., Harteveld, Berntzen, et al., 2022) or distrust, which are arguably different and stronger feelings than dislike. Consequently, when measured, the results capture different conceptual phenomena. Thus, this suggests carefully considering what one intends to examine and the essence of what dislike is at the heart of AP. Hence, in the scope of this study, dislike is an attitude or like-dislike feeling towards political parties, given what is measured in the next chapter due to the available data. Ideally, as Röllicke

(2023) suggests, the dislike can be unwrapped into many other feelings, such as antipathy, fear, disgust, etc. However, because of the data collection limitations, measuring this phenomenon with such precision is not feasible. Therefore, this study utilises the dislike concept.

Last but not least, the third AP's conceptual concern has already been elaborated upon in this chapter, addressing the concept of polarization in general. As mentioned previously, the presence of AP is determined by both, positive *and* negative out-group evaluations, distinguishing the concept of AP from the neighboring concepts (Esteban & Ray, 1994; Reiljan, 2020; Röllicke, 2023). It has also been mentioned that polarization refers to two distinct camps, however, in multi-party system, as suggested by its definition, there might be more out-groups than one. Thus, while in the US system it is clear what group is defined as an out-group, in the European context such a distinction can occur between many groups as a disperse distribution of like-dislike political attitudes (significance of the group depends on its size) (Röllicke, 2023). In the case of this study, since it is conducted on the individual level based on CSES data, meaningful party identification (homogeneity) is determined by the feeling of closeness to one party, meaning that the party one feels closest to is one's in-party, while all other parties are considered as out-parties. Therefore, in the context of this study, one should comprehend affective polarization as the extent to which like-dislike attitude of individual directed towards in-party differ from the like-dislike attitudes towards out-parties occurring among the mass level.

1.2. Satisfaction with democracy in the broader framework of political support

Before diving into the other key concept of this thesis, democratic satisfaction, it is crucial to clarify why this topic is being discussed within the framework of political support. First, democratic satisfaction is an important indicator that illustrates how citizens evaluate how democracy works in their country and their perception of democratic legitimacy. However, it would be misleading to examine the concept pretending that it exists in isolation, meaning that there are other components that contribute to the stability of the democratic system as well. Therefore, the main reasons to examine this concept within the framework of political support are to avoid speculation of its impact on the democratic regime's stability, understand its position within the framework, and ensure its conceptual preciseness. Additionally, the concept bears different meaning to different people and remains vague when not clarified and tailored to a specific context as will be demonstrated. When one is asked about SwD, that leaves much room

for one's interpretation of the question, namely, does this concept capture satisfaction with the incumbent authorities, the general political system as a whole, democracy as a type of governing regime or all of them together (Canache et al., 2001)? Thus, this raises a couple of critical questions regarding the concept: how to differ between the incumbent and system affects? How can one distinguish SwD within specific and diffuse system support? Is it conceptually feasible? Consequently, without establishing a fundamental essence of the concept, its explanatory power might be limited, hence necessitates thorough examination in the broader framework of political support which is presented in this chapter.

The concept of political support is far from simple, and its theoretical framework extends beyond the basic understanding of what support in ordinary language means. Perhaps the most influential work in bringing conceptual clarity on political support stems from the work of Easton (1975), who defines support as “an attitude by which a person orients himself to an object either favorably or unfavorably, positively or negatively” (p. 436). According to Easton's (1975) framework for theorizing political support, negative attitudes or disapproval of the political system does not necessarily threaten the existence of the system. It might be compatible with it, meaning there is a different degree of “seriousness” in political discontent. In his words, “not all expressions of unfavorable orientations have the same degree of gravity for a political system. Some may be consistent with its maintenance; others may lead to fundamental change” (ibid., p. 437). For instance, poor government performance leading to a decreased level of satisfaction does not mean citizens are against democracy in general and are going to overthrow the regime.

Previous example illustrated an important conceptual distinction between specific support – support for political authorities' behavior and their performance, and diffuse support – support for the regime generally that are interrelated but not interdependent according to Easton (1975). However, depending on the stability of the democratic system, the response to crises might differ, triggering the movements to fundamental changes in some cases (Muller & Jukam, 1977). This suggests that system affect has a greater impact on the political support as opposed to incumbent affect. This observation has been framed by Muller & Jukam (1977) as,

“if system affect is negative among powerful or sizable segments of a polity, the threat to the stability of the prevailing regime will be great, even if affect for a particular

incumbent administration is positive; conversely, if system affect is positive among powerful or sizable segments of a polity, the threat to the stability of the prevailing regime will be small, even if affect for a particular incumbent administration is negative” (p. 1563).

In light of this insight, it is of paramount importance to draw theoretical links to previously discussed concept of AP the extent of which is characterized by the sizeable groups on opposite extremes. To state things in clear, the threat to democratic regime is more likely to occur in the nation that experiences low system support and high AP level on the large scale, despite positive evaluation of elected authorities. Therefore, understanding distinction between system and incumbent affect, both conceptually and empirically and which one of them is more pronounced among polarized partisans and whether it refers to more specific or diffuse support is key to understanding threat to democratic regime. Further, Muller & Jukam (1977), relying on the work by Lipset (1960) provided empirical examples of democratic backlashes in societies that experienced higher levels of discontent with the system in general, so when the incumbent effect turned negative, it triggered fundamental changes in the regime, as evident in the case of Germany, Austria, and Spain in the 1930s. It is challenging to prove that AP played a role in these cases, however, it is also hard to deny the prominent potential of the fit into the framework within the modern context to explain contemporary democratic developments. Moreover, Muller & Jukam (1977) also suggest that ideology plays an important role in system affect and one’s aggressive political behavior, which is more pronounced among leftists than centrists and rightists.

Shifting the emphasis back to the theoretical framework of diffuse and specific political support, despite providing a solid conceptual foundation for democratic approval, the Eastonian theoretical framework needed to be adjusted to the contemporary realities. This has been made in the work of Norris (2017), who provided conceptually extended framework of the system support consisting of 5 components ranging from the most diffuse to the most specific support (see Figure 6). According to her, in line with Muller & Jukam (1977) and in contrast with Easton (1975), citizens can separate their satisfaction with different state agencies, incumbents, and the political system as a whole. In the nested model proposed by Norris (2017), national identities take place as the most diffuse attitude toward political system, suggesting that feeling of belonging to the nation can influence the perception of political institutions. The next level reflects one’s approval of

democracy as the most preferable governing regime and one's adherence to the commonly accepted rules of democracy.

The third level is central to my research, focusing on general state support. Norris (2017) points out the difficulty in conceptualizing this level due to its potential overlap with previous level of democratic principles approval. However, emphasizing democracy's *performance* through specific questioning shifts the focus towards democratic practices rather than abstract principles. The question from CSES used in my study, asking respondents “*On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in [COUNTRY]?*” aligns with this approach. As the same question has been asked in all examined cases to ensure cross-national comparability, the concept of democratic satisfaction (SwD) within the context of this study is understood as satisfaction with the democratic performance (practices) of the country.

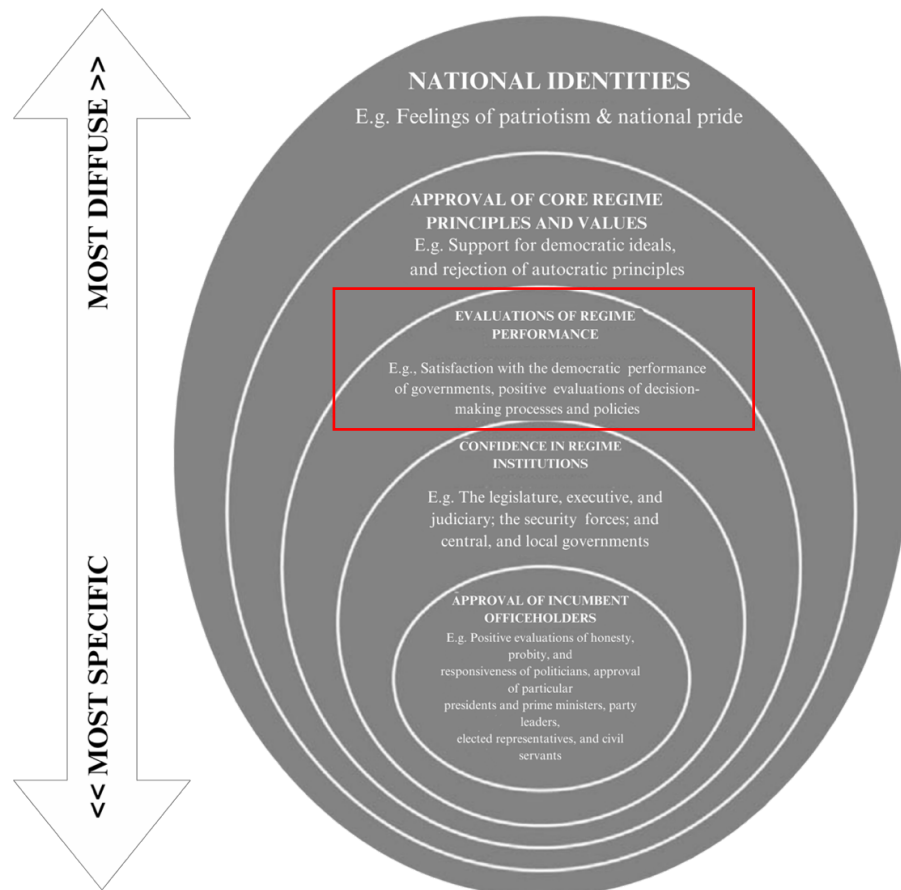


Figure 6. Indicators of system support. Source: Norris (2017) (redrawn for better visual comprehension by the author with the content remaining identical to the original source)

Two final components of the framework are confidence in regime institutions and approval of incumbent office holders representing more specific types of support. The former refers to the support towards core state institutions, such as the police or the judiciary system, and this type of support is distinguished between different institutions rather than generalized; that is, while one evaluates certain institutions positively, that does not necessarily mean the same evaluation for another (Norris, 2017). Last but not least, the most specific type of support – incumbent support - concerns attitudes towards particular elected authorities or leaders. As mentioned previously, Muller & Jukam (1977) demonstrated that the level of support for an incumbent is connected to the broader sentiment toward the political system as a whole. Thus, low incumbent support in stable political systems is less likely to threaten its stability, while in nations experiencing a high level of discontent with the system in general might lead to fundamental changes.

Therefore, the most relevant and intriguing concept for examining AP's impact, given the potential it holds for political systems, is democratic satisfaction. As have been demonstrated the complexity of the political support framework extends far beyond solely concept of SwD. Thus, it was important to acknowledge the limitations of this study might have in providing explanation for AP's impact on political system in general. Still, it can provide new and valuable insights for further investigation of AP's interplay with the whole framework of political support. As this master's thesis has constraints of the available time and scope, it required a targeted approach for examining the most conceptually relevant variable for the sake of achieving realistic results. Consequently, in case of meaningful findings, this research should serve as starting point in examining the whole framework and investigating countries' system and incumbent affect that might shed light on the potential aggressive political behavior.

1.3. Gap between electoral winners and losers in multi-party systems

Considering that partisans characterized by higher levels of affection towards political parties care more deeply about their party's performance in the election, it's reasonable to infer that gap between polarized electoral winners and losers might exacerbate the divide even further. Fueled by affective biases, those on the losing side might feel more dissatisfied with the electoral outcome compared to those who hold more neutral stances and attitudes towards political parties. It has been proven that higher levels of AP lead to lower levels of SwD (Iyengar et al., 2012), and,

another key element in examining this relationship, the prism through which this study looks at the interplay is a winner-loser gap.

This concept is well-known political phenomenon thoroughly examined in academic papers, with the general finding that those who end up on the winning side in the aftermath of elections experience more positive attitudes toward the government than those who lost. This finding is intuitive given the fact that electoral winners are more likely to have favorable attitudes toward the authorities they elected themselves than those who were voting for other parties. But in case of an electoral loss, how do polarized partisans see democracy? Except the Janssen's (2023) study we do not actually know anything apart from the UK elections in 2015 and 2019 that showed amplifying effects of AP on SwD depending on one's electoral status.

“Losing elections is hard for politics, but it could also be hard for the soul” (Toshkov & Mazepus, 2020, p. 1). In the election outcome, there are mainly two options: being a loser or a winner, which poses challenges to finding a compromise because the losing side might feel unrepresented and question the democratic legitimacy in the aftermath of the elections. Nevertheless, the congruence with new policies and acceptance of new powerholders from the losing side is essential and central to the stability of democracy itself, especially when the losing side constitutes a large part of society (Anderson et al., 2005; Dahlberg & Linde, 2017). It must be admitted that the process of division into winning and losing groups is an inevitable and natural part of every democratic election. This stems from the imperfections of political systems, as there are no perfect electoral districts that would equally represent every citizen, thus naturally creating the feeling of discontent in case of unfavorable outcomes of the elections.

Even though the gap between winners and losers might seem like a temporary phenomenon, it has a wide impact; in fact, its impact extends far beyond the immediate disappointment with the electoral result and influences political and social attitudes, the subjective well-being of citizens, and even the happiness, with the effects being greater for partisans with stronger affiliations, new democracies and males (Toshkov & Mazepus, 2020). Findings from Sweden suggest that the phenomenon of the winner-loser gap is persistent over time and has a continuous effect after the election results, emphasizing that it is not a short-term disappointment but a complex sentiment toward loss (Dahlberg & Linde, 2017). Making use of the unique data on the same individuals

across different points of time provided a perfect opportunity for scholars to discern the long-lasting effect of the winner-loser gap, compared to other studies that examined individuals only before and after elections. “Losers lose more than winners win,” as Hansen et al. (2019) further emphasized the long-lasting effect of being an electoral loser.

The study by Halliez & Thornton (2023) was conducted based on a unique case – the US election in 2000, which created manipulation of electoral outcome and a perfect condition for studying the winner-loser gap in the absence of a clear result. The data used in the study was gathered in two periods – a “pre-treatment” (the winner was uncertain) and a “post-treatment” (the winner was known), allowing the implementation of a difference-in-difference approach. The results showed an increase in SwD among winners and the opposite result for the losers. However, in the US two-party system defining an electoral winner and loser is more straightforward compared to complex parliamentary systems in Europe which often require forming coalitions and seeking compromise between, sometimes, adversarial parties. This implies considering critical questions regarding the definition of electoral winner and loser for this research. For instance, if the party barely gains the threshold but defines who forms the government, can it be stated that they are winners? What if the party receives the most amount of votes but still struggles to form the coalition and can’t receive vote of confidence and all other parties are blocking their initiatives? All these intricate details are carefully defined and unwrapped in the following paragraphs.

The concept of winners and losers is widely understood as the dichotomous classification of people into either winner or loser category based on the electoral outcome. *Tertium non datur* – the third is not given, Latin law according to which two contradictory statements cannot be true, similarly as in the election where two opposing parties cannot emerge victorious (however, there are circumstances where this statement can be argued as evident in the multi-party systems, e.g., in 2015 Greece saw a governing coalition between radical left party Syriza and right-wing populist party Independent Greeks - National Patriotic Alliance (ANEL)). The distinction between winners and losers excludes the idea of “middle,” which creates the gap between two groups. According to (Gjerde, 2006), “Losers are defined as citizens voting for parties that, after elections, do not participate in government” (p. 751). However, according to the scholar, there is much more to consider in electoral victory, as this is very contextual, depending, e.g., on the type of political system, the ability to form the governing coalition, one’s perception of the electoral outcome, etc.

(ibid.). Thus, the feeling of either winning or losing is, first of all, the feeling which is very complex and thick in its nature and encompasses multiple layers. It becomes apparent that there are different types of losers and winners produced by various political contexts that must be carefully examined before making judgments on electoral victory or loss.

Electoral winners, on the contrary, can be defined as the individuals who voted for the party that ended up forming the government. Plescia (2019), when talking about electoral winners, differentiates between subjective and objective perceptions of the victory, with vote share and change in it from the previous to the current election being an important feature of the latter, however, not being the only variable that impacts the feeling of being a winner. “Prior expectations regarding the election’s outcome as well as preferences for the supported party significantly moderate the effect of party performance on voter feelings” (ibid., p. 797). This comprehensive approach to defining the concept of electoral winner is by no means more accurate. However, empirical challenges may arise when opting for a “thicker” approach, as it entails a greater level of complexity in measurement due to the increased number of features inherent in the concept. Following Plescia's (2019) approach would require crafting a specific set of questions, but this does not align with the dataset utilized for this research as well as with the workload of the thesis. Ultimately, what holds significance is whether the political party attains governmental power. Consequently, in accordance with most studies, I define political winners as individuals who feels the closest to the party which forms a governing coalition.

1.4. Hypotheses

Prior to diving into the methodological section, it is of vital importance to provide context of why should one expect such relationship. A few works shedding light on this were previously mentioned (Janssen, 2023; Mason, 2015; Ward & Tavits, 2019), but it necessitates further elaboration. First, and foremost the nature of AP stemming from social attachment to the political party suggests that partisan’s social contruction of reality is threatened in case favored party is jeopardized leading to its protection even in the instance of disagreeing with party’s issue positions (Mason, 2015; Ward & Tavits, 2019). To state things clearly, polarized partisans favoring one party more than the others will be more likely to discriminate when stakes are high (e.g., elections) even when in-party’s position on certain policies differs from partisans (an example of the US Capitol attack). Due to these characteristics, numerous studies and evidences have illuminated that

AP is perceived as a dangerous development that is negative for the democratic processes, correlated with democratic backsliding, leading to less accountability, freedom, rights and deliberation in democracies, unlike IP, which has not shown a correlation with these negative developments (Gidengil et al., 2022; Lee, 2015; Orhan, 2022; Reiljan, 2020; Ward & Tavits, 2019).

Harteveld & Wagner (2023) demonstrate that AP is able to mobilize citizens and has been found to increase voter turnout, especially among those characterized by less political sophistication. This again emphasizes that polarized partisans care more deeply about the results of election evident in higher participation, thus its outcome simply carries more meaning to one's perception of the world or social construction of reality. Nevertheless, not all scholars agree with the negative impact of AP. Broockman et al. (2023) argue that AP does not necessarily undermine democratic norms, relying on two main arguments that suggest that besides affect, there might be other elements in forming one's evaluation, and affect is not central in this process (p. 809). Additionally, affective biases cause the trade-off for the voter's opinion change, which is too costly for the voter (ibid., p. 809).

To avoid the speculative nature of the findings of AP's diminishing impact on SwD, this thesis benefits from previously described Norris's (2017) framework, which demonstrated that system support is a broad concept that entails different components, including both support for democratic norms and satisfaction with how democracy functions. These are neighboring but distinct concepts that simultaneously capture slightly different things. Recognizing that the concept of democratic satisfaction, in this study's context, is clearly posited as the citizens' perception of how democracy functions, it distinguishes it from the neighboring concept of the support for democratic norms. In other words, while Broockman et al. (2023) argue that AP might not undermine democratic norms, the same conclusion can not be applied to whether AP impacts citizens' perception of how democracy functions. Consequently, while polarized citizens might still prefer democracy over autocracy following the election outcome, this does not necessarily mean that their perception of how democracy works in the country remains unchanged.

Röllicke (2023, p. 5) also pointed out that the consequences of causal relationship of AP with democracies should not be over speculated and carefully considered as it would be naïve to expect

everyone to like each other, especially in the cases of marginalized groups disliking political elites oppressing their rights. Thus, this study aims to shed additional light on the scholarly discussion and fit into this puzzle by demonstrating the bias in perception of democracy among affectively polarized electoral losers.

Having defined what AP in the framework of this study is, what exactly democratic satisfaction as the concept mean and its implication for the system's stability as well as electoral winners and losers in the multi-party system have been defined, it is finally the time to put my hypotheses forward:

Hypothesis 1: *The more affectively polarized a person is, the stronger the negative effect of being an electoral loser on satisfaction with democracy.*

Hypothesis 2: *The more affectively polarized a person is, the stronger the positive effect of being an electoral winner on satisfaction with democracy.*

By consciously defining concepts and drawing insights from the foundational literature, this chapter has laid the groundwork for further investigation into AP's impact on democratic satisfaction among electoral winners and losers. This chapter benefits from acknowledging conceptual ambiguities and crafting a theoretical framework for the specific objectives of this study. Building on the earlier hypotheses, the forthcoming chapter will present nuanced insights into the methodologies for measuring these concepts.

Chapter 2: Measuring [a]ffective polarization, democratic satisfaction, and classification of electoral winners and losers

This chapter delves into the operationalization of the study's key concepts, outlining existing approaches for their measurement to argue for the most suitable approach for this research. To test my hypotheses empirically, I use cross-sectional post-election Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) Module 5 data as the most recent available dataset. This dataset provides comprehensive data on many European and non-European countries with various variables relevant to my research. Having conceptualized the concepts in the previous chapter, i.e., answering fundamental questions of *what* will be measured, which was the first step before conducting empirical analysis, it is time to turn the attention to the study's methodology (*how* the concepts will be measured and study conducted).

Capturing the concepts as closely as possible to measure what has been defined is one of the crucial priorities of this study, as what determines a concept's practicality is not only the ability to grasp it conceptually but also to measure it. This section begins by reviewing how AP has been measured in previous studies, critically assessing the main differences and gaps in the measurement applied to this thesis. Next, the chapter proceeds to detail democratic satisfaction measurement. Furthermore, given the complexity and ambiguity of the electoral outcome in the multi-party systems, I explain how electoral winners and losers were coded. Additionally, the chapter will explore the analytical technique employed.

2.1. Affective polarization measurement

The method of measuring AP can vary depending on the specific direction of the concept, just as in the case of its definition. This means that there is no one-size-fits-all approach or unified measurement of AP, which is reflected in scholars' developments of measurements tailored to the specific objectives of their research. Thus, for a clear direction of operationalization, it is essential to review what has already been done before in developing the concept's measure, emphasizing the European multi-party context as its measure differs methodologically from the American two-party system.

As the concept traveled to Europe, it produced different meaning, leading to confusion when measured. For instance, Iyengar et al. (2012) to capture the extent of AP among the American electorate, utilized questions of thermometer feeling, inter-party marriage and stereotypes of party supporters. The thermometer feeling is a scale ranging from 0 to 100, which identifies how partisan feels toward a certain group, where 0 implies “cold” feelings, 50 is a neutral stance, and 100 indicates “warm” feelings in a dataset of American National Election Studies (ANES). The European counterpart to the thermometer feeling scale can be found in the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), which has been used in key European studies of AP (Reiljan, 2020; Wagner, 2021). The question from CSES that has been utilized to measure AP is:

I'd like to know what you think about each of our political parties. After I read the name of a political party, please rate it on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means you strongly dislike that party and 10 means that you strongly like that party.

This argument and difference have already been brought up in the previous chapter, implying that the nature of the concept then differs; even though the correlation between feelings towards the party and its supporters is correlated, the measurement is still imperfect when used to explain the sentiments towards party supporters (Kekkonen et al., 2022). Another critical component regarding the AP's measurement proposed by Wagner (2021) is that the partisan can experience positive sentiment towards several parties, for instance, in the example of electoral alliances, the 2019 Polish election (United Right, Civic Coalition, Polish Coalition, etc.), the 2021 Czech election (SPOLU and PirStan), or the parties representing the same bloc. Therefore, it is not appropriate to assume that there is a single in-party in such a system. This is a fundamental difference between measures proposed by Reiljan (2020), who differentiates between a single in-party and all other out-parties, and Wagner (2021), who argued for the spread of like-dislike evaluations without the differentiation between in-party and out-parties.

Additionally, in the European context, given that there are multiple parties, their size is significant in defining the extent of AP compared to the US, where only two parties represent the in- and out-group. For instance, as Wagner (2021) explains, the dislike toward minor political parties does not carry the same weight as toward mainstream parties. Consequently, if the size of a minor party increases, it also implies an increase in AP. Therefore, the measure must be weighted based on the

parties' vote shares to capture AP correctly in the multi-party context. Hence, to establish methodological clarity, I will present both approaches to measure AP through a similar formula to Reiljan's (2020) accounting for in-party, and Wagner's (2021) like-dislike spread approach. To do so, I will utilize the like-dislike questions of the cross-sectional post-election CSES dataset. Despite previously mentioned shortcomings and imperfections in capturing attitudes towards partisans, it is still arguably the best approach to measure AP in the European multi-party context, given its broad availability and coherence among cases that enable large cross-national comparison.

In the case of Reiljan's (2020) measure, it is essential to figure out the individual's in-party. In most of studies, including Reiljan's (2020), scholars used variable E3024_3 from CSES, representing the numeric code of the party **one feels closest to**. This is the control question, which is preceded by two questions: 1) whether there is a party one feels close to (yes/no), and 2) whether there is a party that one feels closer to (yes/no). However, while this variable focuses on the "feeling" component, I will test another variable as a robustness check, namely E3010_2, which indicates the party **best represents the respondent's views**. This is done to prove that partisans, when asked about political parties, are driven by feelings rather than ideas, as was argued in the previous chapter. It is also used to test another approach to measure AP to establish which variable is more accurate. Another reason to test both of the variables stems from the initial observation from the dataset, which indicates that some respondents might feel close to one party without answering that this party represents their views best or, conversely, there is a party that represents the respondent's views better than any other, but this is not the party one feels closest to (see Figure 7). To put simply, there are NAs (or missing values) inconsistently spread over both columns of E3024_3 and E3010_2, i.e., there is the party that one feels closest to, but it is not the party that represents one's views best, or vice versa.

	E1004	E3024_3	E3010_2	E3017_A	E3017_B	E3017_C	E3017_D	E3017_E	E3017_F	E3017_G
1	ALB_2017	NA	NA	9	2	0	0	0	0	NA
2	ALB_2017	8001	8001	8	3	0	1	0	5	NA
3	ALB_2017	NA	NA	6	2	0	0	0	0	NA
4	ALB_2017	8001	NA	10	0	2	3	NA	0	NA
5	ALB_2017	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0	NA
6	ALB_2017	8002	NA	0	10	1	2	0	0	NA
7	ALB_2017	8008	NA	0	0	1	0	0	0	NA
8	ALB_2017	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
9	ALB_2017	NA	8002	0	8	5	NA	0	0	NA
10	ALB_2017	8001	8001	6	0	0	0	0	1	NA
11	ALB_2017	NA	NA	5	0	0	0	0	0	NA
12	ALB_2017	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0	NA
13	ALB_2017	8005	NA	1	0	0	0	NA	0	NA
14	ALB_2017	8002	NA	0	0	10	10	NA	NA	NA
15	ALB_2017	NA	8001	10	0	0	2	0	5	NA
16	ALB_2017	8001	NA	8	7	5	NA	NA	NA	NA
17	ALB_2017	8001	8001	7	0	0	1	0	0	NA
18	ALB_2017	8001	NA	10	4	3	2	2	2	NA

Figure 7. Responses to E3024_3 and E3010_2 from the CSES Module 5 dataset

In selecting a variable to define in-party affiliation, the next step is to filter the countries that do not meet the criteria of this study, that is, being located in Europe. After excluding cases in which respondents did not have the party they felt closest to and excluding cases of countries that did not meet the study's requirement, E3024_3 resulted in 37,116 observations. In comparison, E3010_2 resulted in 27,123 observations, nearly 10k less. Moreover, it is important to note that the CSES lacks data for the E3010_2 variable for Hungary's 2018 election. Therefore, it results in the exclusion of numerous individuals and an entire election from the study. However, another consideration is to account for the discrepancy in the nearly 10,000 responses, which extends beyond the absence of a single election's data. The data suggests that respondents tend to identify more frequently with the party they feel closest to rather than the party that best represents their views. Given this pattern, and the fact that AP has traditionally been gauged using the E3024_3 variable, which not only encompasses a more substantial number of observations but also includes the 2018 Hungarian election case, it has been determined as the more suitable variable for this study.

Furthermore, this variable will be used in adopting Reiljan's (2020) formula to account for in-party and out-party evaluations. In the case of Reiljan's original approach, AP is calculated on the party level through an average score of each party, further aggregated to the country level. To adopt this

measure to the individual level, I calculate AP for every individual separately, comprising in-party/out-parties subtraction of their weighted (size is taken into account) like-dislike estimations. Hence, the formula for calculating AP on the individual level accounting for 1) in-party and out-party evaluations and 2) their sizes is:

$$(1) AP_n = Like_n - \sum_{\substack{m=1 \\ m \neq n}}^N Like_m \times \frac{Vote\ share_m}{Sum\ Vote\ share - Vote\ share_n}$$

The variable “*Like*” represents the like-dislike value for the party one feels closest to, based on the E3024_3 variable, whereas “*n*” indicates in-party, while “*m*” represents out-party. To calculate the normalized vote share of out-parties, ensuring it equals the total vote share, which means that it adds up to one, it's necessary to subtract the in-party's vote share from the total vote share, which is represented by “*Sum Vote share – Vote share_n*.” Furthermore, “*Vote share_m*” divided by adopted vote share for out-parties results in a normalized vote share, which is multiplied by the respective like-dislike value of the out-party.

Now, turning attention to Wagner's (2021) measure of the spread of like-dislike scores, which does not differentiate between in- and out-parties, it indicates that similar affect towards parties represents low AP level (i.e., equally love every party, equally hate every party, equally neutral to every party). This measure is methodologically more simple compared to Reiljan's (2020) approach since it is the spread of like-dislike scores and there is no need to define one in-party. Thus, Wagner (2021) measures AP as “the weighted average party affect difference compared to each respondent's weighted average party affect” (p. 11). Consequently, the formula for the weighted AP based on the spread of like-dislike scores is:

$$(2) Spread_i = \sqrt{\sum_{p=1}^P v_p (like_{ip} - \overline{like}_i)^2}$$

This formula calculates AP based on the number of political parties (*P*), the like-dislike scores assigned to political party (*like_{ip}*), in which *p* is the party, *i* is the individual respondent, *v_p* is proportion of votes that each party received, ranging from 0 to 1 (Wagner, 2021, p. 11). Each respondent's weighted average party affect is represented by $\overline{like}_i$ which is calculated as:

$$(3) \overline{like}_i = \sum_{p=1}^P (v_p * like_{ip})$$

To summarize, Wagner's (2021) measure does not differentiate between in- and out-parties by utilizing the spread of like-dislike scores. Reiljan's (2020) approach requires distinction and selection of in-party implemented in my measure. Hence, I will compare how the results of the approach, which does not differentiate between in- and out-parties, and the one that does, differ from each other by empirically testing them. Nevertheless, it is crucial to emphasize that accounting for in-party is a significant feature for defining the status of the electoral winner or loser. In other words, while calculating AP without accounting for in-party is possible, classifying partisan as either winner or loser still requires knowledge of the party one identifies with.

Another key aspect that needs elaboration when calculating formulas is the vote shares, especially in contexts where political parties have formed electoral alliances for certain elections. In CSES Module 5, there are instances where the vote shares of political parties within an electoral coalition are combined and presented as a single variable. For example, during the 2021 Czech parliamentary election, political parties such as the Civic Democratic Party (ODS), Christian and Democratic Union-Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU-CSL), Tradition, Responsibility, Prosperity (TOP 09), Czech Pirate Party (Pi), and Mayors and Independents (STAN) created the electoral alliances SPOLU and PirStan, respectively (Kudrnáč & Petrůšek, 2022). In the CSES data, the vote share for the SPOLU alliance is aggregated, failing to distinguish between the individual party contributions within the coalition. This aggregated variable attributes the entire vote share to the largest party in the alliance, ODS, suggesting inaccurately that ODS alone secured a 27,79% vote share, which in reality was the combined vote share of the entire SPOLU alliance. To address this, I adjusted the calculation by dividing the seat share of each political party based on the data from the Chamber of Deputies Parliament of the Czech Republic, by the total number of seats (200) in the parliament, thereby obtaining a more accurate representation of each party's size. This process is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Adjusted seat shares for the Czech 2021 parliamentary parties*

Political party	ANO 2011	ODS	STAN	KDU-CSL	SPD	TOP 09	Pirate
Number of seats	72	34	33	23	20	14	4
Seat share	36%	17%	16.5%	11.5%	10%	7%	2%

Source: Chamber of Deputies Parliament of the Czech Republic, n.d.

Consequently, I have decided to use seat shares instead of vote shares across all cases to ensure the highest accuracy and consistency when calculating AP and to facilitate better comparison. This decision is also supported by the fact that the conversion from vote shares to seat shares is not straightforward. For instance, securing a certain percentage of the popular vote might differ from the percentage of seats in the parliament obtained by the party following the electoral outcome. Moreover, in the 2020 Slovak election, the electoral alliance Progressive Slovakia (PS) - TOGETHER - Civic Democracy (SPOLU) failed to meet the threshold imposed on 2-3 parties, receiving 6.97% of the vote share and 0 seats in the parliament (Maráková, 2020). Thus, to enhance accuracy in such cases, the seat share variable offers a more precise representation of the party weight.

Moving forward to discuss other electoral alliances, in the German 2017 and 2021 elections, CSES provided separate variables of the seat shares for the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Christian Social Union in Bavaria (CSU) that compete in the coalition. In the Hungarian 2018 election, Hungarian Civic Alliance (Fidesz) – Christian Democratic People's Party (KNDP) and Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) - Dialogue for Hungary formed two electoral alliances. However, in this case, CSES does not have separate variables for KNDP and Dialogue, neither for seat shares nor for a like-dislike score, which means both of these variables are aggregated, unlike in the Czech 2021 instance when despite the existence of an electoral alliance, political parties that formed it still had separate variables. Nevertheless, CSES explains that in the case of MSZP – Dialogue alliance, the like-dislike score refers mainly to MSZP as it constitutes the dominant part of the coalition. Consequently, in this case, the same approach to calculating seat shares as in the

Czech example can not be implemented due to the lack of variables for KNDP and Dialogue; therefore, they will be calculated as aggregated values.

In the 2018 Italian election, CSES differentiated seat share variables between political parties in the Center-Right Alliance, comprising Forza Italia (FI), Northern League (LN), and Brothers of Italy (Fdi). In the instance of the 2019 Polish election, most Polish parties competed in electoral alliances, such as United Right (ZP), Civic Coalition (KO), Polish Coalition (KP), The Left (Lewica) and Confederation (Konfederacja). However, CSES only provides aggregated variable of the seat share and like-dislike score for the dominant party in the alliance, so Law and Justice (PiS) in ZP, Civic Platform (CO) in KO, Polish People's Party in KP, Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) in Lewica and aggregated value of all parties in Konfederacja. Thus, given a challenge similar to the Hungarian case, I will utilize aggregated values due to the lack of distinguished party variables. This decision is also supported by the fact that the previously mentioned political parties constituted the dominant part of electoral alliances. In the 2019 Portuguese election, one electoral alliance was formed, the Unitarian Democratic Coalition (CDU), comprising the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) and the Ecologist Party "The Greens" (PEV). In this case, PCP was a dominant member. However, CSES only provides one variable for these two parties. In the already mentioned Slovak 2020 election, three alliances were formed. CSES assigned variables similar to the Polish case; the major party received the variable of the total vote share, while minor parties in the electoral alliance were not assigned any variables. Thus, the aggregated value will be used in this case as well.

Nevertheless, there is still one country in the dataset which necessitates thorough elaboration. In the 2017 France had presidential election before legislative election, and the CSES survey was carried out when it was not known what parties will be elected to the parliament, leading to the absence of both variables for vote and seat shares. Consequently, calculating AP in France without weights will result in incorrect results. When applying Wagner's formula, the calculation will result in 0 values for French parties. Reiljan's adopted formula will yield high results because, given that vote shares are equal to 0, the formula will rely only on like scores for in-party. To address the issue of lacking current seat share data for French political parties, an effective alternative method is to utilize the seat shares from the most recent legislative election (2017). This approach allows for the inclusion of France in the analysis despite the initial data gap. Thus, the

seat share will be calculated similarly to the Czech case in which the party's seat share will be divided by the total number of the seats in the parliament (577).

Table 2. *Adjusted seat shares for the French 2017 parliamentary parties*

Political party	The Republic Onwards! (LaREM)	National Front (FN)	The Republicans (LR)	Indomitable France (FI)	Socialist Party (PS)	France Arise (DLF)	Europe Ecology - The Greens (EELV)
Number of seats	308	8	112	17	30	1	1
Seat share	53%	1.4%	19.40%	2.95%	5.20%	0.17%	0.17%

Source: Ministère de l'Intérieur et des Outre-mer, n.d.

Hence, after thoroughly examining the variables and electoral alliances, it was possible to distinguish each party's contribution only in the case of the Czech 2021 election as CSES provided separate variables for minor parties which is not the case in most of the election studies. However, in light of recognizing the presence of electoral alliances, it has to be acknowledged that the variable which identifies the party one feels closest to refers to the largest party of the coalition. Consequently, the approach utilized in this paper to overcome the challenges posed by the lack of data is the best possible solution to conduct the analysis.

2.2. Measurement of satisfaction with democracy

In CSES, democratic satisfaction is operationalized as a four-category variable but measured on a 1 to 5 scale. A rating of “1” denotes the highest level of satisfaction with democracy, while a “5” indicates the lowest level of satisfaction. The value “3” does not carry meaningful significance in this context. As one of the major empirical challenges in assessing SwD involves separating incumbent performance from the broader political system, it was essential to examine the variable with the specific question, as detailed on page 25 . The purpose of formulating the survey question in a way that precisely targets the intended aspect of democratic satisfaction is driven by the crucial

need for conceptual and empirical differentiation between different aspects of SwD. Namely, to ensure that citizens' responses reflect their assessment of how democracy operates in their country at a more general level rather than evaluating their incumbent officials. As methodologically it is more correct to conduct logistic regression with the binary variable and to facilitate the presentation of findings, the original 1 to 5 satisfaction scale used in the CSES has been converted into a binary variable, categorizing respondents as either "satisfied" with democracy, coded as "1" or "unsatisfied," coded as "0".

2.3. Classification of electoral winners and losers

In alignment with its definition, this study operationalizes electoral winners as those individuals who have supported the party that ultimately formed the government. The criterion of support is derived from the previously mentioned variable E3024_3, which identifies the party with which an individual feels most close. Consequently, coding the new government as winners seems straightforward. However, it is a misleading approach without considering a critical aspect: the timing of the CSES survey's execution. Therefore, this study aims to implement a more precise "surgery scalpel" approach, which requires a thorough examination of each electoral outcome and diving into each specific context of every election, rather than the "butcher" approach, which means classifying all new government parties as winners.

As previously mentioned, CSES provides post-election data. However, that does not necessarily mean that the government had already been formed when the survey was conducted in the country. Moreover, the lack of data on whether one felt like a winner underlines the need for devising a methodology that can accurately capture one's electoral result. Thus, given every country's unique government formation process, the sophisticated approach applied in this thesis to define winners and losers is described in detail in Appendix 1 and stems from addressing fundamental questions: *Was a government formed when the CSES survey was conducted in a country? Is it possible to assume potential governing parties based on the coalition talks during the CSES survey period?* Considering this nuance is imperative in crafting as precise an operationalization of the winner as possible. In this subchapter, I will elaborate on the logic behind the coding, present the classification of the cases, and explain the decisions to code them as either winners or losers.

Conventionally, the cases can be categorized into three categories:

- 1) *New government.* In several instances, a definitive victor emerged, either because a party won a majority of the seats, enabling it to form an uncontested government - examples include the Socialist Party of Albania (PS) in the 2017 Albanian election, The Republic Onwards! (LaREM) in the 2017 French election, the Conservative Party (Con) in the UK's 2017 and 2019 elections, New Democracy (ND) in the 2019 Greek election, Fidesz – KNDP in the 2018 Hungarian election, Law and Justice (PiS) in the 2019 Polish election, and the Socialist Party (SP) in the 2019 Portuguese election - or the government was established during the CSES survey period (the 2019 Danish election, the Finnish 2019 election, the Greek 2015 election, the 2016 and 2017 Icelandic elections the 2016 and 2020 Lithuanian elections, the 2016 Montenegrin election, the 2020 Slovak election, the 2018 Turkish election), or it was evident from coalition talks that a government comprising certain parties would be formed (the 2017 Austrian election, the 2021 Czech election, the German 2021 election, the Norwegian 2017 election, the Romanian 2016 election).
- 2) *Old government.* In some countries, government formation traditionally takes considerable time (forming a new government after the 2019 Belgian election took more than a year, while in the 2021 Dutch elections, it took 300 days). In other cases, inconclusive electoral results led to a fragmented parliament and failed coalition talks, which caused deadlocks in government formation (the 2017 German (failed Jamaica coalition) and 2018 Swedish elections (fragmented parliament)). In such cases, old government parties were coded as winners as they remained as caretakers until a new government was formed and, in some instances, formed a new government again (the 2021 Dutch election, the German 2017 election, and the 2018 Swedish election).
- 3) *In between.* This category can be explained as between new and old governments as the result of these elections was unclear. Therefore, it was incorrect to classify the old government as winners without thoroughly exploring the intricate dynamics of the political discourse and coalition formation. Additionally, it was prominent that the old government parties would not remain in power. In contrast, a new government had not yet been formed when the CSES survey was carried out (e.g., the 2017 Dutch election, the 2017 Czech election, the 2016 Irish election, the 2018 Italian election, and the 2018 Latvian election). Still, despite the ambiguity of the electoral result, these elections had to be coded. After consulting multiple sources to map government formation reality,

in most cases, except the Czech 2017 election, a new government was coded as the winner given the puzzling relations between parties, making it most likely to form these coalitions (for each specific election explanation, see Appendix 1). The Czech 2017 election stands out among all other cases, as the political party Action of Dissatisfied Citizens (ANO 2011) won a significant share of the seats but could not form a coalition with any party. Therefore, I will test this case with only the ANO party as winners, given that their laws were passed and that later, they formed a coalition with the Czech Social Democratic Party (CSSD).

2.4. Study limitations

This subchapter aims to outline the limitations of this study and emphasize how they were addressed. The limitations are discussed within conceptual and empirical domains in the same sequence as the concepts were conceptualized and operationalized. Thus, I start the discussion by presenting the limitations of AP, followed by SwD and winner-loser concepts. The subchapter is organized in the way in which I first describe limitations and then explain how these limitations were addressed in this study. While this research does not aim to solve these limitations, recognizing and discussing the most appropriate approaches to address them greatly benefits this study regarding better, more precise concepts and measures. Table 3 visually represents the limitations faced in this thesis, which is further elaborated.

Table 3. *Study limitations*

	Affective polarization	Satisfaction with Democracy	Winner-loser
Conceptual limitations	1. Horizontal-vertical dimensionality 2. Misleading use of stronger emotions than dislike	1. Ambiguity between different levels of democratic satisfaction	1. Thin definition (winner is defined based on the mere criterion of forming the government)

Empirical limitations	1. Lack of unified measure 2. Lack of precise data on votes and seat shares across all cases	1. The need to capture precise formulation in the survey question	1. Lack of the winner feeling variable 2. The timing of the CSES survey
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Limitations of AP

Starting from the beginning, one of the main conceptual limitations of AP is its reliance on a horizontal-vertical dimensionality. This framework implies a need for a very specific direction in analysis. For instance, the affect towards political parties is not the same as that towards individual partisans. This distinction underscores a need for a nuanced approach to grasp AP's dynamics and complexity fully. This has been addressed by recognizing the direction of AP in this study, which aims at political parties and not partisans. Furthermore, CSES's question of like-dislike about parties, used in most studies (Reiljan, 2020; Wagner, 2021), is directed toward the party itself and not its electorate. For this challenge, as has been mentioned, the current approach is arguably the best due to its applicability in a wide range of countries; however, to capture the affect directed at partisans, different questions should be included in the questionnaire.

In some sense, the ANES questionnaire is more advanced and designed to get deeper into partisans' minds, asking about interparty marriage compared to the questions of the like-dislike score for political parties in CSES. In addition, there are a lot of other questions that could provide additional insights, like whether one would shake hands with a supporter of the opposing party or whether one would be willing to be neighbors with the supporter of the opposing party. Questions directed more towards partisans rather than parties could tell us more about intergroup clashes' effects and intricate complexities that go far beyond the political dimension.

Additionally, there is a need to distinguish between specific emotions of partisans, as simple dislike might also imply a reluctance to be engaged in political discussions with supporters of the opposing party (Röllicke, 2023, p. 4). Moving forward to the empirical limitations, one of them stems from the lack of unified measures. As was argued previously, to overcome this, the study

seeks to test both existing approaches in the European multi-party context, namely Wagner's (2021) formula, and adopted to the individual level Reiljan's (2020) formula to establish to what extent these results correlate with each other.

Limitations of SwD

The complex nature of the democratic satisfaction concept necessitates a thorough distinction between the estimation of incumbent officials, support for democratic ideals, and the general political system in the country. Therefore, I examined Norris's (2017) framework to determine the precise component of democratic satisfaction being examined in this thesis. Given that this study uses post-election data, it poses a limited understanding of the dynamics of democratic satisfaction, as I only know it at specific points in time. Consequently, this study could benefit from panel data that gathered citizens' democratic satisfaction, ideally, at 3 points in time: 1) before elections, 2) after elections, and 3) when the government is formed. This data would allow for a comparison of how citizens perceive democracy based on the electoral performance of their party. As such data is unavailable, the only solution was to use my data.

Limitations of electoral winners and losers

First and foremost, as previously mentioned, the feeling of victory is very complex and most likely extends beyond the sole criterion of the party forming the government. What matters is also the electoral performance compared to the previous election. If the party had never been in parliament before and received 10% of the popular support, it would have been a huge success and victory for their supporters. One such example is AfD in the 2017 German election. However, being a small player in the German political landscape, it still did not play a significant role in decision-making. However, the argument I am trying to make is that the appearance of this party symbolizes a shift in German politics, representing a certain electorate with distinct views.

Conversely, if the party was the largest in the previous election and lost a significant share of the seats, the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (LSDP) had to form the government with the Lithuanian Union of Farmers and Greens (LVSZ) in 2016. In this case, despite forming the government, the party no longer had the same weight as LVSZ, which was deciding the number

of ministers to be appointed from the party. Hence, with great skepticism, I assume that supporters of LSDP and other similar cases felt like the winners.

This links to the second point, which is that the preciseness of the results and political party coding could benefit from a thicker approach, considering not only whether the party formed the government but also whether the party was represented before the election at all, what are the difference in results between the elections, and, most importantly how voters feel in the aftermath of the elections. Ideally, the dataset should have determined whether respondents feel like the winners, as the feeling component comprises many factors listed above. Still, the need to apply a very thin definition stemmed from the scarcity of data and the fact that what matters, in the end, is whether the party takes part in the country's decision-making process or it is in the opposition.

The final limitation concerns the variables and timing of the CSES dataset. Specifically, the issue of variables is more technical. Despite CSES gathering data on minor parties that were uncommon for the response and individual candidates, it did not provide the variable names for them, which led to the exclusion of these responses from the analysis due to the inability to analyze them. However, the responses regarding minor parties constituted a very small percentage of the whole dataset. Hence, they would not significantly change the analysis results. Furthermore, the timing of the CSES dataset did not perfectly match the government formation period in the cases examined. To overcome this, I delve into each specific election to understand the intricate details of a discourse and government formation process to determine the most precise way to classify parties. For a more detailed overview of this process, see Appendix 1.

Chapter 3: Results

The primary goal of this chapter is to test hypotheses by demonstrating how AP exacerbates the democratic satisfaction gap between electoral winners and losers. To address the research question and confirm the hypotheses outlined on page 31, I utilize CSES Module 5 data from 33 elections in 25 polities, comprising 32,340 observations. Additionally, this section presents the correlation findings between Reiljan's adopted formula for this study and Wagner's measure. The results section reveals that AP amplifies the experience of victory and defeat. For individuals whose party wins an election, their satisfaction with democracy slightly increases in correlation with AP. Conversely, this dynamic operates differently for those on the losing side, significantly decreasing democratic satisfaction. Recognizing this, the study benefits from examining each election separately, which sheds light on AP's dynamics in the analyzed cases. Graphs and tables are utilized throughout this chapter to illustrate the findings more effectively.

The results are presented in the following sequence. First, I analyze and calculate AP at the individual level using both, Reiljan's adopted formula and Wagner's formula. Examining these measures allows me to compare the results of both approaches to establish a nuanced understanding of their correlation, thereby enriching the comparative analysis. The aggregated results of the AP individual scores into average country scores are presented in Table 4, which represents the comparative overview of the yielded results across different countries and measures. Consequently, Table 5 presents the value of correlation between the measures. Following this, Figure 8 and Figure 9 visually depict the levels of AP across countries, the former reflecting Reiljan's approach and the latter Wagner's to illustrate differences and similarities on the AP scale. Furthermore, I delve into the empirical justification of the lower levels of democratic satisfaction among higher polarized partisans. The chapter then culminates with the main findings of this research – evidence of the intensifying gap between winners and losers driven by AP and its intricate dynamics in each country.

The analysis commenced with calculating AP for each individual based on Formula 1, which accounts for in-party on the individual level, and Formula 2, which does not differentiate between in- and out-parties by utilizing the spread of like-dislike scores. Hence, the main methodological difference in using the former measure lies in utilizing the variable defining partisan's in-party and differentiating it from all other political parties. In contrast, the latter measure utilizes the spread

of the like-dislike scores. It is worth noting that when using Formula 1, the AP calculation yielded negative values, which could indicate that respondents misunderstood the survey's questions. The presence of negative AP values suggests that a respondent rated their preferred party lower than the average weighted evaluation of other parties. However, this tendency was uncommon, and the negative values of AP constituted approximately 2%, or, more precisely, this has been observed in 690 cases. These values were further excluded from the analysis for the sake of a clear presentation of the results on the plot. The exclusion does not significantly prevent the model's valid results.

After calculating each individual's AP score, these results were aggregated to the country level and calculated as an average of individuals' AP values per country. Table 4 sets the results received from the calculation of AP, derived from Reiljan's adopted formula against those obtained via Wagner's measure side by side. The table is divided into two main columns, each representing the results of different measures. In each column, the countries with the specific years of the election are listed in ascending order alongside their calculated AP scores, starting from the ones with the lowest values. The comparison of the two measures reveals that Reiljan's adopted formula yielded higher results than Wagner's measure. This discrepancy stems from the different scales used for measuring AP. In Reiljan's approach, the scale ranges from 0 to 10, with 0 representing the lowest and 10 the highest levels of AP. Conversely, Wagner's scale operates from 0 to 5.

Additionally, as can be observed from Table 4, the order of the countries and their respective AP scores differs. In the case of Reiljan's adopted formula, the Netherlands (2017) appeared to be the least polarized country, whereas based on Wagner's formula, such a country was France (2017)*. Note that in the table, France (2017)* is marked, underscoring that this is the country in which the seat share data was unavailable; hence, this was added manually, which might have impacted the received result. In the former approach, results indicate that Montenegro (2016) was the most polarized country, while in the latter approach, this position is taken by Türkiye (2018). Among the top 5 most polarized countries, 4 match across the measures with varying positions but still remain on the top of the list. Namely, such countries are Slovakia (2020), Poland (2019), Montenegro (2016), and Türkiye (2018).

Table 4. Comparison of AP score results between Reiljan's and Wagner's measures

Results based on Reiljan's adopted formula (N = 32,340)		Results based on Wagner's formula (N = 32,340)	
Country name	AP	Country name	AP
Netherlands (2017)	3.51	France (2017)*	1.9
Germany (2017)	3.88	United Kingdom (2019)	2.34
Netherlands (2021)	3.9	Austria (2017)	2.37
Iceland (2016)	4.06	Iceland (2016)	2.4
Germany (2021)	4.09	Portugal (2019)	2.4
France (2017)*	4.2	Lithuania (2016)	2.44
Iceland (2017)	4.3	Iceland (2017)	2.44
Belgium Flanders (2019)	4.42	Netherlands (2017)	2.49
Austria (2017)	4.46	Greece (2015)	2.52
Norway (2017)	4.48	Belgium Flanders (2019)	2.53
Lithuania (2016)	4.53	Netherlands (2021)	2.55
United Kingdom (2017)	4.56	Finland (2019)	2.57
Finland (2019)	4.64	Norway (2017)	2.62
Portugal (2019)	4.64	United Kingdom (2017)	2.62
Denmark (2019)	4.69	Ireland (2016)	2.64
Ireland (2016)	4.72	Belgium Wallonia (2019)	2.65
Czechia (2021)	4.93	Latvia (2018)	2.67
Belgium Wallonia (2019)	4.94	Denmark (2019)	2.69
Lithuania (2020)	4.98	Hungary (2018)	2.75
Albania (2017)	5.14	Germany (2017)	2.76
Sweden (2018)	5.16	Romania (2016)	2.76
United Kingdom (2019)	5.26	Italy (2018)	2.79
Italy (2018)	5.26	Germany (2021)	2.8
Romania (2016)	5.35	Albania (2017)	2.8
Greece (2015)	5.35	Czechia (2021)	2.83
Latvia (2018)	5.6	Lithuania (2020)	2.85
Czechia (2017)	5.9	Czechia (2017)	2.86
Greece (2019)	6.05	Greece (2019)	2.93
Slovakia (2020)	6.07	Sweden (2018)	2.98
Poland (2019)	6.08	Slovakia (2020)	3.01
Türkiye (2018)	6.54	Poland (2019)	3.09
Hungary (2018)	6.84	Montenegro (2016)	3.2
Montenegro (2016)	7.13	Türkiye (2018)	3.44

For better visual comprehension, Figure 8 and Figure 9 represent the average AP score across countries and measures. Figure 8 depicts the results of AP calculated based on Reiljan's adopted formula, and Figure 9 represents the results yielded from Wagner's measure. The X-axis represents the country's name and its election year. The Y-axis represents the country's aggregated AP score. In this visualization, the higher bar suggests higher values of AP, reflecting the ascending order of the results outlined in Table 4.

Similar to Reiljan's (2020) findings, a certain geographical pattern arises in the results, indicating that more polarized countries are located in Southern and Eastern Europe. In contrast, Western European countries show more moderate polarization results. Wagner's approach suggests similar observations, except in a few cases. Germany (2017, 2021) appeared in much higher positions than in Reiljan's adopted formula, alongside the Netherlands (2017, 2021), showing more moderate position change. Interestingly, Greece (2015) assumed the position among less polarized countries with a significant difference to the former measure.

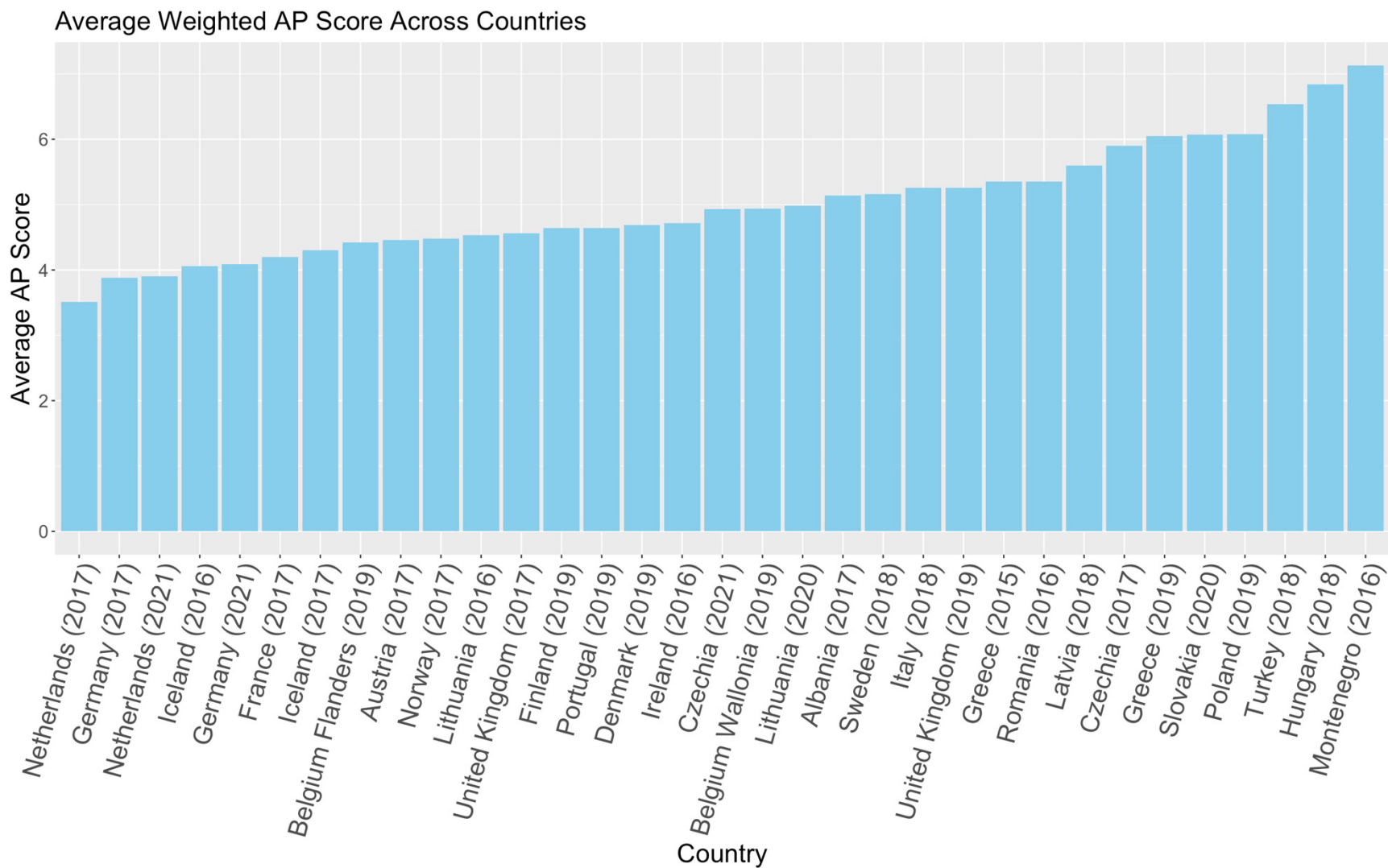


Figure 8. Average weighted AP scores across countries based on Reiljan's (2020) adopted formula

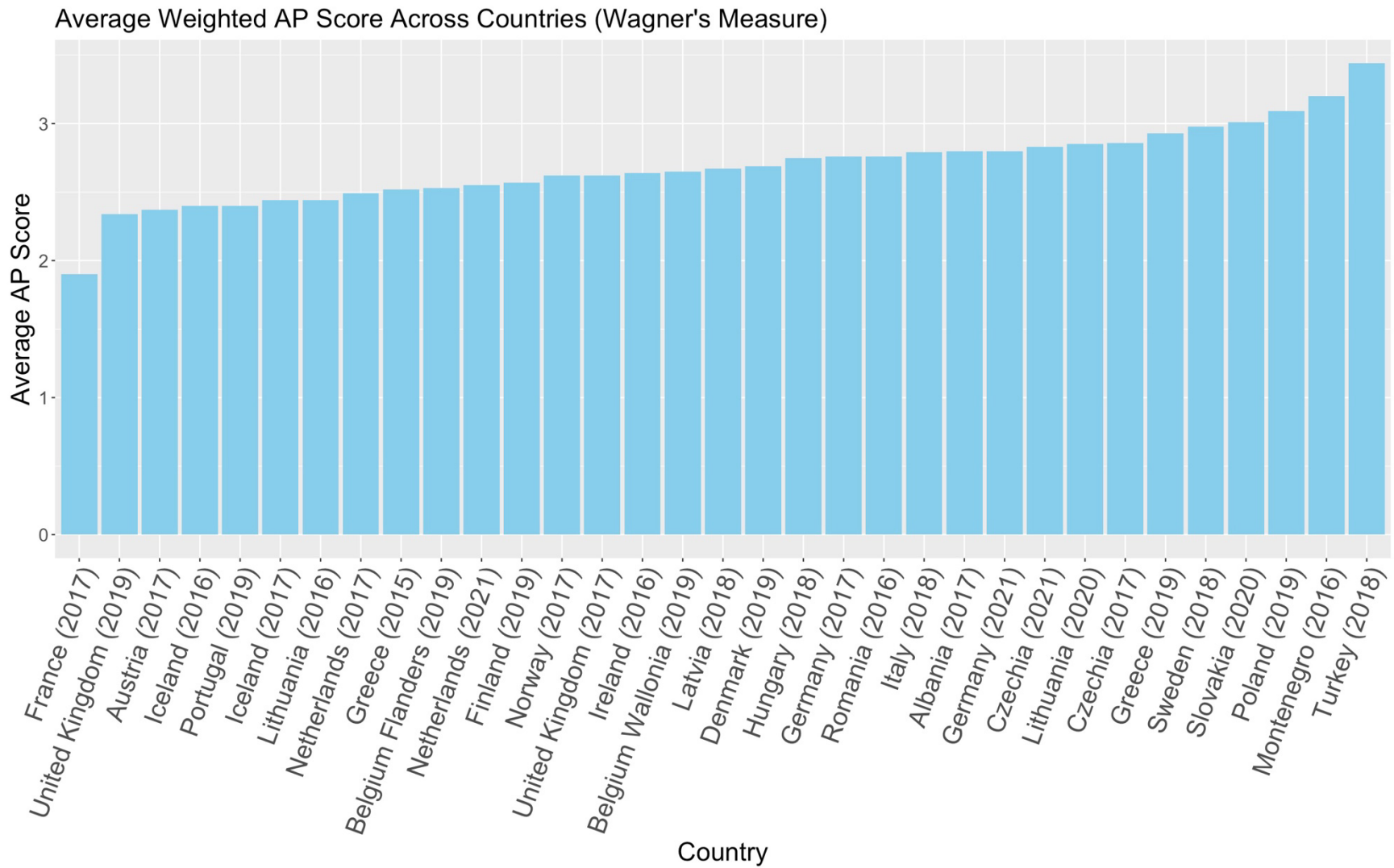


Figure 9. Average weighted AP scores across countries based on Wagner's (2021) formula

Following this, conducting a correlation test between the measures further helps to shed light on how the approaches correspond. The results of correlation tests are presented in Table 5, which has two main columns representing the condition under which the correlation was conducted and rows representing correlation coefficients, p-values, the 95% confidence interval, and the number of cases. Using Pearson's product-moment correlation on all data, the analysis showed that the correlation coefficient between the AP values calculated based on Reiljan's adopted formula and Wagner's formula equals 0.66, suggesting a strong correlation between approaches. The p-value < 0.05 indicates a statistically significant association. The 95% confidence interval shows that the correlation value might be between 0.656 and 0.668. The number of cases based on which the correlation test was conducted is 31,768.

Additionally, given that French data was inserted manually, I ran another Pearson's product-moment correlation test for the robustness of the results, which required the exclusion of the cases from France. This analysis showed that correlation resulted in a slightly higher value of 0.68. The p-value < 0.05 . The 95% confidence interval ranges between 0.674 and 0.686. The number of cases utilized is 30,611.

Table 5. *Correlation between Reiljan's adopted measure and Wagner's measure*

	All data	France (2017)* excluded
Correlation	0.66	0.68
p-value	< 0.05	< 0.05
95% Confidence interval	0.656 - 0.668	0.674 - 0.686
N of cases	31,768	30,611

Redirecting the focus back to the discussion of the measures employed in the paper and relying on the knowledge I obtained of the strong correlation between Reiljan's adopted measure and Wagner's formula, I will conduct further analysis with the former approach. The rationale behind this stems from how AP is conceptualized within the paper. Hence, to ensure that the measurement of the concept is linked to its definition, which derives from the social identity theory, Reiljan's approach is therefore prioritized for use in this research.

Moving forward, the next step in the analysis is to examine whether, among the European electorate, there is a tendency to be less satisfied with democracy in instances of higher polarization. This phenomenon has been observed in the United States, as documented by Iyengar et al. (2012). I will conduct a logistic regression analysis to investigate this within the European context. The dependent variable in this model is satisfaction with democracy, which is coded as a binary outcome ranging from 0 (not satisfied) to 1 (satisfied). The independent variable is AP. Additionally, the model accounts for the group structure in the dataset, requiring the inclusion of country dummy variables into the model, which will account for the fact that the outcome variable can have different average values across countries unrelated to the predictor variable. In other words, using country dummy variables, the model holds a constant country effect, which separates the impact of the predictor on the outcome variable.

The regression results presented in Table 6 utilize the McFadden Pseudo R-squared value to assess the proportion of variance in the dependent variable (SwD) based on 31,080 observations. The closer values to 1 indicate the stronger model's explanatory power. In the case of this logistic regression, McFadden Pseudo R-squared is 0.12, indicating that the model explains 12% of the variance in democratic satisfaction, indicating modest explanatory power. Furthermore, there is a negative association between the independent variable (AP) and the dependent variable (SwD). With a one-unit increase in AP, the probability of belonging to category 1 (satisfied with democracy) decreases by 0.067. This negative association is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), suggesting that when AP increases, the probability of belonging to the category of satisfied with democracy individuals decreases. To sum up, the model confirms that within the European context, polarized individuals tend to be less satisfied with democracy compared to those exhibiting more moderate scores of AP, similar to the findings of Iyengar et al. (2012).

Table 6. Logistic regression table of AP predicting SwD on the individual level

	Dependent variable:
	satisfaction with democracy
AP (0-10)	-0.067*** (0.006)
Constant	-0.597*** (0.095)
Observations	31,080
Pseudo R-squared (McFadden)	0.12

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

The graph depicted in Figure 10 visualizes the discussed relationship between AP and SwD among European respondents in 25 polities examined in this analysis. The fitted regression line showcases that when AP scores increase – indicating higher levels of polarization – there is a noticeable decrease in the probability of being satisfied with democracy. The regression line slopes downward, representing the statistically significant negative association between independent and dependent variables. The change in the likelihood of being satisfied with democracy from the point of the least level of AP to the end of the highest level of AP is nearly 10%. The gray area around the regression line illustrates a 95% confidence interval, which suggests that the line can take any values within this interval.

Nevertheless, it is important to underscore that the change in democratic satisfaction of 10% between the extremes of the AP scale is rather moderate. However, demonstrating this relationship serves as an essential build-up to showcase the effect of AP on SwD when there is no differentiation between electoral winners and losers, with the model predicting values across the entire dataset.

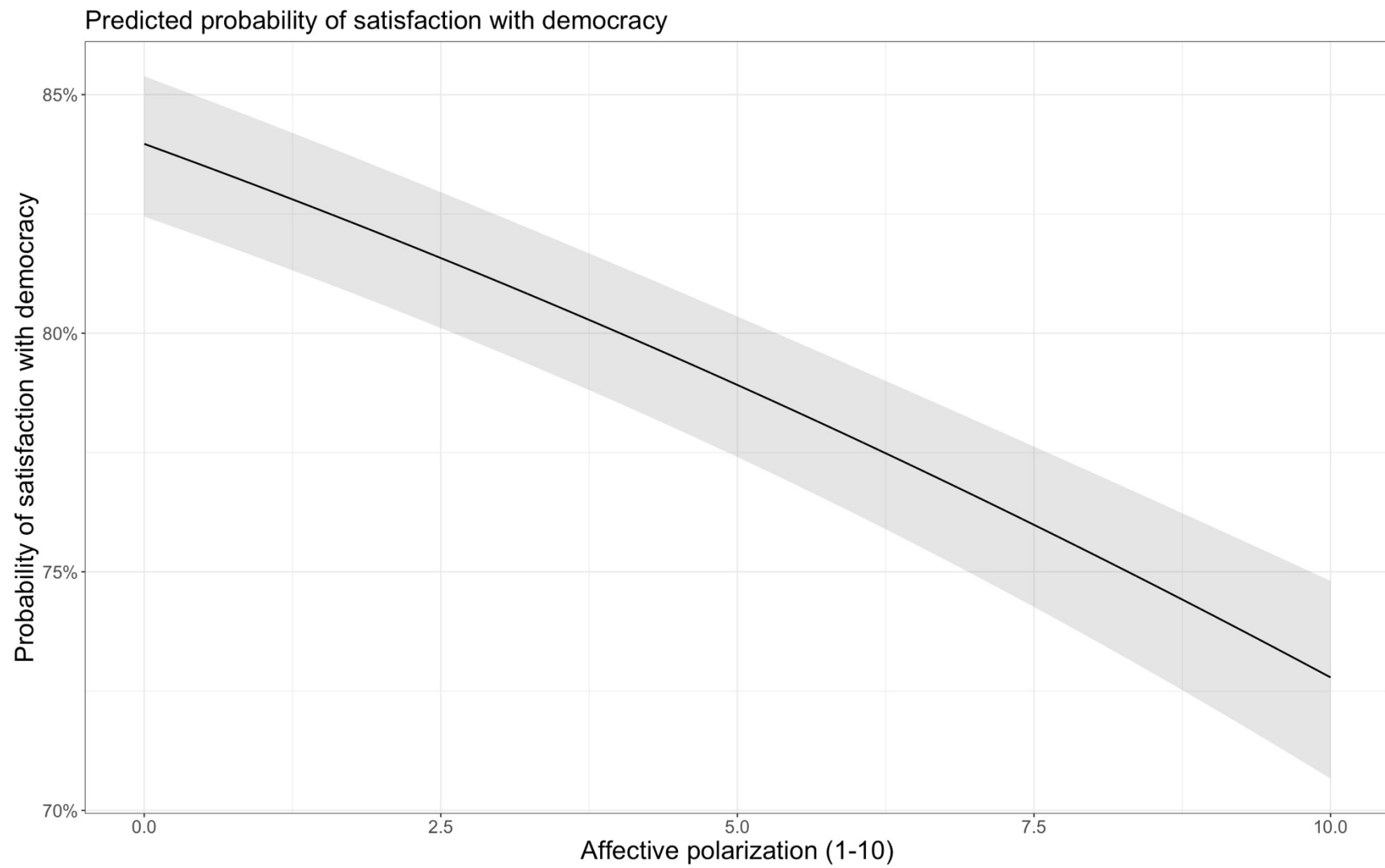


Figure 10. *Probability of satisfaction with democracy predicted by affective polarization on the individual level*

Furthermore, Figure 11 represents the relationship between AP and SwD at the country level. In this case, the SWD scale was recoded, wherein 0 represents the lowest level of democratic satisfaction, and 4 indicates the highest level of satisfaction with democracy. The model is based on the aggregated average scores of AP, which predict the SwD values. Similarly to Figure 10, the regression line slopes downward, suggesting a negative association between AP and SwD, which means that when the former value increases, the latter decreases. Most of the countries align with the regression line, except for a few noticeable outliers among those highly satisfied with democracy, such as Norway (2017), Austria (2017), Sweden (2018), and Denmark (2019), and lower satisfied, such as Greece (2015) and Albania (2017) and moderately satisfied but more polarized countries as Poland (2019), Montenegro (2016) and Türkiye (2018). In these cases, AP has a lesser role in impacting democratic satisfaction than in countries better aligned with the general trend.

Table 7 presents results of the linear regression between AP and SwD scores on the country level. Adjusted R-squared is 0.18 which indicates that the current model can account for 18% of the variation in the independent variable. The p-value < 0.01, which suggests that the model is statistically significant. In case of increase of AP by one unit, the model predicts that SwD will decrease by 0.19. Still, the difference between the least and most polarized countries in the indicator of SwD remains moderate, similarly to the model based on the individual level.

Table 7. *Linear regression table of affective polarization predicting satisfaction with democracy on the country level*

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>
	Average satisfaction with democracy
Average AP (0-10)	-0.19** (0.006)
Observations	33
Adjusted R-squared	0.18

Note:

* p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001

Relationship between Affective Polarization and Satisfaction with Democracy across Countries

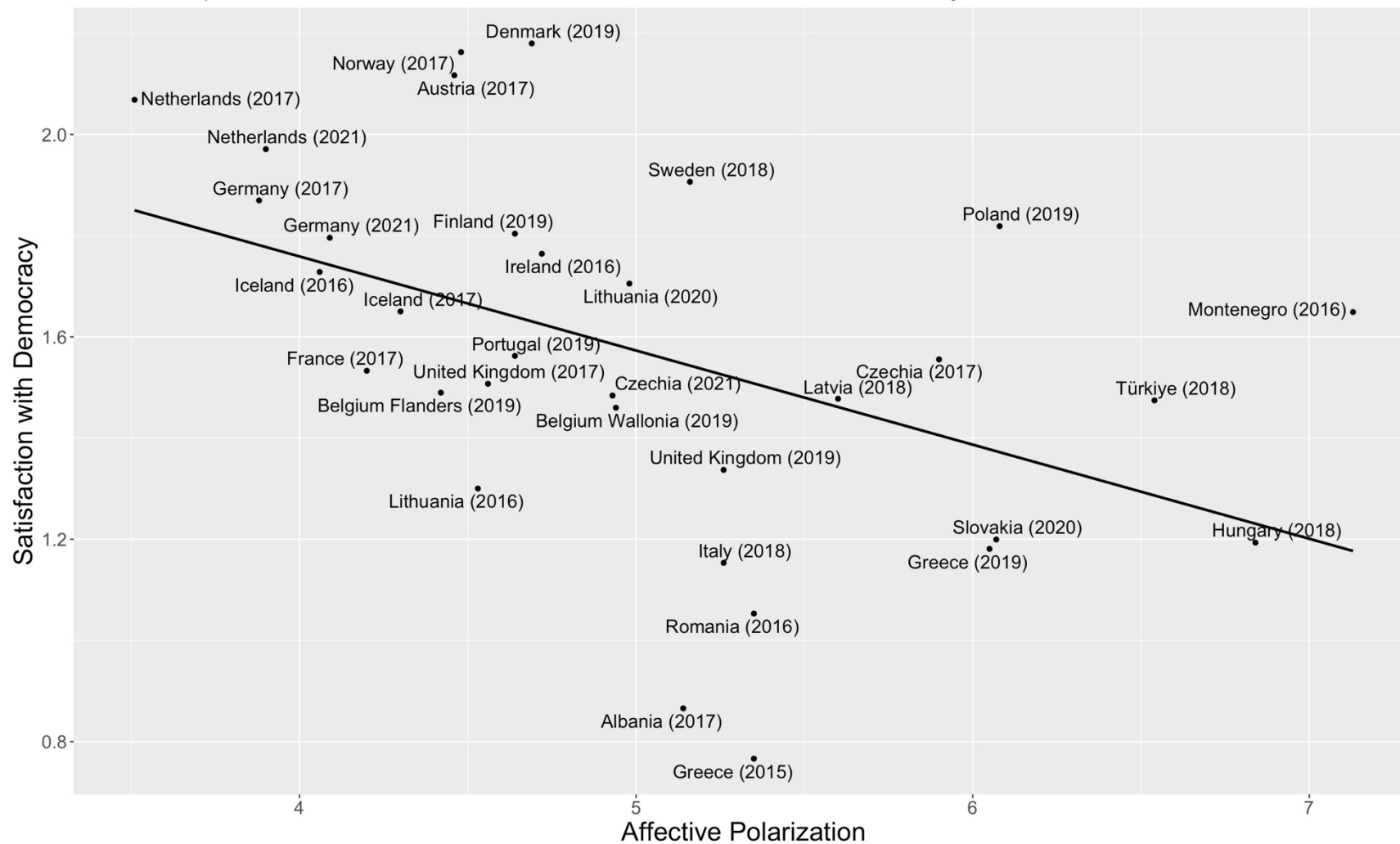


Figure 11. Relationship between affective polarization and satisfaction with democracy on the country level

Moving forward in the analysis, I now turn to establishing the relationship between AP and SwD, accounting for the electoral status of the individuals, categorizing them as either ‘winner’ or ‘loser’ of an election. As the previous analysis posited that AP does not significantly impact SwD, for this model, the expectation is to receive results that will validate hypotheses that polarization will amplify the effects of electoral victory and loss, making the former extremely satisfied with democracy and having an opposite effect on the latter, in line with Janssen’s (2023) findings. To do so, I will again utilize logistic regression, which requires recoding the scale of the dependent variable (SwD) from 0 to 1. This model differs from the previous model in that it involves an interaction of the winner-loser dummy variable with AP to demonstrate how the slopes of the regression differ between these groups. In other words, it enables an examination of whether AP’s influence on SwD varies between election winners and losers. Country dummy variables are also taken into account in this model.

Table 8 presents the results of the logistic regression with an interaction between AP and winner-loser status to predict probability of being satisfied with democracy between the groups based on 31,080 observations. McFadden Pseudo R-squared is 0.18 which suggests decent explanatory power of 18% of the variance in the dependent variable. The negative association between AP and SwD suggests that with a one-unit increase in AP, the probability of belonging to category 0 (not satisfied with democracy) increases by 0.167. This is statistically significant association as a p-value < 0.001 . The direct effect of being an election winner or loser is not statistically significant when other factors are controlled as p-value > 0.05 .

The coefficient of the interaction term is 0.204 and shows how much the slopes of the regression lines are different between the groups of winners and losers. While the increase of AP leads to a decrease in SwD by 0.167 units, this effect is mitigated for the election winners as this value becomes less negative by 0.204 units. Therefore, while election losers experience a decrease in SwD by 0.167 units, the election winners yield in $(-0.167 + 0.204) = 0.037$ increase, which implies that AP has a positive effect in the latter case but is much smaller than for the winners. These results confirmed hypotheses 1 and 2; however, the positive impact of being an election winner compared to the negative effect of being an election loser was notably lower with an increased AP level. Hence, affectively polarized electoral loser experiences a significant decrease in democratic satisfaction, while there is only a slight positive change for a polarized electoral winner.

Table 8. Logistic regression table of affective polarization interacting with winner-loser status to predict satisfaction with democracy

	<i>Dependent variable:</i> satisfaction with democracy
AP (0-10)	-0.167*** (0.008)
winner-loser status (ref. loser)	-0.089 (0.066)
AP:winner_loser_status(ref. loser)	0.204*** (0.012)
Constant	-0.832*** (0.102)
Observations	31,080
Pseudo R-squared (McFadden)	0.18
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Figure 12 illustrates the previously described relationship and demonstrates exactly what can be expected theoretically: being a polarized electoral loser significantly decreases democratic satisfaction. In this graph, the x-axis represents the scale of AP, ranging from 0 (the least polarized) to 10 (the most polarized), and the y-axis represents the probability of being satisfied with democracy bound between 0 and 1. The red regression line represents the group of electoral winners (coded as 1), and the blue line represents electoral losers (coded as 0). When the value of AP is 0, which suggests that citizens are neutral to the political parties, there is a very small gap between the winners and losers. However, as the values of AP increase, the blue line goes steeply down, indicating the increasing gap in the perception of democracy between the groups. Compared to a previous result of decreasing SwD of 10%, when differentiating between the groups, the probability of being satisfied with democracy between winners and losers drops by nearly 35%! This is a significant finding demonstrating how AP fuels biases among losers in the perception of the democratic functioning of their country. Nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that the model is based on the results of the whole dataset, but most likely, the relationship will differ in each respective country. Hence, the analysis moves forward to investigate this.

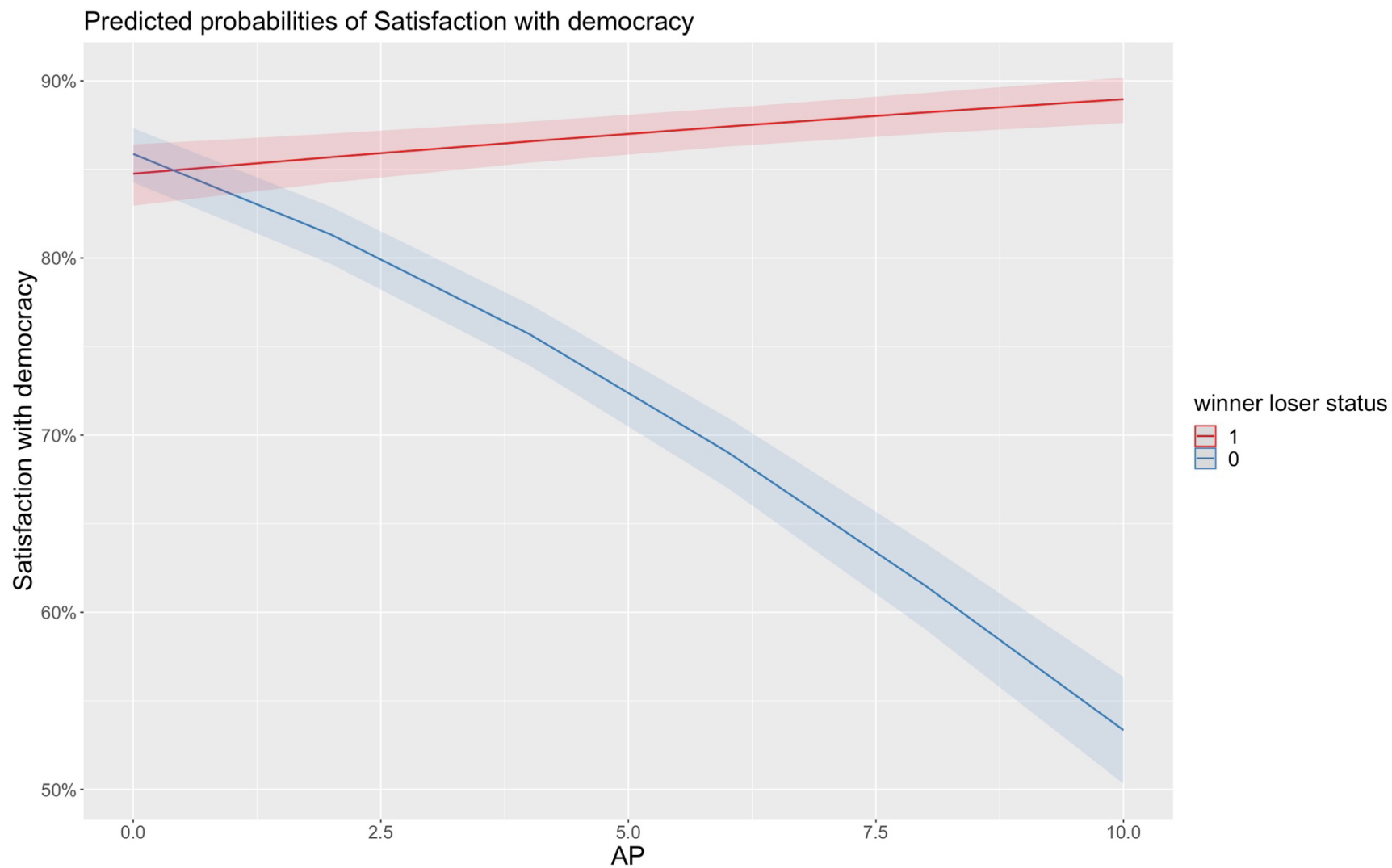


Figure 12. Democratic satisfaction gap between polarized election winners and losers

Before investigating the relationship in each country separately, Figure 13 offers another visual depiction of the AP effects on SwD among winners and losers. In this graph, the variables are defined in the opposite order, so now the x-axis has a winner-loser status ranging from 0 to 1. The AP is represented by the dots of three colors, namely red (the lowest AP with a value of 0), blue (medium AP with a value of 5), and green (the highest AP with a value of 10). These values were chosen to demonstrate different values of AP and their effect on SwD by comparing the extremes and the medium. This graph captures the difference in democratic satisfaction, and as can be observed, these differences are much bigger among losers, which suggests previously described significant negative effects of AP. Here, as the value of AP is 0 for both winners and losers, the latter even has prevailing democratic satisfaction; however, as AP increases, the gaps between being satisfied with democracy significantly increase.

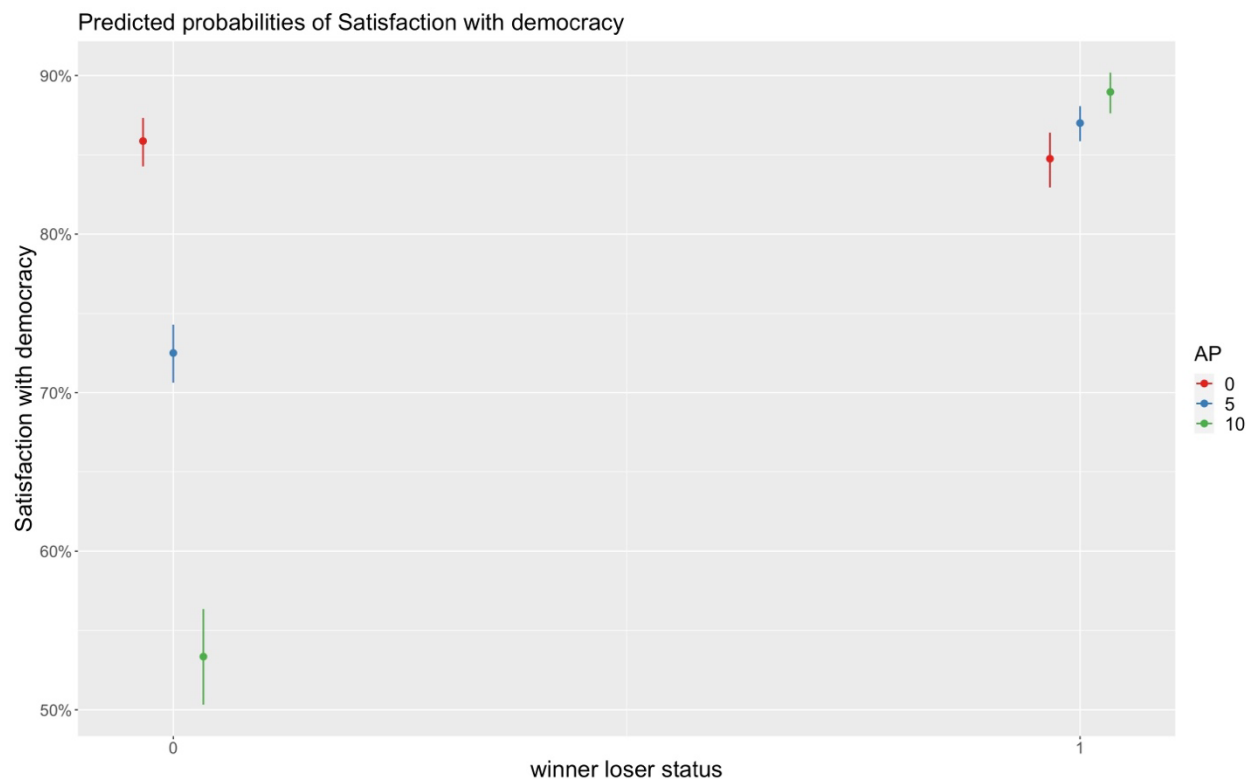


Figure 13. *Democratic satisfaction gap between polarized election winners and losers (reversed)*

The next model is devoted to redirecting the focus back to shedding light on how AP intensifies the experience of election victory and loss in the examined countries separately. Specifically, the model examines the interaction between AP, winner-loser status, and country dummy variables to

determine the respondent's country, providing insights into how these factors shape SwD. Furthermore, Figure 14 serves as a pivotal visual to demonstrate this nuanced relationship across various countries. I utilize this approach to avoid generalization of the results through a detailed examination of the intricate dynamics of the relationship based on each election studied in this thesis. Hence, this enriches conclusions by emphasizing differing directions of the relationship discovered by a comparative approach, as evident in Figure 14. The only difference with Figure 12 is that the results are plotted per country in this graph, which means that axes and regression lines have the same meaning. Thus, the x-axis represents the scale of AP, the y-axis represents the probability of being satisfied with democracy, and the red (winners) and blue (losers) lines represent one's election status.

A striking trend evident from the graph is the pronounced satisfaction gap between election winners and losers, which notably widens in Türkiye (2018), Hungary (2018), and Montenegro (2016). The deepening gap is the most pronounced in two former instances compared to other cases. Specifically, more affectively polarized supporters of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and Nationalist Action Party (MHP) in Türkiye (2018) and supporters of Fidesz – KNDP electoral alliance in Hungary (2018) tend to perceive that democracy functions extremely well in case their party wins. On the other hand, election losers are consistently extremely dissatisfied with democracy despite the increasing values of AP.

Apart from the similar trends in these countries, there was another feature these elections had in common. The election results in Hungary (2018) meant the third straight term for incumbent prime minister Viktor Orbán and in Türkiye (2018), the second term for incumbent president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan signaling the continuation of the countries' drift towards autocratization. Moreover, both elections had very high stakes, especially in the 2018 Turkish case, which faced changes expanding the president's power and transitioning the country to an executive presidency system (Kılıc Bugra Kanat et al., 2018). Hence, the election outcome left losers out of the decision-making processes in the country for an extended period, which, as suggested by the literature on election victory and defeat, impacts the perception of democratic legitimacy (Anderson et al., 2005). Consequently, repeated election loss is a potential explanation for the observed effect of AP on SwD among losers in these respective countries.

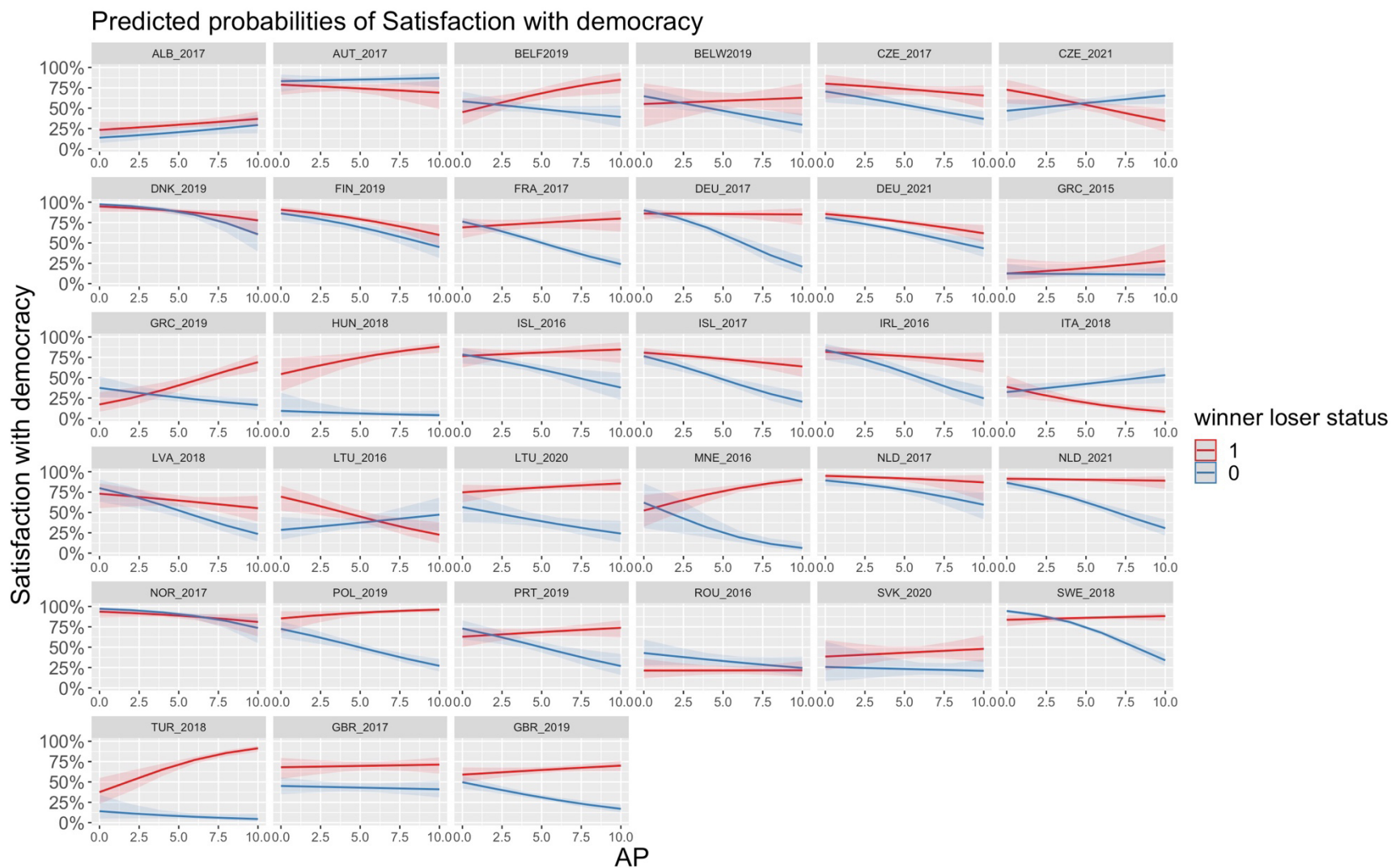


Figure 14. Democratic satisfaction gap between polarized winners and losers per each country

In the Montenegrin 2016 case, a slightly different relationship is observed; when AP is 0, both winners and losers have a similar probability of democratic satisfaction. However, as AP increases, how supporters of the winning and losing parties see democracy functioning aligns perfectly with the hypotheses outlined in this paper. One explanation for such directions lies in what happened in the 2016 Montenegrin election, which was marked by a polarized nation over NATO's path (Bajrović et al., 2018). In the aftermath of this election, the Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro (DPS) secured a governing coalition with Social Democrats of Montenegro (SD) backed up by Croatian, Albanian, and Bosniak minority parties, each consisting of 1 MP and winning 42 seats out of 81 to secure victory. Consequently, the winners of this election stand for pro-EU and pro-NATO paths, while losers have opposite views of the country's trajectory. Hence, given very tense and competitive election results and polarized views of the country's direction, we observe the deepening gap between those who stand on the extremes of the AP scale.

Furthermore, other notable cases corresponding to the outlined theoretical expectations are Poland (2019), Portugal (2019), Lithuania (2020), France (2017)⁴, Germany (2017), Greece (2019) and the UK (2019). The latter election case finding aligns with Janssen's (2023) study, which showed that the gap widens between election winners and losers in electoral systems characterized by winner-takes-all features. In the instances of Poland (2019), Portugal (2019), France (2017), and Greece (2019), all countries saw single-party victories. More precisely, in Poland, Law and Justice (PiS) was the major party in the electoral alliance, securing the majority of the seats in the parliament. At the same time, an explanation for France (2017) is provided in the footnote. Hence, a certain pattern of more pronounced and widening gap between winners and losers emerges in the countries characterized by single-party victories. Nevertheless, among these cases, there is one outlier in which the government also saw a single-party majority victory, but there is a minor difference between winners and losers; in fact, the more polarized losers had a slightly higher probability of being satisfied with democracy – Albania (2017). However, it is very challenging to establish the reasons for the observed outlier, which necessitates further elaboration.

⁴ Note that France (2017) is included in the discussion despite the absence of the electoral outcome and manual addition of the parties' seat shares, as most likely, these results would be the same if the election results were certain and CSES provided data. Furthermore, the coalition was formed with a minor party, the Democratic Movement (MoDem), for which CSES did not give a variable.

Shifting the focus back to the two remaining and undiscussed cases that align with theoretical expectations, Germany (2017) and Lithuania (2020), in the former case grand coalition consisting of traditional parties such as the Christian Democratic Union (CDU/CSU), Christian Social Union in Bavaria (CSU), Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) remained in power, while the negotiations with Free Democratic Party (FDP) and The Greens (Grüne) failed. Hence, the democratic satisfaction among the winners remained unchanged, while the losers, hoping for their parties to be a part of decision-making processes, experienced a significant decrease in the perception of how democracy functions. In the Lithuanian (2020) election, the gap might be explained by the fact that none of the previous governing political parties Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (LSDP) and Lithuanian Union of Farmers and Greens (LVSZ) were in the governing coalition in 2020, while Homeland Union - Lithuanian Christian Democrats (TS – LKD) and Liberal Movement of the Republic of Lithuania (LRLS) came back from the loss in 2016 alongside with Freedom Party (LP).

Moving forward in explaining the cases that align with theoretical expectations, it has to be acknowledged that previously discussed countries particularly stood out across all countries due to the very pronounced and widening gap (except Albania, which was mentioned in light of sharing similar feature of the single-party victory). Nevertheless, in such instances as Belgium-Flanders (2019), Belgium-Wallonia (2019), Greece (2015), Iceland (2016), the Netherlands (2017, 2021), Slovakia (2020), and Sweden (2018), the expected relationship and direction of regression lines is in line with the hypotheses, however, with varying levels of the AP's effect. As has been already mentioned, defining winners and losers in the context of Belgian politics is a challenging task due to the consensual way of democracy which results in lengthy government coalition talks, making it confusing even for the voters to understand whether they won or not. Nevertheless, in this case, the old government remained in power as a caretaker to deal with COVID-19. In the Netherlands, government formation traditionally also takes considerable time. However, there is a notable difference between 2017 and 2021. The potential explanation for this is that the old government remained in power. Hence, the opposition supporters again were deprived of the victory, which might have resulted in a widening gap in 2021. A similar feature of the old government was observed in the Swedish 2018 election, which was left with a caretaker due to fragmented election results and the inability to form a new governing coalition at the time when the CSES survey was carried out, which might have caused the increasing dissatisfaction among losers.

Previously discussed cases corresponded to the general theoretical expectation of the AP's amplifying effect. However, as evident in Figure 14, some countries yielded unexpected relationship directions. Specifically, more polarized losers were predicted to be more satisfied with democracy in these cases. Conversely, those who won the elections were shown to be less satisfied. Among those countries are Austria (2017), Czechia (2021), Italy (2018) and Lithuania (2016). The results of lower satisfaction with democracy among polarized losers in the 2016 Lithuanian case might stem from two reasons: 1) most of the ministers appointed were independent of any political party, and only one minister from LVSZ was appointed, as promised by the party, 2) LSDP lost a significant amount of seats and had to form a coalition with LVSZ which might have upset the voters, that despite forming a government, the party was no longer a key player with only three appointed ministers (Ibenskas, 2016).

Regarding the Austrian (2017) election, the results are indeed unexpected as the coalition talks and government formation were rather clear that Sebastian Kurz List - The New People's Party (OVP) and Freedom Party of Austria (FPO) will emerge victorious. However, this government is characterized as a radical far-right populist, which suggests that its supporters are generally more dissatisfied with how democracy functions in their country (Bodlos & Plescia, 2018). The Czech 2021 election was a very interesting case of the opposition parties collaborating to exclude the governing party, Action of Dissatisfied Citizens (ANO 2011), from the future coalition. In this case, democracy indeed functioned particularly well, allowing the exclusion of ANO 2011 through electoral alliances and collaboration between SPOLU and PirStan. Still, the decreasing values of SwD among winners remain puzzling.

Regarding the Italian (2018) election, the government formation took unconventionally a lengthy period due to a very fragmented election outcome. Specifically, the puzzle of government formation revolved around different political parties unwilling to collaborate. For instance, the Five Star Movement (M5S) was ready to form a government with the League (LN). However, the latter was only willing to do so with its electoral ally, Go Italy (FI), which M5S rejected. Consequently, the formation period was full of different coalition talks, and there was no clear understanding of who would form the government. Finally, the agreement between M5S and LN was reached after the CSES survey period. Therefore, in this case, the result might be either because of 1) the coding or 2) the LN's supporters' dissatisfaction with the party forming the

coalition without FI. Additionally, it must be acknowledged that the alliance of LN and M5S is considered Euroskeptic, with the LN being positioned as a far-right party, which might have also impacted the result (Zampano, 2018).

In the cases of the Czech (2017) election, Icelandic (2017) election, and Irish (2016) election, the gap between winners and losers is notable. However, both groups were more dissatisfied with democracy when AP increased with varying effects. Finally, the Nordic countries, Denmark (2019), Finland (2019), Norway (2017), and Germany (2021), all resulted in a similar trend of decreasing SwD between winners and losers, however, without a significant gap between them.

It has to be acknowledged that the discussion and interpretation of the relationship directions was mainly based on the surface-level analysis, without an in-depth examination of each case. However, the main goal of this discussion was to attempt to explain observed differences among the countries and identify potential causes. The main sources of these insights are from Appendix 1, in which I explained electoral outcomes for the political parties and their supporters. Hence, this analysis and assumptions can serve as a basis for future research to test these explanations. Nevertheless, among those potential explanations causing the widening gap between polarized winners and losers prominently stems single-party victory (except in the Albanian case) and consistent electoral loss, which is logical and consistent with the literature. These conditions exclude election losers from decision-making, impacting how losers perceive democratic functioning.

The final stage of the analysis is to test the model with different variables which might impact SwD. Among those are traditional variables such as age, gender, and education, and I also added ideology. Variables such as income and type of residency were deliberately not included based on the absence of data across various countries. From the technical point of view, it is the same two-way interaction between AP and winner-loser status, accounting for country dummy variables, but with additional predictors listed above. Table 9 presents the results of this regression model.

The regression analysis reveals that in this model, based on 28,109 observations, AP is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), which means that AP has a meaningful negative impact on SwD. Hence, a one-unit increase in AP leads to a decrease of 0.152 in SwD. Sole winner-loser status is not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$), suggesting that being a loser or winner does not significantly

affect SwD in this model. The respondent's age and gender ($p > 0.05$) do not show statistically significant effects. Education ($p < 0.001$) and ideology ($p < 0.001$) are statistically significant and have a positive association with SwD. In other words, increasing these variables leads to higher democratic satisfaction. Thus, those who are more educated and right-ideology-leaning tend to be more satisfied. AP and winner-loser status interaction is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), suggesting that while elections losers experience a decrease in SwD by 0.152 units, belonging to the winner group mitigates this by 0.2 units. The overall explanatory power of the model, as evidenced by McFadden Pseudo R-squared, is 0.2, indicating that the model explains 20% of the variance in the dependent variable. The results of the model are visualized in Figure 15.

Table 9. Logistic regression table with the results of predicting satisfaction with democracy with additional variables

	Dependent variable: satisfaction with democracy
AP (0-10)	-0.152*** (0.009)
winner-loser status (ref. loser)	-0.110 (0.071)
age (years)	0.001 (0.001)
gender - (ref. male)	0.019 (0.028)
education (1 – 9)	0.070*** (0.008)
ideology (0 – 10)	0.036*** (0.006)
AP:winner_loser_status(ref. loser)	0.200*** (0.013)
Constant	-1.331*** (0.130)
Observations	28,109
Pseudo R-squared (McFadden)	0.2
Note:	* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

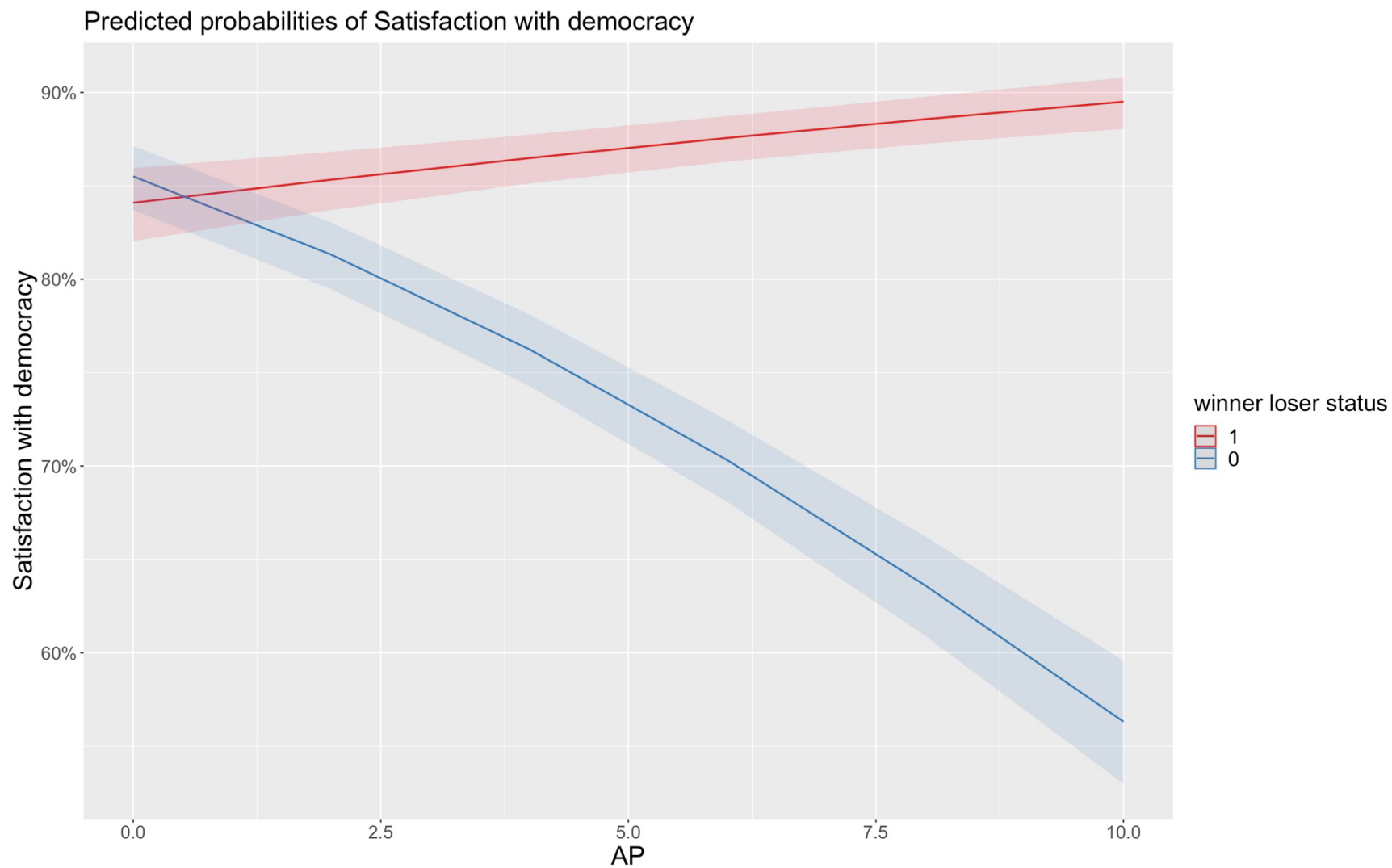


Figure 15. Predicted probabilities of satisfaction with democracy from the logistic regression model with additional predictors

Conclusions

The central focus of this thesis was to delve into the impact of affective polarization on the gap in democratic satisfaction between electoral winners and losers. The research was driven by the objective of filling the existing gap in the literature, which, despite its prominence, failed to shed light on the extensive cross-national comparison of the relationship in the European multi-party context, except in one study by Janssen (2023). Consequently, this thesis fills the gap by extending the knowledge of the relationship dynamics and broadening the scope of the cases examined in the previous research by Janssen (2023), while also corroborating her findings of the widening gap between polarized winners and losers. Additionally, this research adds to the pioneering work of Reiljan (2020) in studying AP in the European multi-party systems. Through a large data analysis of 33 elections in 25 polities, geographically located in Europe, and utilizing logistic regression modeling, the study has substantiated a significant finding: the diminishing role of AP in democratic perception. The results have serious implications by highlighting and empirically proving AP's threatening tendencies for the perception of democratic legitimacy.

Establishing solid theoretical ground by conscious recognition of concepts' nature and the traveling problem arising when applied in the European multi-party system, the first chapter of the thesis, the literature review, provided rigorous conceptualization. Building on the fundamental theory of social identity elucidated by Tajfel (1970), the study dives into a broader discussion of polarization's core principles that entail the division of society into two opposite camps. Furthermore, the thesis highlights previous research and benefits from the discussion of seminal studies of AP in the American and European contexts distinguishing affect from ideological paradigms (Iyengar et al., 2012; Reiljan, 2020). By acknowledging and addressing the conceptual limitations of AP in the multi-party systems, the study adopted a definition tailored to the thesis objectives emphasizing horizontal direction.

Moreover, the theoretical framework encompassed a detailed discussion of two other key concepts of the research: democratic satisfaction and the winner-loser gap. In the context of the former concept, as has been argued in the literature review chapter, it was imperative to establish what exactly this kind of satisfaction entails by examining political support framework originally proposed by Easton (1975) and further elaborated upon and updated for the modern need by Norris (2017) the figure of which is included in the chapter for visual clarity. Hence, within the scope of

this thesis, democratic satisfaction entailed satisfaction with how democracy functions in the country, distinguishing it from neighboring concepts of support for democratic principles or incumbent evaluation. Ultimately, the chapter culminated in applying a narrow definition of electoral winner and loser based on the reflection of available data. The painstaking process of consistent and meticulous conceptualization justified theoretical expectations outlined in the form of hypotheses. The underlying hypotheses posited that the effect of election results is amplified for individuals characterized by higher levels of affection for the political party.

Furthermore, the methodological chapter provided a transparent explanation of the logic behind conducting empirical analysis. Specifically, by comparing two primary methodologies in measuring AP in multi-party systems, this thesis contributes to the literature methodologically by calculating Reiljan's approach on the individual level and establishing the correlation with Wagner's formula. Following this, Reiljan's (2020) adopted formula was prioritized over Wagner's (2021) approach, which faced limitations in aligning with the AP's conceptualization within the context of this study. Additionally, Appendix 1 provided a thorough and detailed explanation of the electoral winners and losers classification process.

The research avoids a speculative nature by showing how citizens perceive how democracy functions in their country despite being close to supporting democratic norms as distinct and different concepts. Furthermore, the new knowledge generated by this academic inquiry contributes to the debate over AP's impact on democratic endurance, proving that, in contrast to Broockman et al.'s (2023) account of speculative scholarly discourse, in fact, AP does cause bias in how polarized partisans view democracy in their country depending on whether the party they support wins or loses. Consequently, while more polarized citizens are unlikely to undermine democratic norms, this thesis proves that AP does impact how citizens see how democracy works in their country.

The empirical study, detailed in the 3rd chapter revealed an increasing probability of dissatisfaction with democracy among higher levels of AP and the central finding of the thesis – the deepening gap between electoral winners and losers intensified by affective ties to a political party. Moreover, the thesis sheds light on the intricate dynamics of the relationship in a comparative manner between the cases, illustrating differing effects on SwD for polarized

partisans among the countries. In some instances, a strong affect for the party in case of electoral victory led to a significant increase in democratic satisfaction. Conversely, some other cases showed more moderate, with the gap remaining relatively insufficient.

Understanding the impact of electoral outcomes on democratic satisfaction is crucial for grasping the dynamics of increasingly polarized societies as the trend of different democracy functioning perception evident in this relationship has been observed across multiple European countries. Significantly widening gaps between the groups of winners and losers have been observed in such countries as Türkiye (2018), Hungary (2018), Montenegro (2016), Poland (2019), Portugal (2019), Lithuania (2020), France (2017), Germany (2017), Greece (2019) and the UK (2019). Furthermore, these findings become particularly important in light of research highlighting how societies fractured into polarized groups may exhibit tendencies toward violent political behavior (Easton, 1975; Esteban & Ray, 1994; Norris, 2017).

As this thesis draws to a close, it is imperative to emphasize that the findings have limited explanatory power of sole democratic satisfaction examination. The results establish foundational understanding of the relationship, but this is a preliminary step. First of all, despite a significant finding of the thesis, to empirically prove that AP causes threats to the system support by dividing cohesive societies into distinct camps, future studies should aim to examine the entire spectrum of the political support framework and research each component. Second, the results show different amplifying effects of the relationship depending on the examined country, which paves the way for future research to build on explaining the potential causes of these differences. Nevertheless, the paper outlines some potential predictors of difference, including consistent election defeat, majoritarian systems (consistent with previous research; for evidence, see (Anderson et al., 2005; Janssen, 2023)), and single-party majority victories. These findings were based on the election summaries detailed in Appendix 1.

In conclusion, I hope this thesis makes an important contribution to our knowledge of polarization and democracy dynamics. By conducting this analysis, I strive to bring conceptual and methodological clarity to the field of AP and spark scholarly discourse. The findings presented in this paper will serve as a stepping stone for more in-depth studies.

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Appendix 1

Table 1. Classification of political parties as either electoral winners or losers

Polity name and election year	Election date	CSES data collection dates	Election background and outcome	Winner and loser status
Albania (2017)	June 25, 2017	February 15, 2018 – April 11, 2018	The 2017 Albanian Parliamentary elections were preceded by a political crisis – a boycott from the opposition Democratic Party (PD). The turnout rate was 46.8% (the lowest since multiparty elections in 1991). The incumbent Socialist Party of Albania (PS) won a single-party majority of the seats (74 out of 140) in the Albanian Parliament (Kuvendi). PD experienced a significant loss in seats (43 out of 140). Social Movement for Integration (LSI), a former coalition partner of PS, moved to opposition. Despite Libra Party (LIBRA) securing 5,000 more votes than the Social Democratic Party of Albania (PSD), they did not secure any seats in the Parliament due to the Albanian proportional representation system (National Democratic Institute, 2017).	Winning parties: Socialist Party of Albania (PS) Losing parties: Democratic Party of Albania (PD), Socialist Movement for Integration (LSI), Party for Justice, Integration and Unity (PDIU), Libra Party (LIBRA), Social Democratic Party of Albania (PSD).
Austria (2017)	October 15, 2017	October 19, 2017– November 30, 2017	The 2017 Austrian snap Federal lower house election has been christened as “a shift rightward” with the turnout rate of 80% (Bodlos & Plescia, 2018). 183 seats were at stake to <i>Nationalrat</i> (National Council). In the aftermath of the election, OVP received the highest share of the votes, while FPÖ ranked third. Almost immediately after	Winning parties: Sebastian Kurz List - The New People's Party (OVP), Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ).

			the results were published, coalition talks between OVP and FPÖ began. OVP's leader, Sebastian Kurz, stated that FPÖ is the party, among others, to form a coalition (Mischke, 2017).	Losing parties: Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ), The New Austria together with Irgard Griss, Citizens for Freedom and Responsibility (NEOS), Peter Pilz List (PILZ), The Greens - The Green Alternative (GRÜNE)
Belgium-Flanders (2019)	May 26, 2019	May 29, 2019 September 24, 2019	In the context of the unique Belgian political system, which is characterized by a consensual type of democracy, classifying electoral winners and losers presents significant challenges. This is exemplified by the situation in 2019, where the formation of a new government extended beyond the span of a year due to the inability to reach a consensus. In scenarios like these, the previous government often retains its governing capacity, as was the case during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, in such instances, the outgoing government might be considered as the 'winners' given their continued role in governance amidst the inability to form a new government (ALDE, 2020).	Winning parties: Christian Democratic & Flemish (CD&V), Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats (Open-VLD), Reformist Movement Losing parties: New Flemish Alliance (N-VA), Flemish Importance (VB), Socialist Party Differently (sp. a), Green, Workers Party of Belgium (PVDA), Socialist Party (PS), Ecolo, Humanist Democratic Centre (cdH), Democratic Federalist Independent

				(DeFI), People's Party (PP).
Belgium-Wallonia (2019)	May 26, 2019	May 29, 2019 - September 03, 2019	See Belgium-Flanders election background and outcome	Winning parties: Losing parties:
Czechia (2017)	October 20 - October 21, 2017	October 23, 2017 - November 12, 2017	The 2017 Czech parliamentary election saw a significant disparity in votes for the populist party ANO, which won 78 out of 200 seats, standing out from the rest of the parties. However, the coalition formation process was unstable, mainly due to the criminal charges facing ANO's leader, Andrej Babis (Daniel McLaughlin, 2017). This led to a failed attempt to form a minority government (attempt announcement on October 31, 2017) which, in order to work, required support from other parties, which at that time was only given by the Communist Party (Vodstrelcova, 2017). However, even with the support of Communists the amount of seats would not constitute the majority. The previous government consisted of CSSD (the largest party in the previous government that lost 35 seats in 2017), ANO (gained 31 seats) and KDU-CSL (lost 4 seats). While there was no government formed at the time the CSES survey was carried out, it is also misleading to code the old government as winners except for ANO, as both CSSD and KDU-CSL lost seats. The puzzle remains around CSSD that later formed the government with Communist backing, but not being part of the government. Still, despite unfinished government, Czech parliament supported ANO's laws and passed the state budget on December 21, 2017 (Stuchlíková, 2018). Therefore, despite the refusal of political parties to form	Winning parties: Action of Dissatisfied Citizens (ANO 2011), Czech Social Democratic Party (CSSD) Losing parties: Civic Democratic Party (ODS), Czech Pirate Party (Pi), Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD), Christian and Democratic Union-Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU-CSL), TOP 09, Mayors and Independents (STAN), Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSCM)

			coalition with ANO, it remained a main political force in the country and a clear winner of that election, which was able to form a government with only one party. Thus, in this case, for a robustness check, I will code ANO as a winner and, in another, both CSSD and ANO as winners, given their previous and future coalition in the government (Deloy, 2017; Dębiec, 2018).	
Czechia (2021)	October 8 - October 9, 2021	October 11, 2021- November 24, 2021	The 2021 Czech parliamentary election resulted in the unexpected victory of the SPOLU (ODS, TOP 09, KDU-CSL) and PirStan (Pi, STAN) electoral alliances in the popular vote aiming to exclude ANO from the decision-making process of Czech politics. The new head of the government became the leader of the ODS party, Petr Fiala. The coalition included five political parties. Both CSSD and KSCM failed to meet the threshold to enter the parliament. Despite ANO gaining the most seats, SPOLU and PirStan signed the agreement to exclude ANO. Consequently, Petr Fiala led formation of a government (Kudrnáč & Petrůšek, 2022; Reuters, 2021).	Winning parties: Civic Democratic Party (ODS), Czech Pirate Party (Pi), Christian and Democratic Union-Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU-CSL), Tradition, Responsibility, Prosperity (TOP 09), Mayors and Independents (STAN). Losing parties: Action of Dissatisfied Citizens (ANO 2011), Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD), Czech Social Democratic Party (CSSD), Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSCM),

Denmark (2019)	June 5, 2019	June 06, 2019 - September 28, 2019	The new Danish government was quickly formed following the election, with parties including the Social Democrats, the Liberal Party, the Red-Green Alliance, and the Socialist People's Party sharing common ground on the issue of climate change. A single minority government was formed by the SD on June 27, 2019, with the latter parties providing support (Skjæveland, 2020).	Winning parties: Social Democrats (SD), Danish Social Liberal Party (RV), Socialist People's Party (SF), Unity List - Red-Green Alliance (EL). Losing parties: Venstre, Denmark's Liberal Party (V), Danish People's Party (DF), Conservative People's Party (KF), The Alternative (A), The New Right (NB).
Finland (2019)	April 14, 2019	April 17, 2019 - October 05, 2019	In the 2019 Finnish election, the Social Democratic Party received the largest share of the votes, leading the government formation talks. They initiated the process of initial talks and distributed a questionnaire to various parties, based on which the government was formed on June 6, including the Center Party, Green League, Left Alliance, and Swedish People's Party (YLE NEWS, 2019).	Winning parties: Social Democratic Party of Finland (SDP), Center Party of Finland (KESK), Green League (VIHR), Left Alliance (VAS), Swedish People's Party in Finland (RKP) Losing parties: The Finns Party (PS), National Coalition Party (KOK), Christian Democrats in Finland

				(KD), Blue Reform (SIN)
France (2017)	1st round (April 23, 2017), 2nd round (May 7, 2017)	May 09, 2017 - May 23, 2017	During the CSES data collection period, only the presidential election took place. Thus, no data is available on the parties' vote shares since the legislative election took place in June. Nevertheless, the 2017 French election witnessed a landslide victory for Emmanuel Macron and his party, The Republic Onwards! Together with its ally, the MoDem, secured a majority government (Curtis, 2017).	Winning parties: The Republic Onwards! (LaREM) Losing parties: National Front (FN), The Republicans (LR), Indomitable France (FI), Socialist Party (PS), France Arise (DLF), Europe Ecology - The Greens (EELV)
Germany (2017)	September 24, 2017	September 25, 2017 - November 30, 2017	The formation of a grand coalition with Angela Merkel leading the government took historically longer than ever before, with the CDU/CSU and SPD forming a government in March 2018, even though attempts to form a "Jamaica coalition" between the CDU/CSU, FDP, and Greens failed in November 2017. Given that the government was still unstable at the moment the survey was carried out, the decision was made to code the old government as winners, which in the end was correct as it was the only viable option for leading the government. (Amelang et al., 2018).	Winning parties: Christian Democratic Union, (CDU/CSU), Christian Social Union in Bavaria (CSU), Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) Losing parties: Alternative for Germany (AfD), Free Democratic Party (FDP), Left Party, Alliance 90 / The Greens (Gruene), Free Voters (FW)

Germany (2021)	September 26, 2021	September 27, 2021 - November 21, 2021	In the 2021 German election SPD gained the largest share of the vote, with the CDU/CSU being the main competitor for coalition partners, namely the Greens and the FDP. However, it was not yet clear who would succeed, and a grand coalition was not possible, as both leaders of the CDU/CSU and SPD were striving for the chancellor position. Consequently, both the Greens and the FDP were seen as big winners since the major parties wanted to form a coalition with them. However, given Merkel's resignation and election result it was most likely that the SPD would form the government. (BBC, 2021b).	Winning parties: Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), Alliance 90 / The Greens (GRUENE), Free Democratic Party (FDP) Losing parties: Christian Democratic Union (CDU/CSU), Alternative for Germany (AfD), Christian Social Union in Bavaria (CSU), Left Party, Free Voters (FW), Animal Protection Party
Great Britain (2017)	June 8, 2017	June 28, 2017 - October 02, 2017	Right before CSES survey was carried out, on June 26, 2017, the agreement between Conservatives and Northern Irish Democratic Unionist Party has been reached to back May's minority government (BBC, 2017b).	Winning parties: Conservative Party (Con) Losing parties: Labor Party (Lab), Liberal Democrats (LD), Scottish National Party (SNP), United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), Green Party (GP), Plaid Cymru (PC)

Great Britain (2019)	December 12, 2019	December 28, 2019 - July 13, 2020	In the 2019 UK election Conservative party emerged as victorius gaining majority of the seats (365 out of 650) in the House of Commons (BBC, n.d.).	Winning parties: Conservative Party (Con) Losing parties: Labor Party (Lab), Liberal Democrats (LD), Scottish National Party (SNP), Green Party (GP), Brexit Party (BP), Plaid Cymru (PC)
Greece (2015)	September 20, 2015	October 29, 2015 - February 29, 2016	The 2015 Greek parliamentary election saw the radical left party, Syriza, nearly achieving a one-party majority, falling just a few seats short. Despite their contrasting ideologies, they formed a coalition government with the right-wing populist party ANEL, which secured 13 seats. Both parties shared the common goal of ending the financial crisis, which was enough basis for them to collaborate and form the government (Smith, 2015).	Winning parties: Coalition of the Radical Left (Syriza), Independent Greeks - National Patriotic Alliance (ANEL) Losing parties: New Democracy (ND), Popular Association - Golden Dawn (XA), Democratic Coalition (PASOK - DIMAR), Communist Party of Greece (KKE), The River, Union of Centrists
Greece (2019)	July 7, 2019	December 12, 2019 - March 07, 2020	In the 2019 Greek elections, New Democracy gained a majority of the seats in Parliament, securing 158 out of	Winning parties: New Democracy (ND)

			300 seats, which allowed them to form a single-party government (Kyriazi, 2019).	Losing parties: Coalition of the Radical Left (Syriza), Movement for Change (KINAL), Communist Party of Greece (KKE), Greek Solution, European Realistic Disobedience Front (MeRA25), Popular Association - Golden Dawn (XA), Course of Freedom, Union of Centrists
Hungary (2018)	April 8, 2018	April 23, 2018 - May 14, 2018	In 2018, Hungary witnessed a significant victory for the Fidesz-KDNP alliance, which secured a two-thirds majority in the parliament (Bayer, 2018).	Winning parties: Fidesz – KDNP Losing parties: Jobbik - Movement For a Better Hungary (Jobbik), Hungarian Socialist Party - Dialogue for Hungary, Politics Can Be Different, Democratic Coalition (DK), Momentum Movement, Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party, Together
Iceland (2016)	October 29, 2016	October 30, 2016 - January 25, 2017	The 2016 Icelandic snap elections were held amidst a scandal involving the incumbent prime minister from the Progressive Party, as reported by Bowers (2016). The outcome of the election led to a precarious coalition	Winning parties: Independence Party (Sj),

			scenario, ultimately resulting in a government formed by three parties: Independence, Reform, and Bright Future, which officially took office on January 10, 2017 (Iceland Review, 2017).	Reform Party, Bright Future (BF) Losing parties: Left-Green Movement (VG), Pirate Party (Pi), Progressive Party (F), Social Democratic Alliance, People's Party (FIF), Dawn
Iceland (2017)	October 28, 2017	October 30, 2017-February 02, 2018	In the aftermath of the 2017 Icelandic election, three parties formed the government. The Left-Greens were allocated the position of Prime Minister and two ministerial positions, the Independence Party was granted control of five ministries, and the Progressive Party was responsible for four ministries (Fontaine, 2017).	Winning parties: Left-Green Movement (VG), Independence Party (Sj), Progressive Party (F) Losing parties: Social Democratic Alliance, Centre Party (M), Pirate Party (Pi), People's Party (FIF), Reform Party, Bright Future (BF)
Ireland (2016)	February 26, 2016	March 01, 2016 - March 06, 2016	The 2016 Irish election resulted in a hung parliament. Immediately after the election results, the leader (prime minister) of Tribe of the Irish (FG), the largest party in 2016, announced that the coalition between FG and Labor party, who suffered a significant loss in seats, will not continue. Furthermore, FG and FF indicated they would not join a coalition (BBC, 2016). In this case Independents emerged as key players since both of the leading and competing parties (FG and FF) needed their support to back minority government (RTÉ, 2016b). Therefore, the political reality led to a situation where the	Winning parties: Tribe of the Irish (FG), Soldiers of Destiny (FF) Losing parties: We Ourselves (SF), Labor Party (Lab), Anti-Austerity Alliance-People Before Profit (AAA-PBP), Social Democrats (SD), Green

			government could rather be formed between FG and other political parties, except FG, which is unrealistic given the fragmentation of the parties. Another possibility arose between FG and FF, who met to discuss a potential coalition (RTÉ, 2016a). Thus, while there was no clear stance on who would form the government when the CSES survey was carried out, it was clear that it would not be correct to label the Labor Party as the winner. It could be the case that even voters were confused of whether their party emerged victorious, given that two giants in Irish politics at that time could not find a compromise. However, the electoral performance of these two parties, the likelihood and speculation talks of the grand government formation between them led to the classification of these parties as winners. This classification can also be explained in a way that despite FG losing seats, it was still the largest party. Meanwhile, FF's finishing second could dictate its terms and facilitate government formation.	Party (GP), Renua Ireland (RI)
Italy (2018)	March 4, 2018	March 08, 2018 - May 02, 2018	The 2018 Italian election led to a hung parliament with no party receiving a single majority of the seats. Center-right alliance comprising of Forza Italia (FI), Northern League (LN) and Brothers of Italy (FdI) altogether received 37% of the vote share. Meanwhile, Five Star Movement (M5S) received 32%. Electoral performance of the League outperformed Berlusconi's party putting them in a direct competition with M5S. (DW, 2018a). Consequently, given the position of these two political parties, LN's leader announced readiness to form a coalition with M5S (announcement on March 14, 2018) (Zampano, 2018). However, due to LN's appeals to include Berlusconi's party in the coalition, which was	Winning parties: Five Star Movement (M5S), League (LN) Losing parties: Democratic Party (PD), Go Italy (FI), Brothers of Italy (FdI), Free and Equal (LeU)

			rejected by M5S, resulting in attempts to include the Democratic Party (PD) in a possible coalition (DW, 2018b). The deadlock continued, caused by the unwillingness of PD to form a coalition with M5S or a center-right alliance and M5S's rejection of forming a government with the whole alliance. This situation led to the president's proposal to impose the neutral government to avoid the need for another election, which was refused by the parties (The Guardian, 2018). Furthermore, the puzzle was solved when the talks between LN and M5S proved positive. However, this happened after the CSES survey period (Giuffrida, 2018). Therefore, there was no clear winner in that period, and coding old government parties as winners would not be correct. At the same time, coding both M5S and LN as winners, given the period, is not completely correct either. Nevertheless, it is the only viable option given that both parties performed well in the election, and the likelihood of forming the government between them was higher than with PD since M5S and LN were ideologically closer.	
Latvia (2018)	October 6, 2018	November 14, 2018 - December 01, 2018	The aftermath of the 2018 Latvian election was marked by a significant period of uncertainty in government formation. The Latvian constitution grants the president the authority to appoint party leaders to attempt to form a new government. In this instance, the leader of the New Conservative Party (JKP) initiated discussions with all political parties, excluding Harmony, and subsequently decided against including the Greens and Farmers Union in the talks. This decision, along with the departures of Development/For!, National Alliance (NA), and New Unity (JV) from the coalition discussions—largely due	Winning parties: New Conservative Party (JKP), Development/For! (AP!), National Alliance (NA), New Unity (JV), Who Owns the State? (KPV LV) Losing parties: Social Democratic Party "Harmony" (Harmony),

			to disagreements over JKP's approach to communication—resulted in an unsuccessful attempt to establish a government. It wasn't until January 7, 2019, that a breakthrough was achieved, largely due to JV. Despite the prolonged period without a government, it became increasingly apparent that Harmony would not be a part of the ruling coalition, with the other parties moving forward without them (Gusevs, 2019)	, Union of Greens and Farmers, Latvian Russian Union (LRU), The Progressives
Lithuania (2016)	October 9, 2016	November 11, 2016 - December 10, 2016	In the 2016 Lithuania election, the Union of Farmers and Greens (LVSZ) emerged as a huge winner and signed the coalition agreement with the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party shortly after the results. However, most of the ministers in the newly formed government were independent of any political party, as LVSZ promised (Ibenskas, 2016)	Winning parties: Lithuanian Union of Farmers and Greens (LVSZ), Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (LSDP) Losing parties: Homeland Union - Lithuanian Christian Democrats (TS – LKD), Liberal Movement of the Republic of Lithuania (LRLS), Anti-Corruption Coalition (LCP-LPP), Lithuanian Poles Electoral Action - Christian Families Alliance (LLRA-KSS), Party Order and Justice (PTT), Labor Party (DP)
Lithuania (2020)	October 11, 2020	January 21, 2021- February 21, 2021	On November 9, 2020, leaders of three political parties, Homeland Union - Lithuanian Christian Democrats (TS – LKD), Freedom Party (LP), Liberal Movement of the	Winning parties: Homeland Union - Lithuanian Christian

			Republic of Lithuania (LRLS) signed a coalition agreement to form a new government (Jurkynas, 2021; LRT, 2020).	Democrats (TS – LKD), Freedom Party (LP), Liberal Movement of the Republic of Lithuania (LRLS) Losing parties: Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union (LVSZ), Labor Party (DP), Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (LSDP), Lithuanian Poles Electoral Action - Christian Families Alliance (LLRA - KSS), Lithuanian Social Democratic Labor Party (LSDDP), Lithuanian Center Party – Nationalists (CPT)
Montenegro (2016)	October 16, 2016	December 08, 2016 - January 16, 2017	The 2016 Montenegrin election was marked by an attempted coup, backed by Russia, aimed at installing a pro-Russian government and halting the country's pro-Western trajectory. Among accused are members of pro-Russian party, Democratic Front which constituted 18 out of 81 seats in the parliament (2nd place after Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) with 36 seats) (Bajrović et al., 2018). The nation was split due to debates over its NATO path, allegations against opposition politicians regarding involvement in a coup, and alleged electoral fraud, which led the opposition boycotting the results (Tomovic, 2016). On November	Winning parties: Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro (DPS), Social Democrats of Montenegro (SD), Bosniak Party (BS), Albanians Decisively (FORCA-DUA-AA), Croatian Civic Initiative (HGI)

			28, 2016, Montenegrin Parliament elected new government supported by 42 MPs from DPS, Social Democrats (SD) and minority parties (Batrićević, 2016).	Losing parties: Democratic Front (DF), Key Coalition, Democratic Montenegro (DCG), Social Democratic Party of Montenegro (SDP)
Netherlands (2017)	March 15, 2017	March 16, 2017 - July 03, 2017	In the Netherlands, the process of government formation traditionally takes a considerable amount of time. This was exemplified in 2017 when the country set a record by taking 208 days to form a government, comprising of People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), Democrats 66 (D66), Christian Union (CU) (Henley, 2017). The 2017 Dutch election saw VVD securing 33 seats out of 150. At that time this meant VVD had to go in coalition with three other parties to form a government. The leader of the VVD party announced that his party would enter coalition talks with Christian Democrats (CDA) and Democrats 66 (D66), while Party for Freedom would be excluded from this process. Either Christian Union (CU) or Green Left (GL) could become a fourth party in the governing coalition (announcement on March 16, 2017) (BBC, 2017a). However, on May 15 coalition talks between VVD, CDA, D66 and Green Left failed. At the same time most of the political parties refused to form government with Wilder's Party for Freedom (PVV) (Saeed, 2017). The Green Left (GL), despite being involved in coalition talks, could be perceived as a winner. However, due to the unsuccessful efforts to form a coalition with them, they are classified as losers in this context. Consequently, the new government, formed	Winning parties: People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), Democrats 66 (D66), Christian Union (CU) Losing parties: Labor Party (PvdA), Party for Freedom (PVV), Green Left (GL), Socialist Party (SP), Party for the Animals (PvdD).

			without the inclusion of GL, will be coded as the electoral winner in this analysis since the previous coalition partner, Labor Party (PvdA), suffered a significant loss and a long process of government formation, it would be wrong to code old government as winners (Mehreen Khan, 2017).	
Netherlands (2021)	March 17, 2021	March 18, 2021 - May 16, 2021	The 2021 Dutch election saw another victory of Rutte's VVD party securing 35 out of 150 seats while D66, part of governing coalition gained 24 seats. It was expected that VVD will not form coalition with PVV or FvD and will choose to form a coalition with CDA and D66; however, this alliance would not secure enough seats to establish a majority government, necessitating the inclusion of an additional party (BBC, 2021a). The government formation again took considerable amount of time and remained a puzzle in which political parties were vetoing coalition with others (VVD and D66 against PvdA and GL), while also rejecting the idea of governing without an inclusion of specific parties (VVD would not govern without D66). However, the coalition talks between old government parties started again after 200 days and after almost 300 days new (old) government comprising of the same parties was formed. Thus, in this case the most appropriate classification of the winners would old government (Otjes, 2022).	Winning parties: People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), Democrats 66 (D66), Christian Union (CU) Losing parties: Party for Freedom (PVV), Socialist Party (SP), Labor Party (PvdA), Green Left (GL), Forum for Democracy (FvD),
Norway (2017)	September 11, 2017	September 20, 2017 - October 26, 2017	In the 2017 Norwegian election, there was a minor decrease in backing for right-leaning conservative parties, which initiated coalition discussions following the election results. However, by late September, KRF decided to exit these talks (The Local Norway, 2017).	Winning parties: Conservative Party (H), Progress Party (FRP), Liberal Party (V) Losing parties: Labor Party (AP), Center Party

			After almost two years KRF joined the governing coalition to secure majority government (Galaxy, 2019).	(SP), Socialist Left Party (SV), The Greens (MDG), Red (R), Christian Democratic Party (KRF)
Poland (2019)	October 13, 2019	October 24, 2019 -November 17, 2019	The 2019 Polish election witnessed a single-party majority victory of Law and Justice, securing 235 seats of 460-seat Sejm (Grosse, 2019).	Winning parties: Law and Justice (PiS) Losing parties: Civic Platform (PO), Polish People's Party (PSL), Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), Kukiz'15 (K'15), Left Together (Razem), Spring, Modern (Nowo), Confederation Liberty and Independence (Konfederacja)
Portugal (2019)	October 6, 2019	October 12, 2019-December 15, 2019	The 2019 Portuguese election resulted in a victory for the Socialist Party, which received 106 seats out of 230, leading to formation of minority government on October 26, 2019 (Magone, 2020).	Winning parties: Socialist Party (SP) Losing parties: Social Democratic Party (PPD/PSD), Left Bloc (BE), Unitarian Democratic Coalition (CDU), Democratic and Social Centre - People's Party (CDS-PP), Party for People, Animals and Nature (PAN), Enough

				(CH), Liberal Initiative (IL), Free (L)
Romania (2016)	December 11, 2016	December 13, 2016 - February 20, 2017	Immediately after the Romanian 2016 election, PSD received a significant number of votes, leading to the formation of a potential governing coalition between them and the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats, with the latter being led by a close partner of PSD (Anghel, 2016).	Winning parties: Social Democratic Party (PSD), Alliance of Liberals and Democrats Losing parties: National Liberal Party (PNL), Save Romania Union (USR), Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR), People's Movement Party (PMP), United Romania Party (PRU), Greater Romania Party (PRM), Our Romania Alliance (ANR)
Slovakia (2020)	February 29, 2020	June 10, 2020 - August 31, 2020	The 2020 Slovak election resulted in the four-party governing coalition reaching an agreement on March 13, 2020 (Reuters, 2020).	Winning parties: Ordinary people - Independent personalities (OLaNO), We are family - Boris Kollar (SR), Freedom and Solidarity (SaS), For the People (ZL) Losing parties: Direction - Social Democracy (Smer),

				People's Party Our Slovakia (LsNS), Progressive Slovakia - TOGETHER-Civic Democracy, Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), Hungarian Community Togetherness (MKO)
Sweden (2018)	September 9, 2018	September 11, 2018 - November 06, 2018	The 2018 Swedish election resulted in a hung parliament with far-right parties making gains. Social Democratic Party (SAP) emerged as the party with the biggest share of the seats, seeking a coalition with Moderates (M), which was further rejected by its leader and refusing collaboration with Sweden Democrats (SD) (Scally, 2018). Given the fragmented electoral result, media pointed out on Swedish parliament challenges to form the government (The Local, 2018). On September 25, incumbent prime minister, Stefan Löfven lost a motion of no-confidence. Furthermore, the attempts to form government were failing resulting in another motion of no-confidence for Kristersson and the proposal for governing coalition comprising of M and KD with the parliamentary backing of SAP (Cardiff EDC, 2018). The deadlock was only resolved after almost 4 months when Löfven was reelected. SAP formed a governing coalition with the Greens parliamentary backed by the Liberal (L) and the Centre Party (C). In this case SD despite making gains will clearly considered as loser given the fact that parties refused to form a coalition with them (Henley, 2019). Thus, the decision has been made to code old government as winners given the caretaker authority of	Winning parties: Sweden's Social Democratic Worker's Party (SAP), Green Party (MP), Left Party (V) Losing parties: Moderate Party (M), Sweden Democrats (SD), Centre Party (C), Christian Democrats (KD), Liberals (L), Feminist Initiative (FI)

			Löfven government (despite losing confidence of no-motion) (Henley, 2018)	
Türkiye (2018)	June 24, 2018	July 23, 2018 - September 09, 2018	In the case of the Turkish 2018 election, what mattered was not only the winning party but also the presidency, given the changes that expanded the president's powers and transitioned Turkey to an executive presidency system. Before the election, the AKP and MHP parties formed the People's Alliance, which won received parliament majority (Kılıc Bugra Kanat et al., 2018).	Winning parties: Justice and Development Party (AKP), Nationalist Action Party (MKP) Losing parties: Republican People's Party (CHP), Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), Good Party (IYI), Felicity Party (SP)

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