

## Psychological Underpinnings of the 2017 French Presidential Election Vote

Pavlos Vasilopoulos,

Cevipof

Sciences Po

[pavlos.vasilopoulos@sciencespo.fr](mailto:pavlos.vasilopoulos@sciencespo.fr)

**Abstract:** The 2017 French presidential election was characterized by the emergence of a newcomer to the French presidency, the poor performance of the traditional forces of the French party system, as well as increased fragmentation and polarization, as four ideologically distinct candidates found themselves on the verge of qualifying in the second round. This article draws on the French election study to investigate the psychological motivations behind vote choice in the election. It assesses the impact of a diverse set of psychological traits that include authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, group empathy, system justifying attitudes, and populist preferences to investigate the psychological underpinnings of the electoral bases of the new French party system. Results a strong psychological cleavage along the left-right dimension, as the Right and far Right candidates attract voters scoring high in SDO, ethnocentrism, and authoritarianism, while the only unifying aspect between the far left and far right electorates is populism. On the other hand, results illustrate that Emmanuel Macron appealed to a non-authoritarian pool of voters with strong system justifying preferences.