



The dynamics of populist mobilization in the 2017 French presidential election

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Populism and the 2017 French elections

- Widespread anti-establishment feelings and voter aspiration to political renewal
- The French populist 'market' has expanded, with L/R populist parties competing against the mainstream and against each other
- An 'atypical' presidential runoff featuring a strong populist candidate
- Our aim today:
 - Examine the conditions underlying support for populist parties in the 2017 elections, notably the role of populist attitudes

Defining populism

- Populism as a 'thin' ideology attached to thicker sets of ideas (Mudde 2004), which has at its core:
 - Antagonism between the 'virtuous' people and the 'corrupt' elite
 - Politics should be an expression of the people's will
 - Claim to represent the people against the elite
- Left (econ. inclusive) and right-wing (cult. exclusive) variants of populism (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser 2013), found both in parties and voters (Van Hauwaert & Van Kessel 2017)
- Relationship between populism and Euroscepticism (Pirro and Van Kessel 2017)

Populist actors in the 2017 elections

| Candidate | Party | Main ideological features | % 2017 vote |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|---|-------------|
| Marine Le Pen | Front National (FN) | Radical Right Eurosceptic | 21.3 |
| Jean-Luc Mélenchon | La France Insoumise (LFI) | Radical Left Eurosceptic trajectory | 19.6 |
| Nicolas Dupont-Aignan | Debout la France (DLF) | Right-wing Sovereignism Eurosceptic | 4.7 |

Non-populist actors in the 2017 elections

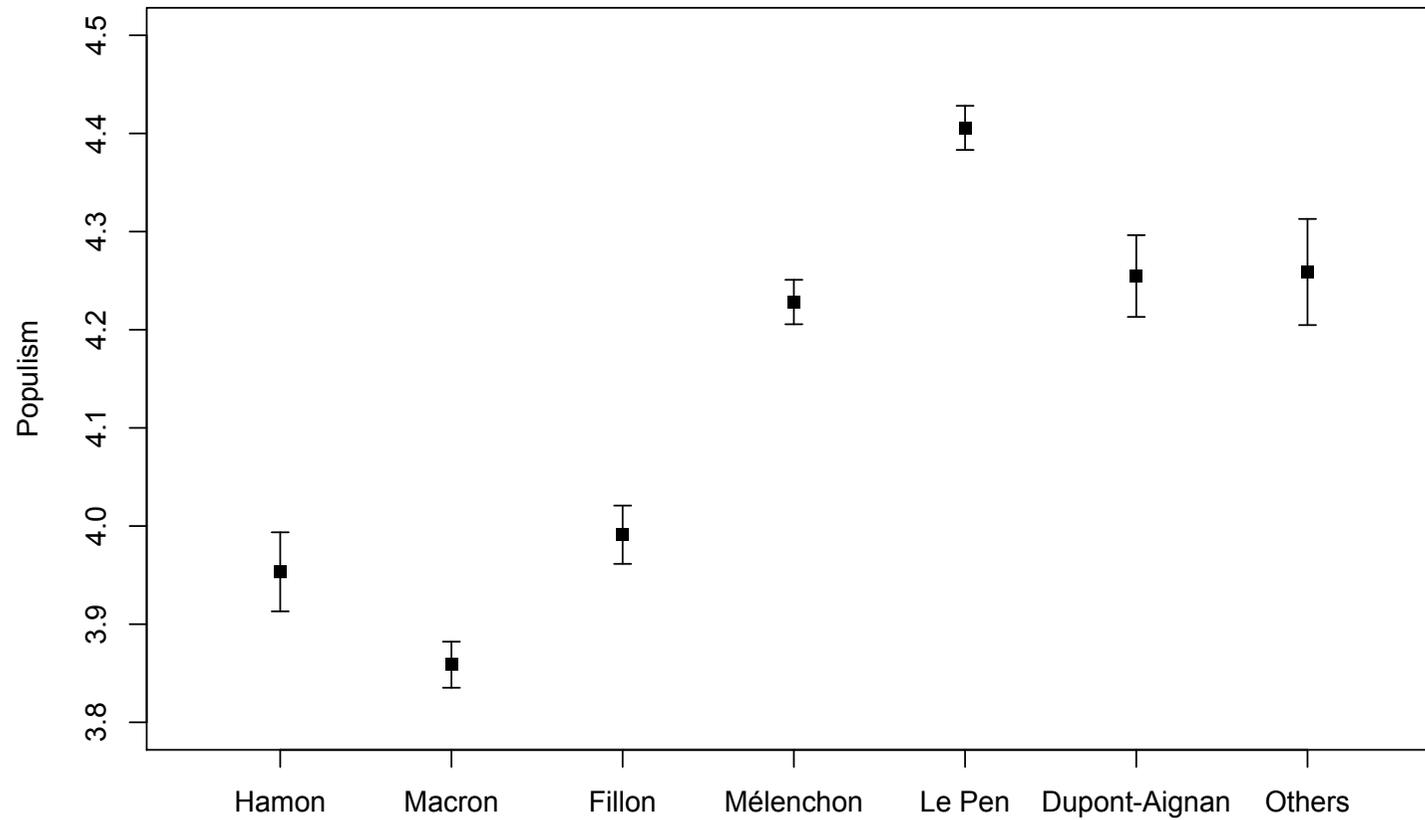
| Candidate | Party | Main ideological features | % 2017 vote |
|-----------------|-----------------------|---|-------------|
| Emmanuel Macron | En Marche! (EM!) | Centrist, liberal Pro-EU | 24.0 |
| François Fillon | Les Républicains (LR) | Conservative Free Market Right Eurocritic (cult.) | 20.0 |
| Benoît Hamon | Parti Socialiste (PS) | Green-Socialist Eurocritic (eco.) | 6.4 |

Exploring the 2017 vote

- Voter survey data (N=19,454), analytical samples (N=10,699/9,053)
- A model of French presidential voting (Lewis-Beck et al. 2012)
- DV: vote in the first (R1, multinomial) and second (R2, binomial) round (April / May 2017)
- IVs:
 - Standard socio-demographics (gender, age, education, occupation, religion, religiosity, patrimony)
 - 'Root' political affiliation (left right ideology)
 - Economic and cultural attitudes (e.g. state intervention, welfare chauvinism)
 - Attitudes towards the EU and economic globalization
 - Populist attitudes (Akkerman et al. 2014)

Populist attitudes and R1 vote

Populism and vote in the first round of the 2017 presidential election



Ideological correlates of populism

| | |
|---------------------------|-------|
| Left-right | 0.07 |
| State Intervention | -0.12 |
| Economic Redistribution | 0.31 |
| Welfare Chauvinism | 0.16 |
| European Integration | -0.22 |
| Same Sex Marriage | -0.05 |
| Globalization Opportunity | -0.20 |
| Authoritarianism | 0.27 |

Le Pen voter contrasts (R1, multinomial)

- Less educated, more working class
- More welfare chauvinist, anti-EU, authoritarian and anti-globalization
- More populist than mainstream, same as Mélenchon and Dupont-Aignan

- Less right-wing than Fillon (*ninistes*)
- More pro economic redistribution than Fillon
- Less socially conservative than Fillon (same sex marriage)

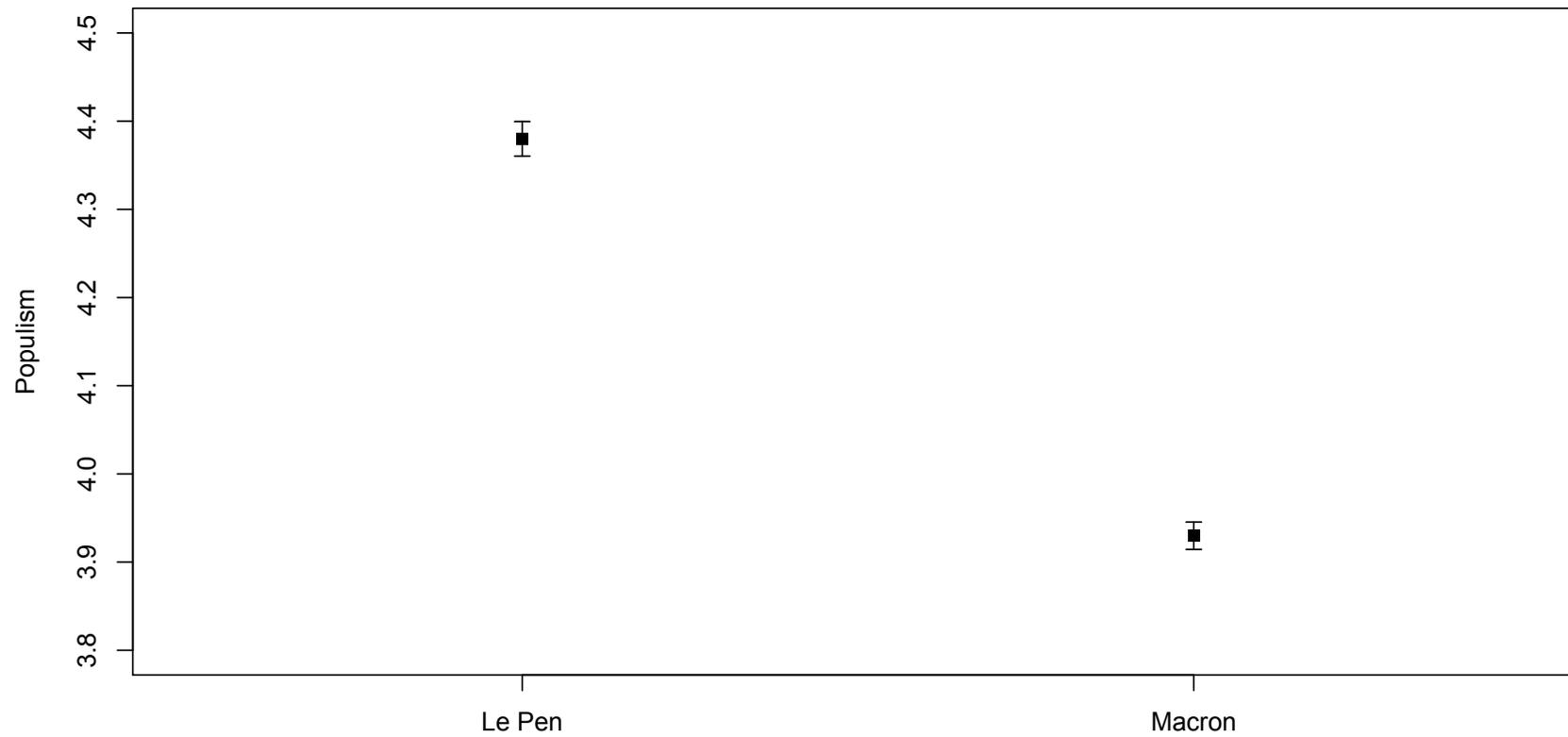
Mélenchon voter contrasts (R1, multinomial)

- More male, younger voters
- More pro economic redistribution
- More Eurosceptic and anti-globalization than mainstream
- More populist than mainstream and Dupont-Aignan

- Less left-wing than Hamon
- More welfare chauvinist than Hamon

Populist attitudes and R2 vote

Populism and vote in the second round of the 2017 presidential election



Le Pen voter contrasts (R², binomial)

- Older, less educated, more working class and fewer eco. assets
- All attitudinal predictors significant and in the expected direction...
- With the exception of economic redistribution (n.s.)

Did populism matter?

| Model | AIC first round (N=10,699) | AIC second round (N=9,053) |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Full model | 25 573 | 5 675 |
| Full model w/o Left- Right | 28 461*** | 6 178*** |
| Full model w/o EU sentiment | 26 076*** | 6 192*** |
| Full model w/o Populism | 25 816*** | 5 788*** |

Likelihood Ratio Tests

Conclusions

- Le Pen and Mélenchon voters are more populist than supporters of mainstream candidates
- Le Pen voters show the highest degree of populism
- Populism 'matters' in both R1 and R2, less so however than:
 - traditional left/right affiliation (R1) and
 - EU sentiment (R2)
- Mélenchon: radical left, econ. Inclusive populism yet less cosmopolitan
- Le Pen: radical right, cult. Exclusive populism yet more social protectionist