The French Presidential Elections and the New World of European Politics

Dr. Natalie J. Doyle, Monash University

Tuesday 11 April, 2017: 6pm for 6.20pm – 7.30pm at Dyason House, 124 Jolimont Road, East Melbourne

The French Presidential elections come second in this year’s European “trifecta”; after the Dutch and before the Germans. Together, these elections have serious implications for the future of the European Union and of European relations with the rest of the world.

They coincide with a dramatic fall in support for the establishment parties (most notably the socio-democratic left), the rise of EU-scepticism, and increasing controversy surrounding immigration policies in the face of terrorism.

The crisis of the French socialist party was marked by the unprecedented decision of President François Hollande not to contest a second term; this brought to the fore an "outsider": Emmanuel Macron, founder of the new political movement En Marche.

With the centre-right having been destabilised by the corruption scandal surrounding its candidate François Fillon, it is Macron who now appears to be the last line of defence against an ever-formidable Marine Le Pen, of the neo-nationalist party, Le Front National. At the same time, with a profound disenchantment taking hold within French society, there is a high risk that many will decide simply not to vote.

While it seems that Macron and Le Pen will meet in the runoff election, the campaign so far has taught us that anything can happen. Regardless of who ultimately secures the presidency, none can rely on a clear parliamentary majority, nor the broad support across the country required for effective presidential leadership. Such an unprecedented situation of political paralysis would not only impact France, but add salt to the wounds of a European Union in crisis.

AIIA Victoria welcomes Dr Natalie Doyle to present her analysis of the crisis of French political culture, and what it reveals about the new political world which Europe is entering.

Dr Natalie Doyle is senior lecturer in French Studies at Monash University and Deputy Director of the Monash European and EU Centre. She is a specialist of French social and political thought, classical and contemporary, with particular reference to interpretations of modernity. She co-edits the international journal of socio-political theory Social Imaginaries, and has co-edited several books, the latest being for Routledge: (IL)liberal Europe: Islamophobia, Modernity and Radicalization. Dr. Doyle has a Bachelor of Arts with honours from the University of Sydney, as well as a Master of Arts by research for which she received the university medal. She completed a PhD in Politics at Monash University.