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Salle 214

Séminaire recherche

From connections to persistence: Evidence from

Political Purges in post-World War II France



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RÉSUMÉ

This paper studies an overlooked mechanism that allows political elites from a nondemocratic regime to survive a democratic transition: connections. We document this mechanism in the transition from the Vichy regime to democracy in post-World War II France. The parliamentarians who had supported the Vichy regime were purged in a two-stage process where each case was judged twice by two different courts. Using a difference-in-differences strategy, we show that Law graduates, a powerful social group in French politics with strong connections to one of the two courts, had a clearance rate that was 10 percentage points higher than others. This facilitated the persistence of that elite group. A systematic analysis of 17,589 documents from the defendants' court dossiers enables us to unpick some of the details of the connections mechanism. We consider and rule out alternative mechanisms.

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