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FRANCE'S POSTWAR MODEL FROM THE STATE IN ACTION TO A STATE OF MIND:

A REVIEW ESSAY OF PHILIP NORD'S *FRANCE'S NEW DEAL*

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Abstract:

Philip Nord's *France's New Deal* is an impressive achievement. Focusing on the period from the mid to late 1930s to the mid to late 1940s, the book charts the lasting influence of the ideas of right-leaning technocratic elites on France's postwar state and its New Deal consensus. This essay reviews Nord's intellectual history of these remarkable individuals—many with origins in the far right—on economic, administrative, and cultural policy, then reflects on France's subsequent trajectory, raising two lingering questions. First, although the postwar consensus was clearly good for France's economy, how healthy was it for French democracy, given the consecration of elite-dominated, hierarchical patterns of leadership? And second, how durable has France's New Deal consensus really been? Might it not remain more as a (public) state of mind—generating discontent—than as the State in action, given policies since the 1980s that transformed the State (but not its enduring technocracy) while so undermining the postwar New Deal as to leave no deal at all?

Keywords: France, state, French postwar era, Third Republic, Vichy, Liberation era, elites, welfare state, New Deal

Introduction

Philip Nord's magisterial new book, *France's New Deal: From the Thirties to the Postwar Era* is the most important study to date about the postwar French State and its 'New Deal' commitments to cradle-to-grave social security. The book's main innovation is to focus on the architects of reform, the administrators, experts, and intellectuals whose ideas about management of the economy, training of state elites, and promotion of French culture slowly gained traction in France's shifting political sands, from the declining days of the Third Republic through Vichy and into the Liberation era, when they became central to the establishment of the postwar French Model on a widely consensual basis. The question Nord leaves us with is whether France's resulting postwar model also set a lasting framework for the country's future trajectory, both in terms of the distinctive role of the State and its New Deal commitments.

At a time when the State has never seemed so crucial to France's political economic future and yet so hemmed in by supranational forces, with its welfare state under pressure, it is useful to reflect on an earlier period of transition when the country was in an even

more parlous state of affairs, and to ask whether the solutions then still have purchase for today.

Building the Postwar Model

Unlike much of the scholarship on France's postwar model, which starts with the Liberation period, this book begins earlier, to explore the extent to which the construction of the postwar State in the Liberation era was influenced not just by Vichy but also by the pre-Vichy authoritarian turn of the late 1930s, thus suggesting that there was not only a *Vichy après Vichy* but also a *Vichy avant Vichy*. By starting his narrative in the declining days of the Third Republic, around the time of the Popular Front, pursuing it through the shift to authoritarianism in the Daladier administration, then on to military defeat and Vichy collaboration with the German occupation, ending with the Liberation and the early years of the Fourth Republic, Nord (2010, p. 11) presents the transformation of the French state not as the beginning of a bright future but 'the end of a longer history,' as 'a denouement as much as a fresh start.' Moreover, by focusing on economic, administrative, and cultural policy, he shows how these three areas served as interconnected elements in the revival of the nation, with the French state itself a central focus of reconstruction as much as the key actor in national transformation. Most importantly, however, by charting this process of renewal through meticulous depiction of the ideas, careers, and actions of the 'institutional entrepreneurs' who constructed France's New Deal, Nord vividly demonstrates that no history of state transformation is complete without an account of the individuals who remade the state, piece by piece, in successive periods from the thirties to the early postwar years.

Nord's history traces the ideational and professional trajectories of the individuals whose power to remake the state devolved first and foremost from their ideas about what the state should be and do, and then from how they were able to translate those ideas into practice. The social, political, and institutional context is also prominent: we see the protagonists as members of different youth groups, associations, and clubs; linked to different influential figures in different camps and networks of influence; gaining personal influence by virtue of their own intellectual production and the circulation of their ideas among a wider public; and finally attaining status and position in the state apparatus. Most disturbing, perhaps, is that we find that the ideas of the far right exerted far more influence than we might have expected, not just in prewar years and during the war but even in the postwar era, in contradiction with many narratives touting the victory of leftwing ideas.

Nord himself makes a point of noting that there are a number of other narratives of the history of the postwar era—about a 'restoration' of the old order, a triumph of Americanization, a 'social-democratic' moment, or even the rise of a state technocracy through planning and expertise. And he recognizes there are a number of other major players, including the politicians, the unions, the military, and the electorate. But he demonstrates that no single generalization or storyline can capture the complexity of this history, and that any such history is itself incomplete without the stories of the technically proficient, intellectually gifted, administrative elites who were central to the (re)construction of the French postwar model.

These elites, as Nord shows, were not new at the Liberation. They were already at work in the 1930s, were mainly on the right, and some very far right, although they were mostly above party politics and critical of the ‘established disorder.’ Some of them during this time were already elaborating their ideas in the press and/or in research institutes focused on remaking not just the French population—in particular through family and pronatalist policies—but humanity itself. While many such projects were not politically classifiable, some were hard right, racist and anti-Semitic, and prospered most with the advent the Daladier government, such as that of Dr. Alexis Carrel, who went on under Vichy to establish the Fondation Carrel (Nord 2010, pp. 60-66). Other ‘technocrats in waiting’ were still students, mainly at Sciences Po, itself notable as the elite recruitment conduit for the state administration, with professors whose economic ideas made the school a ‘bastion of liberal capitalism’ and whose political ideas in many cases also contributed to the school’s not entirely undeserved reputation as a bastion of anti-democratic, right-wing conservatism.

During the war, while some of these elites left to join de Gaulle and the Free French, many more migrated into Vichy service, only to move—sooner or later—into the Resistance, thereby also ensuring themselves a place at the table in the Liberation era. For those who spent time working in the Vichy regime, it served as an opportunity to try out ideas developed in the thirties, of *dirigisme* and planning, while the regime itself built up capacity that would later be put to the service of the Fourth Republic, such as statistical and forecasting services, including demographics. Others less involved in Vichy also developed ideas about more robust technocratic planning and Keynesian economic policy, while those on the left in the Resistance designed a roadmap for *dirigiste* planning to produce ‘real economic and social democracy.’ The faculty and administration of Sciences Po, in the meantime, many of whom started out by collaborating with Vichy, also distanced themselves, in particular as of 1942 with the German occupation of the southern zone, and then increasingly deepened their involvement in resistance activity. This was to prove crucial to the survival of Sciences Po in the Liberation period.

In the rough and tumble of the politico-administrative battles of the Liberation, these technocratic elites increasingly outmaneuvered the left, despite the presence of a left-wing majority in Parliament. For the most part, they managed to substitute their own conservative, state-centered modernization project for the left’s radical reform proposals. The new *dirigisme*, or state direction of industry, for example, was founded not on the left’s strongly top-down, centralized planning ideas but rather on the technocratic planning ideas of Jean Monnet, who preferred *concertation* to issuing directives, and was supported by de Gaulle as well as the US. The agencies that were to supply statistics and other information to the Planning Commissariat and other State units, moreover, were the pre-war and wartime creations of the right, although taken over, revamped, and headed by—right-leaning—heroes of the Resistance. With regard to the training of state administrators, moreover, the left’s onslaught against Sciences Po as a bastion of conservatism and elitism failed to close the school, although the new national school of administration, the ENA, did take over Science Po’s training role for upper level civil

servants, leaving Sciences Po as its feeder school. As for social security, neither the left nor the technocratic elite got its way. Instead of the single universalizing *caisse unique* both favored, the end product was a fragmented mosaic of profession-based schemes. This resulted from the resistance of the Christian-Democrats elected in 1946 who, as Catholic familists and the pronatalists, prioritized a separate family allowance system as well as family and population policies that had much in common with prewar and Vichy policies, albeit absent, again, their more authoritarian attributes.

As for culture, which takes up the second half of Nord's book, the postwar solution is also heavily influenced by the prewar and wartime experiences. What comes out most clearly is that the concern with quality in cultural products, a far right obsession tinged with anti-Semitism and anti-commercialism in the debates of prewar years, which becomes state policy under Vichy, also dominates in the Liberation period, although cleansed of its noxious elements. Here, we are treated to a history of cultural policies that include accounts of the regionalization of the theater, the battles for control and the ultimate nationalization of radio, the pre-war concerns with the commercialization and foreign control (read Jewish) of the film industry that shift to worries about Americanization after the war.

Nord's overall conclusion is that despite its rhetoric of fresh beginnings, the technocratic elites articulated ideas that were mostly not new but 'renewed,' as were their institutions, albeit purged of their authoritarian and racist elements. For Nord, this is actually a good thing, since this is what made for these elites' success in the battle for hearts and minds, enabling them to forge consensus by "making allies out of people and interests that the Left's more radical projects turned into foot-draggers, if not outright enemies" (Nord 2010, p. 209). That the technocratic elite was able to forge a consensus where the radical left only alienated is no doubt true. And it is also the case that such a consensus was certainly good for the French economy—as the Planning Commission was able to promote the 'French miracle' of the *trente glorieuses* while the state apparatus and the nationalized enterprises were run efficiently and productively, without the kind of corruption and patronage found in neighboring Italy. But one has to wonder how healthy that consensus was for French democracy, given that it was founded on ideas that, however much purged of their worst elements, nonetheless retained traces of their anti-democratic origins. These ideas consecrated an elite-dominated, hierarchical pattern of leadership in which the state acts and society reacts.

But leaving these concerns aside, Nord's thesis, that this extended period of state economic, administrative, and cultural reconstruction proved to be a watershed for France, establishing the country's postwar 'New Deal,' is thoroughly convincing. The question that lingers is whether he is right to claim, in the concluding pages, that this postwar settlement served not only as the foundations for the postwar model but that it also persists through today, in the French state's subsequent performance and the durability of New Deal ideas. This invites reflection about the durability of both the French postwar model of state direction and of the welfare and cultural policies that together constitute France's 'New Deal.'

Lingering Questions about the Durability of the French Postwar Model

In the very last pages of Nord's conclusion to *France's New Deal*, he makes a big claim for France's postwar State and its 'New Deal' when he writes that: "The postwar order in France has shown itself more durable than in the United States and Great Britain, and that is because it was more consensual." Just prior to this, he noted that in both the US and the UK "the postwar political order came in for a major renegotiation in the 1970s and 1980s" with Thatcher and Reagan seeking to rollback welfare institutions and an "overweening state" (Nord 2010, p. 382). In France, by contrast, he suggests that there were only faint echoes of this, with a basic consensus about the role of the state to "make a better France for every citizen...not just by reducing the risks and anxieties of day-to-day existence but by enriching the lives of all through the dissemination of a culture of quality." Having said this, however, Nord himself admits that "perhaps such a conclusion is overhasty," and then mentions subsequent events, such as the demise of the Fourth Republic brought about by the Algerian war, to conclude that France's postwar new deal "still had serious bouts of renegotiation ahead of it" (Nord 2010, pp. 382-384).

The question then is: Did the basics of France's postwar order survive the renegotiations ahead, and does that order still command a consensus, let alone does it still exist, given the transformations in the state's role, in its elites, its objectives, and its policies over the course of the subsequent sixty years?

To answer this question, we need to disentangle the major components of the postwar order that are considered as one in Nord's book: the technocratic elites themselves, their economic management of the country, and France's New Deal as an economic and social project. Although these components were clearly inseparable in the thoughts and actions of the architects of state and societal rebirth in the thirties and forties, they need to be separated, at least for purposes of analysis. How the reconstructed state fares over time as administrator, manager, and cultural czar requires analysis, as do the defining policies of France's New Deal, including Keynesian macroeconomic policy, strong public services, the welfare state, and state-promoted cultural revival. My own view is that while the technocratic elite endured, the State transformed itself through a process of *dirigiste* disengagement that altered postwar New Deal policies at the same time as its own postwar role in economic management.

The Enduring Technocratic Elite

The most enduring legacy of the postwar Model has been the perpetuation of a technocratic elite at the heart of the French State. The left's push to democratize the State's administration in the Liberation era did not succeed, as Nord tells us. But surprisingly, perhaps, the left in later years did not even try, despite having had the opportunity in the early 1980s. Significantly, it is not just that the elite recruitment system set up at the Liberation remains to this day, with Sciences Po the feeder school for the ENA, or that the recruits still come predominantly from the *grande bourgeoisie*. It is also that the left as much as the right accepts that these are the people who should run the state, and that these people have a shared technocratic and depoliticized view of what it means to run the State.

Studies of successive generations of Science Po and ENA students as well as of the *hauts commis de l'État* demonstrate the State's continuing upper middle class recruitment bias. This is documented for the 1950s and 1960s by Ezra Suleiman's (1974) path-breaking study of the upper reaches of the State administration, and for the late 1960s by Pierre Bourdieu's (1989) massive study of graduates of Sciences Po. The implicit critique in all such studies is not only that this system is undemocratic but that it also embeds in the State a conservative 'class bias.' By the 1960s, however, the students of Sciences Po and ENA had switched to being solidly on the left—demonstrating at the very least that class background does not dictate political ideas (Bellier 1991).

The leftward turn of the State's elite recruits may help explain why, in 1981, when the left returned for the first time to power since the Fourth Republic, it did little to change the recruitment system (other than to create a 'third way' into the civil service that didn't work and was abolished by the Chirac government in 1986). But this does not explain why the new Socialist government, with its Communist coalition partners and its Liberation era discourse of bringing down the 'wall of money' via nationalization of the banks as well as industry, did nothing to challenge the State's technocratic management style—unless, of course, we also accept that the consensus Nord described for the early postwar years persists. And we should. In illustration is the response to interviews I carried out with the heads of the nationalized industries in the early 1990s. When asked why Socialist CEOs did not seek to imbue the firm with socialist values (whatever that might mean), they responded, over and over again, regardless of their own political affiliation, with the same refrain: 'There is no such thing as management of the left or right, there is just good or bad management' (Schmidt 1996, p. 309). And good management was learned in the *grandes écoles* and the *grand corps*, ensuring that their graduates would share a particularly technocratic view of the state and their role in it, regardless of their political color. As French critics claimed at the time, this changeover was a phenomenon of caste, with generational change in the 1980s of the younger left-leaning civil servants replacing the older right-leaning ones, followed in the 1990s by the intermingling of right and left to form a single elite more united by its *corporatisme* than divided by politics.

The right actually did more than the left to challenge this elite State technocracy in 1986, when Chirac's neo-liberal Deputy Minister of the Civil Service and Plan, Hervé de Charette, cut the size of the ENA in half in order to shake up the State, because this would ensure '*moins d'ENA, moins d'État*' (Schmidt 1996, p. 320). Instead of less State resulting from a smaller ENA, however, greater elite status accrued to its graduates. It is telling that it was only in 2001 that some attempt at opening up recruitment to the more disadvantaged student was initiated at Sciences Po, when the director introduced 'positive discrimination' to the school, in the face of much resistance from faculty and students, by recruiting talented students from lower income school districts and exempting them from the tough entry competition—the first for any *Grande École*.

To say that the technocratic French State elite had similar views of management, regardless of whether they were on the left or the right, were recruited from the same

milieu and had the same state-provided education does not, however, determine how they considered what needed to be done economically, or even whether they were the ones in control. While the postwar consensus on State technocratic leadership may have held, the postwar modalities of State economic management along with its policies did not.

State Led (*Dirigiste*) Disengagement

How long and to what extent did the State continue to maintain the postwar French Model, with its commitments to Keynesian macroeconomic management and indicative planning, and its pledges to build a cradle-to-grave welfare state? The 1960s were the apotheosis of the postwar economic management model, when Andrew Shonfield (1965), in contrasting different models of capitalism, admiringly described France's 'statism' in contrast to Britain's liberalism or Germany's corporatism. In the 1960s, moreover, under de Gaulle's more strongly hierarchical leadership, *dirigisme* only intensified, as planning was replaced by more interventionist industrial policy and the *grand projet*. What makes the 1970s different is that with the end of the Bretton Woods system and the two oil shocks, accompanied by the increasing pressures of globalization, the State lost its capacity but none of its desire to control and direct, or what Jack Hayward (1986) terms its 'industrial patriotism.' It continued for much of the decade with the same postwar Keynesian macroeconomic policy and the same *dirigisme* that no longer made the miracles of the 1950s and 1960s. As for the welfare state, it continued to grow through the 1960s and 1970s along the lines set for it in the early Fourth Republic, at the same time that in the Fifth Republic de Gaulle introduced more egalitarian measures, with near universal pension, healthcare and family allowance programs, including for maternal and day care services that served not only the needs of working women but also the desires of the pronatalist lobby.

Things changed dramatically beginning in the 1980s. 1981 represented the last gasp of the postwar model, with the Socialist government's short-lived attempt to reinvent it in spades through renewed Keynesian expansionism, *dirigiste* control of banking and industry—via a massive nationalization program that dwarfed that of the early postwar years—and an expanded welfare state. By 1983, however, faced with double-digit inflation and having to exit the European Monetary System, President Mitterrand set the new direction with the great U-turn in macroeconomic policy, which replaced Keynesian macroeconomic expansion with monetarist budgetary austerity. This was followed under successive governments of the right and left by the liberalization of the markets, privatization of public enterprises, deregulation of business, decentralization of labor markets, and rationalization of the welfare state. Culture was also 'liberalized,' for example, as the Mitterrand government in 1981 once again allowed private radio stations and as the Chirac government in 1986 partially privatized television—most symbolically starting with TF1.

Moreover, along with the State's own initiatives to dismantle its postwar control of the economy, it helped build the European Union, and in so doing gave up much of its economic autonomy in exchange for shared authority. In the EU, although French governments could claim leadership in the 1980s, as a principal architect (with Germany) of the Single Market and the Single Currency, by the mid 1990s, the country found itself

increasingly forced to follow. This is when the EU sought to deepen integration in services, which touched on another aspect of the State's cherished postwar role as the sole provider of the *services publics*, and led to the deregulation of the telecommunications, electricity, and energy sectors. It may very well be that the French who voted 'no' in the referendum on the EU's Constitutional Treaty in 2005 thought they could stop all that the 'Polish plumber' symbolized in terms of the EU's impingement on labor and welfare state protections, but all they really did was slow the process of European institutional reform.

As for the welfare state, France's New Deal has become an old deal. It has an inflexible labor market that generates comparatively high rates of unemployment even in boom times; low levels of labor market participation, especially for older workers; and a bifurcated labor market that rewards insiders with generous benefits and pensions while leaving outsiders—the young and immigrants in particular—with temporary or part-time jobs that lack benefits and secure pensions. Moreover, it lacks the labor coordination and management cooperation necessary to support the kinds of training systems of a country like Germany, that ensure a steady supply of highly skilled workers for increasingly competitive industries (Culpepper 2003). All of this in turn makes the welfare state very expensive, especially given the added costs of measures to buy labor peace through generous early retirement plans during the restructuring of major industry in the 1980s and 1990s. In addition, although the reforms undertaken in the 2000s were important symbolically, as another nail in the coffin of the postwar New Deal, they haven't done much to solve the welfare state's financial problems. These include President Nicolas Sarkozy's 2007 elimination of the 'special regimes' that allowed railroad conductors to retire at 50—which came 12 years after Prime Minister Alain Juppé, who first proposed it, backed off in the face of three weeks of crippling strikes that shut down the country—or Sarkozy's extension of the age of retirement from age 60 to 62 (full pensions from 65 to 67) in fall 2010, which was also greeted by massive demonstrations, but this time to no avail.

These changes starting in the 1980s and accelerating in the 1990s and 2000s have produced a fundamental shift away from the postwar French New Deal policies. But what about the postwar State's central role in the management of the economy? Here we have to provide a more qualified answer. This is because the State played and continues to play the main role in its own transformation. Beginning in the 1980s, the State itself engineered what I have termed "a *dirigiste* end to *dirigisme*" (Schmidt 1996) ushering in what Jonah Levy (1999) has called the '*post-dirigiste*' state. In its new guise, although the French state no longer leads business or imposes wage bargains, it nonetheless continues to intervene in business and labor where and when it sees fit. With regard to business, this may be to influence it through *ad hoc* decisions, say, to 'rescue' companies from bankruptcy and foreign takeover, or to strengthen its environment, through large scale infrastructural projects. With regard to labor, it may be to liberalize the labor markets—as in the case of abortive attempt in 2006 of Prime Minister de Villepin's government to increase flexibility with a two year probationary contract for youth employment (the *CPE*)—or to 'moralize' them, as in the initiative of the government of Prime Minister Jospin on the 35 hour work week in the late 1990s. Both such approaches

to labor point to the paradox of a state that, as Chris Howell (2009) has argued, after having been the main architect in the dismantling of centralized labor market regulation, nevertheless remains the central actor in the reconstruction of the industrial relations system.

So where does France now fit comparatively in terms of its form of capitalism? For a time, the country disappeared from mainstream scholarly interest almost completely—cast as an outlier both for those who saw convergence along US or UK lines to a single neo-liberal model as well as those who saw a binary split between ‘liberal market economies’ like Britain and ‘coordinated market economies’ like Germany (Hall and Soskice 2001). That said, some scholars continued to see France as part of a distinctive variety of capitalism that followed on from the statism of the past. For Robert Boyer (2004), it was the third variety out of four, as ‘state-driven capitalism.’ I have myself argued that it constitutes the ideal type for a third variety of capitalism that, having moved from ‘state-led’ to ‘state-enhanced’ capitalism (Schmidt 2002), can also be labeled a ‘state-influenced market economy’ in contrast to liberal and coordinated market economies (Schmidt 2009). Most recently, Orfeo Fioretos (2011) has similarly called it a ‘centralized market economy’ in contrast to the other two. What distinguishes France’s market economy from the UK’s financial market-driven model and Germany’s managed market model is the hierarchical nature of both its State and its firm relations.

This is not the postwar State model of economic management, then, nor is it something new, but it is rather, again, something ‘renewed.’ This time, however, the renewal is not the product of the ideas and leadership of the elite-trained technocrats in state service but rather that of the elite-trained politicians, pushing for political reforms that are, arguably, elaborated by the technocratic elite as well as implemented by them. In this sense, we have moved from the administrative state to what Yves Thiberghien (2007) has called the ‘entrepreneurial state.’

But has the postwar French Model entirely vanished then? Certainly, in the first moment of the economic crisis of 2008, many thought that we were returning to the French Model of the New Deal, as President Sarkozy abandoned his neo-liberal austerity election package for neo-Keynesian stimulus and active state intervention to save the economy, and played a leadership role in the EU urging other member-states to do the same. But this was short-lived, in particular once Germany along with the EU pushed back in favor of neo-liberal budgetary austerity across Europe, itself spurred by a different postwar New Deal model, the Germans’ ‘ordo’-liberal economic management. However, it does indicate that the postwar New Deal is more than just a dim memory.

A New Deal Consensus After All?

France has changed dramatically since the early days of its postwar New Deal. The French State’s approach to economic management has been transformed, most of the economic policies replaced, and the cradle-to-grave social security system under siege. And yet, for all this, Nord is not wrong to suggest that France’s New Deal consensus has been durable—but as a state of mind rather than the state in action.

No other Western country, to my knowledge, has such an idealized view of the state *qua* state, disconnected from what it does. It remains, for the French, largely as Georges Burdeau (1970, p. 14) described it, as an idea that, unlike a concept that systematizes a number of facts about reality, is itself “all the reality that it expresses because this reality resides entirely in the spirit of the men who conceive it.” That said, France has been experiencing an increasing disconnect between peoples’ ideas of the State—about the central role of the state to provide a certain kind of economic, social and cultural policy—and what the state actually does or can do. I would argue that ‘*la crise*,’ a topic the French have discussed non-stop since the 1980s—let alone the current economic crisis—has not only been economic. It has also been about ideas and discourse, in the sense that the public has not become reconciled to the kinds of changes that the state has implemented, in part because political elites have themselves not been telling the truth about those changes. Ever since the great U-turn in macroeconomic policy, the left as well as the right have had a discourse about how the various neo-liberal economic reforms would not affect *solidarité sociale*, despite that fact that everyone knew that it would, and did (Schmidt 2002). The crisis of French politics is evidenced by the constant turnover in governments since the 1980s (despite two term Presidents), along with growing public dissatisfaction with those governing, and the rise of the extreme right.

What this means is that France’s New Deal lives on in peoples’ minds, as the only legitimate way of governing the political and social economy, and therefore the measure of what any government actually does, which necessarily falls short. No wonder the French public always complains, and nothing is ever enough. France’s New Deal is dead, but no deal has replaced it. Had Nord in the book’s last pages pointed not to the US and the UK but to Germany or Sweden, he might have had something very different to conclude, since these are countries in which their own New Deals seem to have survived the transformations better than France’s own New Deal. In this light, we could turn the tables on Nord, and ask whether he is justified in being so positive about the postwar New Deal consensus achieved by France’s technocratic elite. Perhaps the very foundations upon which it was built—elite technocratic practices with roots in far right anti-democratic ideas about how to lead the state and who should lead it—are at the origins of its subsequent problems. That said, this comment should in no way detract from Nord’s impressive achievement—an immensely rich and thoughtful intellectual history of how a remarkable set of individuals constructed the state-centered economic, administrative, and cultural system of the French postwar model in all its political ambiguity.

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