

Shifting Norms and Political Demand

Denazification in postwar Germany

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Abstract

Can large-scale interventions shift political norms? In a major denazification program, millions of Germans were questioned about their political past by courts. I document how denazification shaped the emerging political landscape in postwar Germany. Using three identification strategies, I find that broader denazification reduced the demand for nationalist policies and changed social norms. Differences seem driven by mass rather than elite cases and political consequences are observed absent major differences in punishment. The results indicate that the breadth of transitional justice may be more important than its severity. More broadly, the findings illustrate how deliberate public interventions may shift social norms and political demand at scale.

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1 Introduction

Social norms play an important role in determining the political behavior of individuals ([Gerber et al. 2008](#); [Dellavigna et al. 2016](#); [Perez-Truglia and Cruces 2017](#)). In a variety of contexts, studies have documented the persistence of norms, including the survival of past authoritarian norms in democracies ([Voigtländer and Voth 2012](#); [Simpser et al. 2018](#)). While recent work has shown that social norms can change in reaction to aggregate signals such as elections and symbolic policies ([Bursztyn et al. 2020](#); [Dewan and Wolton 2022](#)), less is known about *deliberate* attempts to shift social norms at scale. In this paper, I identify the impact of one of the leading examples of major interventions designed to shift political equilibria and uncover lasting differences in social norms and political demand in competitive elections.

This paper provides new evidence on the effects of mass transitional justice by studying the largest transitional justice program in history: denazification. I document how denazification lowered the demand for nationalist policies and was a leading factor in shaping the political landscape in postwar Germany. Denazification involved the systematic examination of the political past of broad sections of the population. I measure the extent of denazification using the number of denazification court cases per voting age population. Using three identification strategies and comparing neighboring municipalities across Allied occupation zones, across court districts, and within districts, I consistently find that denazification reduced voters' demand for nationalist policies. The effect persists and goes beyond elections. In areas with more denazification, there are more Holocaust memorials, fewer militarist streets names and more streets named after victims. I document that these effects are unlikely to be driven by differences in elite transitional justice.

These findings address a larger question: how interventions may shift norms and political demand. I study a canonical case in which past legacies do not persistently shape politics but move upon intervention. My setting, thus, differs from studies where social norms shift in response to perceived popular support ([Bursztyn et al. 2020](#)). Instead, I focus on a top-down intervention aimed at establishing a new political equilibrium. Substantively, a key result is that mass transitional justice aimed at the wider public may serve as a costly signal underscoring the credibility of postwar transitions.

To study denazification, I gathered evidence on over 850,000 denazification cases in the

state of Baden-Württemberg, where archival data and history offer a unique setting for causal identification. Baden-Württemberg is particularly suited to estimate the effect of transitional justice as one can use three sources of exogenous variation in the extent of denazification.

First, the state was bisected by an Allied occupation zone border which was drawn for purely logistical reasons and gave rise to discontinuous variation in denazification. The extent of denazification was higher in the US occupation zone compared to neighboring municipalities occupied by France. Second, denazification varied within the US occupation zone, where district level courts implemented the policy decentrally. I leverage idiosyncratic differences in court personnel that gave rise to sharp differences in denazification along district boundaries. Third, I use within district variation induced by the distance of a municipality to the district court, which increased courts' cost of collecting and verifying information. In all three cases, I document sharp differences in the extent of denazification.

To study the response to denazification, I focus on federal elections at the municipality level. Following the war, fringe groups were largely excluded from participating in the first federal election in the US and French occupation zones ([Rogers 1995](#)); yet, demand for popular forms of nationalism persisted. Among the major parties in early postwar politics, the Free Democratic Party [FDP] provided the strongest nationalist wing and platform against denazification. Surveys over the 1950s and 1960s consistently found that out of all major parties “anti-Semitic and pro-National Socialist positions were most widespread among FDP voters” ([Buchna 2020](#)).¹

All three empirical strategies yield results with statistically indistinguishable magnitudes that exhibit the same dynamics over time. I consistently find that denazification strongly reduced the demand for the FDP in the first election after the war. First, I find that voting patterns were similar on either side of the subsequent occupation zone border before the end of WWII and differed afterward, using regression discontinuity analyses.² Second, the

¹Yet by the 1970s, the party underwent remarkable change, entered a social-liberal coalition and this eroded its nationalist wing. For a discussion on policies, politicians, and voters of the early postwar FDP, see section [2.3](#).

²Yet occupation zone policies differed along multiple dimensions, which potentially could have influenced politics through other channels. For example, the French did not take in any refugees and dismantled Germans firms at higher rates. This had important consequences for population and wage growth in the following postwar years and support for immigration in the long-run ([Schumann 2014; Ciccone and Nimezik 2022; Lang and Schneider 2023](#)). Thus, it is important to use variation within occupation zones and hold other potential differences across Allied occupation zones constant.

results hold when I compare neighboring municipalities along court-district borders, which had similar voting patterns before the war and did not differ economically after the war, using fuzzy regression discontinuity analyses. Third, I observe similar dynamics when comparing neighboring municipalities within court-districts, using the distance to district courts as an instrumental variable for denazification. The effect is substantial. A one percent increase in denazification corresponds to a one percent decrease in the vote share for the FDP. This holds in all three specifications, which explore different and plausibly exogenous variation.

Tracking the effect over time, I show that support for nationalist policies moves as parties evolve. I find that in every election until the 1970s, the vote share of the FDP is significantly reduced. Yet by the 1970s, the party underwent tremendous change, entered a social-liberal coalition and this eroded its nationalist wing. Coinciding with the FDP's change away from a nationalist platform, differences across borders and within districts become muted. The timing of the shift is suggestive. Any confounder would need to induce a change that varies over time and coincides with the change in the FDP's political platform. Suggestive evidence indicates that the latent residual demand can be reactivated by new parties. Higher denazification predicts a lower vote share for the Alternative for Germany (AfD). Concurrently, I observe a positive shift in turnout for supranational elections.

Where the demand for nationalist policies was attenuated, social norms changed in ways consistent with denazification establishing a taboo. Across comparisons, I find evidence that the variation in denazification is associated with norms of collective remembering. Using information on the first and surnames of over 20,000 victims of Nazi persecution in Baden-Württemberg, I find that municipalities with more denazification are more likely to have street names associated with Holocaust victims but less likely to have street names commemorating militarists and former supporters of National Socialism. I find corroborating evidence when analyzing the presence of Holocaust memorials.

To clarify the political process, I test whether the results are mass- or elite-driven. To do so, I use evidence on the professions and ranks of individuals in over 370,000 denazification cases in the US occupation zone. I find no difference in the extent of denazification of former elites in top administrative, police, (para-) military, and party positions across court districts or as the distance to the court increases within a district. All variation in the extent of denazification is driven by non-elites and in particular teachers – a group previously

indoctrinated and central to the dissemination of local norms. Using evidence on internment in the US occupation zone, I also find no differences in a prior purge and particularly strong form of punishment.

These findings highlight the importance of mass transitional justice in shifting norms. While most remained unpunished (Frei 2002; Niethammer 1982) and many careers continued (Frei 2014; Creuzberger and Geppert 2018), denazification may have served as a costly signal underscoring the credibility of the transition away from authoritarianism. Newspapers reported on ongoing cases and name lists were published on municipal bulletin boards, allowing communities to observe the extent and distribution of former Nazis. This led to the isolation of active supporters and provided an incentive for millions of people under denazification to distance themselves from National Socialism (Herbert 2019; Leßau 2020). At the same time, the absence of punishment might have lowered the cost of adapting personal narratives in ways consistent with the new social norm (Leßau 2020; Herbert 2019; Frei 2002). Denazification, thus, did not root out the bad apples. But denazification was indicative of an equilibrium in which nationalist policies increasingly became taboo.

Related Literature – The paper contributes to a literature on social norms in politics. Social norms play an important role in determining the political behavior of individuals (Gerber et al. 2008; Dellavigna et al. 2016; Perez-Truglia and Cruces 2017). In a variety of contexts, studies have documented the remarkable persistence of norms, including the survival of past authoritarian norms in democracies (Voigtländer and Voth 2012; Simpser et al. 2018; Neendorf and Pop-Eleches 2020). While recent work has shown that social norms can change in reaction to aggregate signals such as elections and symbolic policies (Bursztyn et al. 2020; Dewan and Wolton 2022), less is known about deliberate attempts to shift social norms at scale. In this paper, I identify the impact of a major policy designed to discredit past political norms and uncover lasting differences in political behavior and social norms.

This paper contributes to debates over the effects of transitional justice by resolving a key inference problem. Positive accounts emphasize the importance of transitional justice for removing, exposing, and discrediting the prior regime (Nalepa 2010; Teitel 2000; Sikkink 2011; Dancy et al. 2019; Horne 2017). Yet critics warn that these accounts are likely to overestimate the effect of transitional justice (Vinjamuri and Snyder 2015; Huntington 1993; Nobles 2010). In their view, it is less the policy itself and more the feasibility thereof, that

causes differences. If transitional justice is possible, it is likely implemented alongside a set of related policies consequential for democratic outcomes (Dancy et al. 2019). Or, perhaps more important, underlying differences shape both policies *and* democracy. Thus, to estimate the impact of transitional justice on democracy, we need a source of exogenous variation and be able to observe specific transitional justice mechanisms. I address these issues by leveraging three quasi-natural experiments and individual-level data on court cases and purges in the context of the largest transitional justice program in history.

Finally, these results frame debates surrounding denazification. Prior work has considered denazification a failure. The vast majority of cases remained unpunished (Frei 2002; Niethammer 1982) and careers of ‘functional elites’ persisted into the Federal Republic (Frei 2014; Görtemaker and Safferling 2016; Creuzberger and Geppert 2018). In consequence, historians turned to the question of how Germany turned into a mature democracy *despite* the failure of denazification (Wolfrum 2006). Notwithstanding denazification’s failure to address historical injustices, more recent work suggests that denazification successfully established a taboo (Herbert 2019; Leßau 2020). My analysis is consistent with a view that denazification’s long-term significance lay less in the number of convictions and more in the experiences millions were forced to go through. This notion aligns with quantitative studies that examine state-level variation and show that more cases without punishment led to lower support for one-party systems and anti-Semitism (Capoccia and Pop-Eleches 2020; Mohr et al. 2019). I add to these studies and develop quantitative evidence across different types of transitional justice; isolate variation in the extent of denazification; leverage three natural experiments; and observe political demand and norms across time and space.

2 History

2.1 Denazification

Denazification was the largest transitional justice program in history (Pendas 2020). From 1945 to 1949, courts processed around 14 million questionnaires and 4 million cases, examining the political past of broad sections of the population. While the Allied control council set forth a common denazification directive, which aimed to govern procedures

throughout Germany, the implementation across Allied occupation zones and local courts diverged in practice.³

Denazification varied across Allied occupation zones. Despite having “enacted similar denazification laws”⁴ in their occupation zones, the starker quantitative difference emerged between the US and French occupation zones (Vollnhals 1991). While the US initiated a broad-based examination of the population, the French targeted a narrower subset (Fürstenau 1969; Vollnhals 1991; Henke 2010). In the US occupation zone, the entire adult population (13.5 million) was subjected to a questionnaire about their Nazi past (*Frage- und Meldebogen*).⁵ In the French occupation zone, the questionnaire was distributed more narrowly targeting individuals who held positions of power; only around 669,000 questionnaires were completed. A second difference was “much closer supervision and control of the German tribunals by the French Military Government.”⁶ While each decision was subject to the centralized approval of French authorities, the procedure in the US occupation zone was entirely decentralized.

Denazification also varied within the US occupation zone. In the US occupation zone, each local district court [*Spruchkammer*] was staffed with a public prosecutor who commanded a team of “evaluators” and “investigators.” Evaluators examined individuals’ responses to a questionnaire about their political past and initially sorted individuals into two coarse categories: those who were likely incriminated, and those who were not. While the law establishing the legal basis for denazification specified instructions for evaluators,⁷ incomplete provisions and vague formulations left room for subjective judgment.

³See Allied Control Authority, Control Council Directive No. 38. *The Arrest and Punishment of War Criminals, Nazis, and Militarists and the Internment, Control, and Surveillance of Potentially Dangerous Germans*, 12 October 1946.

⁴See Office of Military Government. Civil Administration Division. *Denazification, cumulative review*. Report, April 1948.

⁵Completion rates were high as the questionnaire served as a basis for decisions about prosecution, employment restrictions, and access to food rations (Olick 2005, p. 125). While it is natural to question the veracity of the responses, the information provided in the questionnaires was at times subject to verification, e.g. through the Berlin Document Center which held the Nazi party registry. Misinformation was sanctioned. Thus, the falsification of questionnaires was rare. In North Baden, for example, out of more than one million questionnaires which had been checked by 1947, the public prosecutor charged 3581 and sentenced 335 cases for falsifying evidence (Borgstedt 2001, pp. 56, 61; Ettle (1985, p. 101) finds a similar figure in Bavaria).

⁶See Office of Military Government. Civil Administration Division. *Denazification, cumulative review*. Report, April 1948.

⁷Law on the Liberation from National Socialism and Militarism of March 5, 1946: with implementing regulations, forms, the instruction for the evaluators of the registration sheets and the ranking list in multicolor reproduction.

Idiosyncratic differences across evaluators mattered in the US occupation zone. For example, evaluators received a list of over a thousand broad ranks, offices, and suspect positions.⁸ Yet the law specified that “the ranking and organization list is only an explanatory aid” and a “schematic representation.” Indeed, the fragmented organizational structure of the late Nazi regime left evaluators confronted with a plethora of agencies and positions (Mommsen 1976; Broszat 1969). Thus, the law specified that “external criteria, such as membership of the NSDAP, any of its formations or other organizations, shall not be decisive by themselves alone for the degree of responsibility under this Law. They may be taken as important evidence as to a person’s conduct as a whole, but may be overcome, wholly or partly, by evidence to the contrary. Conversely, non-membership by itself is not decisive to absolve one of responsibility.” Further, evaluators were tasked with detecting patterns that required context-specific industry and geographic knowledge: such as “exceptionally fast promotions,” “unjustified increases in income,” or whether places of residence lay “outside the borders drawn by the Treaty of Versailles.” Lastly, denazification courts were understaffed and operated under binding time constraints (Niethammer 1982). In face of the complexity of the task, idiosyncratic effort and subjective judgment of evaluators became salient. Note, that evaluators had to substantiate incriminating claims. Thus, idiosyncratic variation in effort across courts is likely to have mostly affected the probability of false negatives, i.e. not investigating incriminated individuals.

If the examination revealed suspicious facts or a formal charge, investigations were initiated and information was cross-validated across offices (Leßau 2020, pp. 273f). Investigators collected additional incriminating information about individuals. Finally, judges categorized chargeable cases into one out of five categories, which then decided whether there was a sanction. Punitive measures included fines, employment restrictions, retraction of voting rights, and asset seizures.

Prior work has centered around the failures of denazification. The policy failed to remove Nazis but disproportionately focused on ‘lesser’ perpetrators (Frei 2002), most of whom received only minor punishment or were exonerated in a series of amnesties. Thus,

⁸The Law of Liberation further categorized these positions according to their presumed level of incrimination into categories: I, II, or b; where category I represented the highest incrimination category. In section 5, I use this information in combination with data on the professions of individuals under denazification, to understand which parts of the population drove the underlying differences.

denazification turned into a far-reaching rehabilitation practice that produced millions of ‘passive’ unsanctioned followers (Niethammer 1982). Incriminated persons were thus integrated into the postwar society. A large literature has documented the remarkable persistence of careers from the Third Reich into the postwar period (Frei 2014; Conze et al. 2010; Görtemaker and Safferling 2016; Creuzberger and Geppert 2018).

At the same time, no other measure to confront the past has affected as many Germans as denazification.⁹ Recent historical contributions suggest that by forcing millions to engage with their past it established a taboo of identifying with the NS-regime (Herbert 2019; Leßau 2020). Similarly, Dack (2016) argues that this process amounted to a massive denunciation of the Nazi regime that contributed to its discrediting after the war. The trials took place in a public “space that reflected the new order of power in postwar Germany” (Leßau 2020). The outcome was published on a bulletin board in the municipality of residence and newspapers reported on ongoing cases. While some initially feared that the trials were “more likely to provoke a nationalist backlash than induce contrition” (Konrad Adenauer in 1946, cited in Judt 2005, p. 55), the shift in norms proved so effective that high-ranking Nazis soon came to fear social ostracism, even by their own families.

2.2 Borders and Occupation Zones

A key driver of the variation in denazification across Germany were differences across Allied occupation zones. In general, the borders of occupation zones reflected pre-existing historical divisions. However, in contrast to other zones, the demarcation line between the French and US zone in the South was neither planned nor followed existing administrative borders.¹⁰

The occupation zone border in Baden-Württemberg was not planned before the end of the war. When the Allies started negotiations on how to split up Germany in the Spring of 1943, France, still subject to German occupation, was absent from these plans. By the end of 1944, however, the situation had changed. France was liberated; run by a provisional government; and determined to resume its place among the Allies (Ziemke 1975, p. 129). At the conference of Jalta in 1945, the three Allies conceded to de Gaulle’s demands of

⁹In contrast, other measures such as the legal prosecution of war criminals and reeducation efforts only addressed small parts of the population and often only indirectly (Leßau 2020).

¹⁰For more details on the deliberations and historical context of the border-drawing, see Appendix D.2.

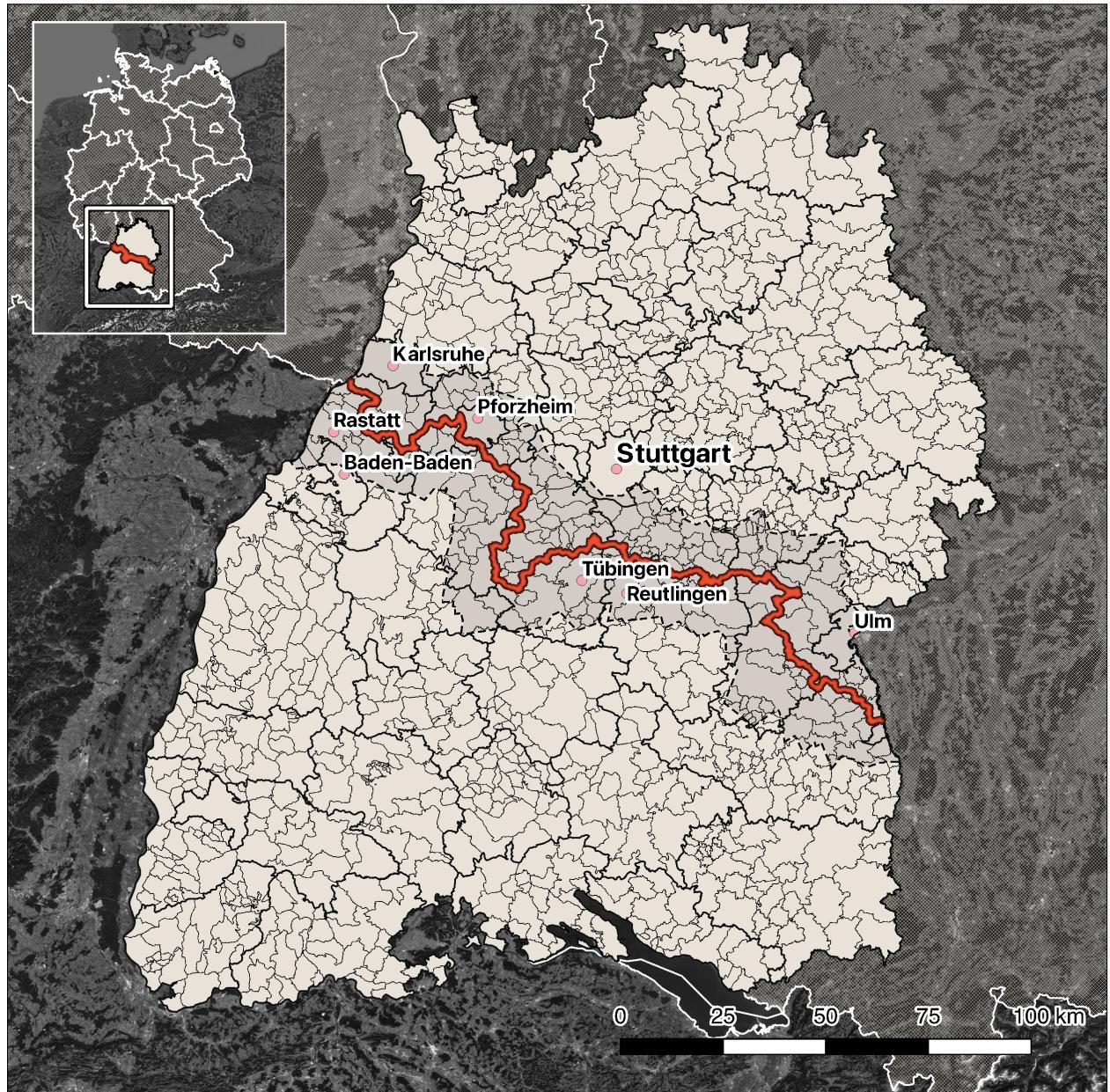


Figure 1: Map of Occupation Zone Border

This figure maps the study area and indicates the occupation zone border (in red), contemporary municipality boundaries (in grey), bold black lines indicate district boundaries, and the outer contours reflect the state boundary of Baden-Württemberg.

granting France a seat in the Allied Control Council and agreed to establish a fourth, French occupation zone.

The border bisected two former states and did not correspond to historical borders; it was simply drawn along the highway *A8* between Karlsruhe and Ulm ([Willis 1962](#), p. 96). All districts that contained the highway were kept by the US, while those districts south of

the highway were given to the French.¹¹ The partition of South-West Germany was a result of logistical considerations by the US military government that outweighed a proclaimed aim to preserve historical borders: “The boundary between the French and American zones was to be drawn to leave in the American zone the main highway, or Autobahn, through Ulm-Stuttgart-Karlsruhe, as well as the trunk railroad. Administrative and traditional divisions were disregarded completely. The sole concern was to assure access under American control to the Middle Rhine region and the seaports” ([Moseley 1950](#), p. 600).¹² Importantly, after the occupation ended in 1952, the border ceased to exist. Municipalities, formerly separated by the border, now were part of the same state.

2.3 Nationalism in Early Postwar Politics

While nationalism was to play a rapidly diminishing part in the politics of postwar Germany, it did not disappear directly after the war. Instead, there were still “millions of resentful and nationalist Germans” ([Hobsbawm 1992](#), p. 144). But who was to represent them?¹³

Among the major parties of the early postwar political landscape, the Free Democratic Party [FDP] had the strongest nationalist wing and platform. Over the first twenty years after the war, “the FDP stood up for the interests of Nazi potentates” ([Frei 2002](#), p. 38), “attracted returning soldiers, expellees, and members of the Hitler Youth generation” ([Lösche and Walter 1996](#), pp. 27), and some FDP party branches even “developed into catchment organisations for former National Socialists” ([Herbert 2019](#), p. 213).

The FDP was critical of denazification and styled itself as “the voice of those robbed of their ‘honor’” ([Frei 2002](#), p. 304). In 1949, the FDP campaigned on the promise to

¹¹The French insisted on consolidated control for the entire state of Baden. It was not until July 1945 “before the French accepted the zone as offered, with a provision for a review of the boundaries later” ([Ziemke 1975](#), p. 307). This review never took place.

¹²It is natural to wonder how the construction of the highway might have altered politics prior to WWII. In [4.1](#), I discuss potential issues and provide evidence that voting patterns and economic characteristics were similar on either side of the occupation zone border.

¹³During the first years after the war, Western military governments excluded radically right-wing parties and parties with National Socialist affiliations through a system of licensing political parties. Thus, a basic political structure of four major parties emerged across Western Germany: a communist party, a social-democratic party, a conservative Christian party, and the liberals ([Rogers 1995](#), p. 18, p. 132). Communist and social democratic opposition to the Nazi regime rendered them unlikely candidates for support. Similarly and despite being nominally non-denominational, the political Catholicism of the conservative Christian Democrats made them somewhat less attractive for former National Socialist voters. Religious confession was the single largest determinant of electoral support for the Nazi party and Catholics were far less likely to vote for the NSDAP than their Protestant counterpart ([Spenkuch and Tillmann 2018](#)).

Table 1: Roll-Call Votes on Denazification by Party

<i>Vote on Extension of Statutory Limitation on Murder 1965</i>	(1) FDP	(2) SPD	(3) CDU
For Extension	0.045	0.873	0.765
Against Extension	0.894	0.000	0.105
Abstained	0.045	0.093	0.070
Observations	66	204	200

This table presents information on roll-call votes on the extension of the statutory limitation on murder in 1965 by party and vote. The first row displays the share of federal MPs per party who voted for the extension. The second and third rows show the share of MPs per party who voted against and abstained from the vote, respectively. The roll call vote data is taken from [Sieberer et al. \(2020\)](#).

end the political “incapacitation” and legal “deprivation” of those under denazification and demanded a general amnesty ([Kiani 2013](#), pp. 227ff). In 1951, the FDP threatened to veto the ratification of the treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community if internees, including war criminals, were not released ([Leuschner 2005](#), p. 11). The treaty was consequential because it would initiate the integration process which eventually led to the creation of the European Union. In 1965, 90% of FDP MPs voted against the extension of the statute of limitations for murders perpetrated during the Third Reich, which would have made the persecution of Nazi killings impossible. In contrast, no Social Democratic parliamentarian and only 10% of CDU MPs voted against the extension (see Table 1). Voting against extending the statute of limitations for murder was strongly and positively predicted by former NSDAP membership ([Charnysh and Riaz 2022](#)).

One group among the FDP’s nationalist wing even “aimed to go beyond simply attempting to rehabilitate the participants in Nazi crimes [...]. Its objective was to develop a collective movement of right-wing nationalists at the heart of the FDP, so as to change the balance of political power in the Republic” ([Herbert 2019](#)). The attempt culminated in the high-profile arrest of key members of the conspiring group in 1953 ([Buchna 2010](#)).

From attempts to recreate a far-right movement in the 1950s to the formalization of a “National-Liberal Action” in 1970, links between the FDP and the old guard were pervasive. The party became an important refuge for the political rehabilitation of former Nazis and over 50% of its federal MPs had been Nazi party members ([Buchna 2010; 2020](#)).¹⁴

¹⁴For accounts on the remarkable Nazi past of FDP deputies in state assemblies see: [Klausch \(2008\)](#)

These patterns were mirrored in the party's voter base.¹⁵ Surveys from the 1950s and 1960s consistently found that “anti-Semitic and pro-National Socialist positions were most widespread among FDP voters” ([Buchna 2020](#)). A survey conducted by the US military government [OMGUS] in December 1952, found that the FDP was “the party of Nazi-sympathizers” ([Leuschner 2005](#), p. 12). While only 4 percent of survey respondents would have welcomed a resurgence of the Third Reich, a quarter of FDP voters supported the idea of a second Nazi regime. The question of whether ex-Nazis should be given the same opportunities in politics and business was answered positively by 36 percent of the total sample population, but 80 percent agreed among FDP supporters ([Leuschner 2005](#), p. 12). In a 1956 survey, 56 percent of FDP voters shared the opinion that “Hitler would have been one of the greatest German statesmen without the war” ([Bergmann and Erb 1991](#)).¹⁶

Over the 1970s the FDP moved from a national-conservative toward a liberal platform. In 1969, the FDP enters into a coalition with the Social Democrats, and this eroded its nationalist wing and outlook. With the party's right-wing substantially weakened and the liberal current of the FDP in command, the party repositioned itself to the center. What once “had been the program core of much of the FDP in the early Federal Republic, clearly had fallen outside the liberal spectrum by the early 1970s.”¹⁷ ([Buchna 2010](#))

3 Data

I gather evidence on denazification and political behavior at the municipal level.

Denazification. I collect data on over 850,000 denazification cases from the State Archives of Baden-Württemberg. The data covers North-Baden, Württemberg-Baden, and

for Lower Saxony, [Klepsch \(2009\)](#) for North-Rhine Westphalia, [Klausch \(2011\)](#) for Hesse, [Klausch \(2013\)](#) and [Tändler \(2016\)](#) for Saarland, [Tändler \(2014\)](#) for Bremen, and [Danker and Lehman-Himmel \(2014\)](#) for Schleswig-Holstein.

¹⁵Appendix Table D2 shows that across all major postwar parties before 1970, the correlation between the Nazi party vote share in 1933 was highest among the FDP in my sample. This correlation is even substantially higher than the coefficients of far-right fringe parties including the German Party (DP) and the German Reich Party (DRP); only the vote share for the neo-nazi party National Democratic Party (NPD) exhibits a similar correlation.

¹⁶In comparison, support for the statement reached 36 percent among CDU voters.

¹⁷Note other instances where postwar liberal parties shaped political landscapes with nationalist agendas including the FPÖ in Austria and the LDP in Japan. Both Austria and Japan lost the war. Yet, in contrast to Germany, transitional justice remained limited and liberal parties continue to influence politics along nationalist lines.

Württemberg-Hohenzollern.¹⁸ Observations correspond to cases which have been processed by German denazification courts and record the municipality of residence, the birthplace, and, for a subset of cases, the profession and rank during the Third Reich.¹⁹ First, I measure the extent of denazification by the number of denazification cases per voting-age population at the municipal level. Second, to study differences in denazification by profession and identify elites, I collect information on the professions of 370,000 individuals located in the US occupation zone and classify cases based on their predicted level of incrimination by sector and rank. Using Boberach (2012), I link over 1500 official titles and ranks in the state administration, judiciary, military, Nazi party, and its branches. Further, I code individual professions by sector using the “Classification of Occupations” [*Klassifikation der Berufe*] issued by the Federal Agency for Work in 1970. Lastly, I use the classification system described in the 1946 “Law for Liberation from National Socialism and Militarism” to indicate the predicted level of incrimination. The law served as a legal basis and provided guidance for local denazification courts.

Elections. To study the demand for nationalist policies, I obtained data on all federal elections from 1949 to 2021 at the municipal level through the Statistical Office of Baden-Württemberg. As administrative district and municipality borders underwent territorial reorganization in the 1970s, the data were harmonized by the statistical office and follows contemporary municipality borders.

Internees. I use evidence on all internees (over 20000) in the parts of Baden-Württemberg under US occupation to study a prior purge of former political, (para-)military, and administrative elites across municipalities.²⁰ The purge was conducted by the Allied forces and based on the “Arrest Categories Handbook” issued by the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force [SHAEF]. I measure the extent of the purge by the number of internees per voting-age population at the municipal level based on the internees’ place of residence.

¹⁸The data corresponds to the following archival inventories. Württemberg-Hohenzollern: *Landesarchiv BW, StAS Wü 13 T 2*; Württemberg-Baden: *Landesarchiv BW, StAL EL 902*; North-Baden: *Landesarchiv BW, GLAK 465*. Note that this individual-level data on denazification is still subject to an archival restriction period.

¹⁹Note, that I only observe whether the court processed a case, not their outcome. Further, cases could, but did not necessarily, lead to an oral hearing in court.

²⁰The data corresponds to the archival inventory *Landesarchiv BW, StAL EL 904/2*.

Collective Memory. I gather corroborating evidence on local-level indicators of collective memory: including Holocaust memorials, and street names associated with militarists and victims of Nazi persecution. I construct a municipal-level indicator of “Memorials for the Victims of Nazi Persecution” as documented in [Puvogel et al. \(1995\)](#). Further, I use information on the names of over 20,000 victims of Nazi persecution in Baden-Württemberg from the minority census in 1939 and document the renaming of street names in their memory. Lastly, I document the survival of militaristic street names associated with the Nazi regime from two sources: (i) data of all known street names associated with the Nazi regime that have been renamed from 1945 to 2010 in Westfalia ([Weidner 2013](#)), and (ii) data on contemporary controversial street names associated with National Socialism in Northrhine-Westfalia ([West Deutscher Rundfunk 2021](#)).²¹

Controls. I collect economic and political data before and after the war. Pre-war, I use municipal-level data on economic and electoral outcomes in the Weimar Republic from 1920 to 1933 and Nazi party membership rate estimates for municipalities above 5000 inhabitants. Historical election data from the Weimar Republic comes from [Falter and Hänisch \(1990\)](#). Results are available for the elections in 1928, 1930, and 1933; yet not available for the elections in 1932, during which the Reich Statistical Office (*Statistisches Reichsamt*) reported election results only for the districts (*Kreise*). Further, I use locality-weighted information on NSDAP membership rates. The data is based on samples drawn from the two original NSDAP member files archived at the Berlin Document Center by teams of researchers in Berlin, Mainz ([Falter and Kater 1993](#)), and Minneapolis ([Brustein 1998](#)).²² Postwar, I digitized the 1950 census published by the Statistical Office of Baden-Württemberg and obtained data on population, religion, refugees, and employment. I assembled archival

²¹I exclude all street names that served as toponyms or functional descriptors, focus on persons that occur more than once, and drop all names commemorating individuals who passed away before 1914. This date was the cut-off criterium specified by the Allied Control Council Directive No. 30 in May 1946, that instructed local administrators and elected councils with the removal of militaristic street names. This resulted in a compilation of 101 notable persons. Of which present in my street name sample are: Paul von Hindenburg (president), Manfred von Richthofen (fighter pilot), Max Immelmann (fighter pilot), Oswald Boelcke (fighter pilot), Erwin Rommel (military general), Otto Weddigen (military commander), August von Mackensen (military general), Werner Mölders (fighter pilot), Maximilian von Spee (military commander), Carl Peters (colonial administrator), Hermann Löns (author), Agnes Miegel (author), Walter Flex (author), Ferdinand Sauerbruch (surgeon), Wernher von Braun (aerospace engineer), Carl Diem (sports functionary).

²²It is important to note, however, that the sample size and sampling strategy were designed to achieve representativity for individuals and not municipalities.

data on firms that were subject to industrial dismantlement.²³ Finally, I obtained data on contemporary population, the share of unemployment, foreigners, religion from the Statistical Office of Baden Württemberg.

4 Research Design and Results

Transitional justice is subject to strategic considerations and political economy constraints (Elster 2004; Nalepa 2010; Vinjamuri and Snyder 2015). For example, transitional justice can be a function of the local supply of former regime supporters. But the strength of former supporters may constrain transitional justice efforts. Or, transitional justice may be implemented where it is feasible and often alongside a set of related policies consequential for democratic outcomes. These issues pose challenges for causal inference. To isolate the causal effect of denazification on political behavior, I employ three empirical strategies leveraging different sources of plausibly exogenous variation in the extent of denazification.

First, I focus on neighboring municipalities across the French-American occupation zone border which was drawn for purely logistical reasons and gave rise to discontinuous variation in the extent of denazification. Using a spatial regression discontinuity design, I analyze differences between neighboring municipalities across the US-French occupation zone border. Second, I study variation in denazification within the US occupation zone that arose from the decentralized administration of district courts. Here I study the implications of idiosyncratic administrative differences that led to sharp variation in denazification across neighboring municipalities along court-district borders. Following Rozenas et al. (2017), I use a fuzzy regression discontinuity design and compare neighboring municipalities across high and low-denazification court districts and focus on the variation in denazification that is driven by district-level differences, controlling for district times district comparison fixed-effects. Third, I use the fact that the physical distance to district courts increased the cost of collecting information and thus generated variation in denazification within court districts. Using an instrumental variable strategy, I examine variation in denazification induced by the distance

²³The data corresponds to the following archival inventories. The official dismantling list for the US occupation zone: *Landesarchiv BW, StAL EA 1-016 195*; the French occupation zone: *Landesarchiv BW, StAL EA 6-006 130*; and dismantled firms that were not on the official list according to German Ministry of Finances in 1959: *Landesarchiv BW, StAL EA 6-006 220*

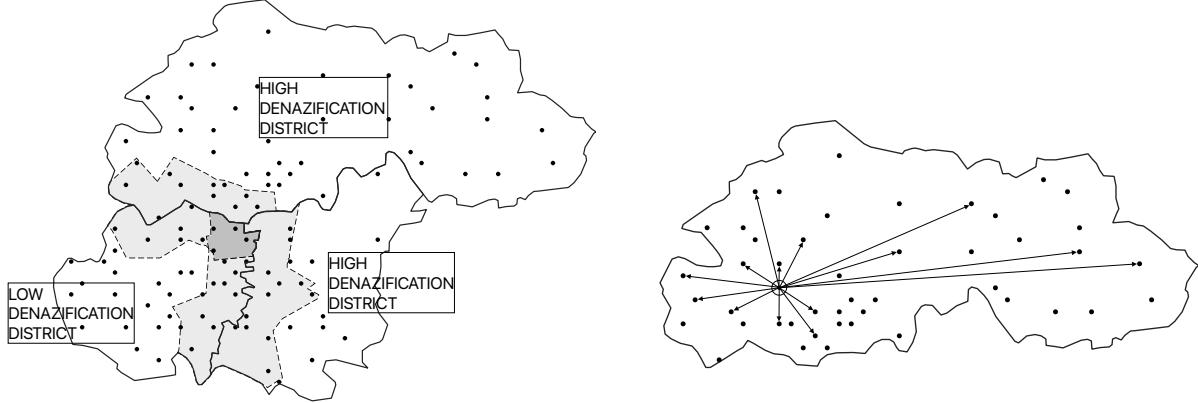


Figure 2: Comparisons across District Borders (left) and within Districts (right)
This figure illustrates the local variation that enters the comparisons across and within court districts. Municipalities are indicated by dots, district boundaries by solid black lines, and the bandwidth by a dashed gray line. In the left panel, I compare neighboring municipalities across court districts with contrasting denazification shares and include district \times district comparison fixed-effects (symmetric segments across borders shaded in light gray). Note that some districts will have municipalities used in multiple comparisons (shaded in dark gray). In the right panel, arrows indicate the distance of the district court to a given municipality which serves as the instrumental variable.

to the district court and control for a set of potential confounders including court district fixed effects. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the approach for the (fuzzy) regression discontinuity designs and instrumental variable strategy. The next subsections provide greater detail on the identification strategies and present the results of the main analyses, which yield similar estimates that exhibit the same dynamics over time across the three empirical approaches.

4.1 Discontinuity across Occupation Zones

This study begins by exploiting the discontinuous exposure to denazification, comparing neighboring municipalities across the French-American occupation zone border. This boundary forms a spatial discontinuity and regressions take the general form of:

$$y_i = \alpha + \beta \text{High}_i + f(X_i) + \sum_{i=1}^n \text{seg}_i + \epsilon_i \quad (1)$$

where y_i is the outcome in municipality i , e.g. the vote share of the respective parties in the federal elections. The function $f(X_i)$ is a local linear approximation using distance to the border as the forcing variable. The variable High_i is an indicator for whether municipality i is located within a high denazification municipality. In this first comparison, all border-adjacent municipalities in the US occupation zone serve as treatment units. The coefficient β captures

the effect of having been subject to higher denazification on political behavior. In addition, the segment fixed effects, seg_i , ensure that the specification is comparing municipalities across the same segment of the boundary. Finally, ϵ_i is an error term.

Figure 3 plots the number of denazification cases as a share of the voting-age population and documents a sharp difference across occupation zones. Denazification was 8 pp. higher in the US occupation zone compared to neighboring municipalities occupied by France.

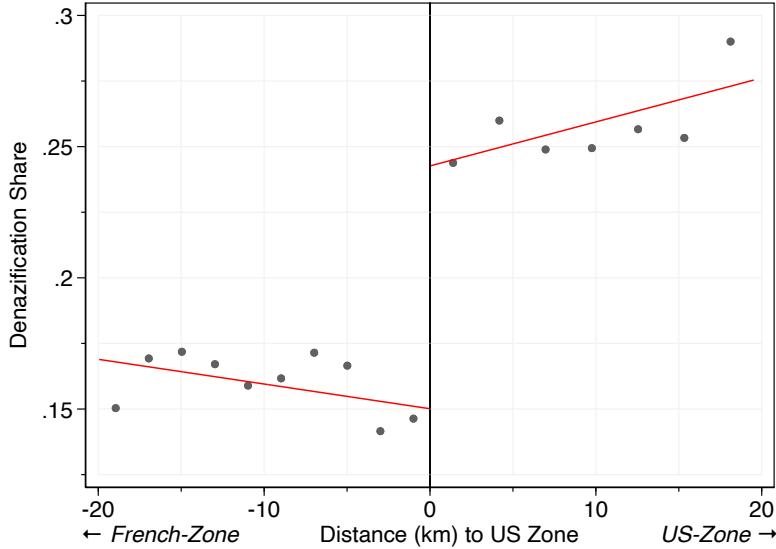


Figure 3: Discontinuity across Occupation Zones

This graph plots the number of denazification court cases as a share of the voting-age population between neighboring municipalities across the French-American occupation zone border.

Coinciding with this sharp variation across the border, I observe large and persistent electoral differences. Figure 4 shows that neighboring municipalities located in the US occupation zone were on average 7 percentage points less likely to vote for the FDP until the 1970s, after which the effect attenuates. As documented in section 2.3, the postwar FDP had a strong nationalist outlook and this was reflected in party platform, politicians, and voter base. Yet over the 1970s, the FDP underwent tremendous change, enters into a coalition with the social democrats and this eroded their nationalist wing and outlook. I do not observe significant differences for any other major party across the border.

Results are calculated using a fixed bandwidth of 10 kilometers to ensure comparability over time. In Appendix C, I document robustness to a range of bandwidth, polynomial, and variance estimator choices, including MSE-optimal bandwidths and bias-corrected estimates following Calonico et al. (2017).

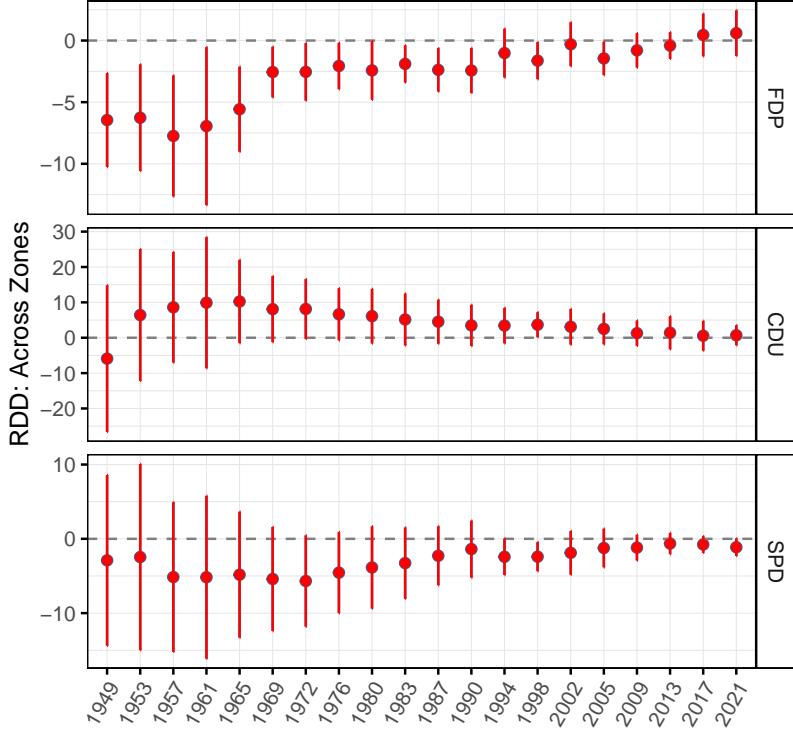


Figure 4: RD across Occupation Zones

This graph plots regression discontinuity estimates examining differences in political behavior between neighboring municipalities across the French-American occupation zone border. The outcome is the vote share for all major parties from 1949 to 2021. MSE-optimal bandwidths and bias-corrected estimates are implemented following [Calonico et al. \(2017\)](#). Robust standard errors are clustered at the district level.

The identifying assumption is that all relevant factors besides treatment are continuous around the cutoff. If other relevant factors vary sharply at the border, a discontinuity in voting behavior cannot be interpreted causally. Formally, this requirement can be captured as the expected outcome $E[y_i(\text{High})|X_i = x]$ being continuous around the border. Otherwise, the estimate runs the risk of producing false positives as municipalities with higher denazification might have had a lower propensity to vote for nationalistic parties anyway. This assumption cannot be validated yet is defensible.

To assess the plausibility of this assumption, I examine differences across the border estimating regression discontinuities. Panel A. of Table 2 summarizes the economic and political differences of neighboring municipalities across the French-American occupation zone border before and after the Second World War.

The first section of Table 2 provides evidence that economic and political outcomes prior to the occupation were largely continuous across the boundary. The statistical analysis does not reveal obvious discontinuities at the cutoff on key pre-war economic observables including

Table 2: Differences across Occupation Zone and District Borders Before and After the War

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
	A. Occupation Zone Border					B. Court District Border				
	β_H	SE	BW	N_L	N_H	β_H	SE	BW	N_L	N_H
<i>Pre-War</i>										
Population 1933 (ln)	-.31	(.27)	22	46	75	-.11	(.12)	28	446	257
Urban Population 1933 (%)	-7.32	(5.16)	32	62	108	-3.48	(2.82)	25	387	221
Protestant 1925 (%)	12.62	(20.8)	20	45	75	7.39	(5.52)	26	456	237
Jewish 1925 (%)	-.1	(.3)	26	53	92	.14	(.2)	24	414	216
NSDAP Members (ln)	-.63	(.97)	27	54	98	.14	(.42)	21	350	176
NSDAP Mean Vote Share	-2.68	(4.44)	23	48	83	.69	(1.58)	19	290	157
DVP Mean Vote Share	-.74	(1.53)	24	50	92	.4	(.39)	23	432	209
DDP Mean Vote Share	.15	(2.38)	22	46	82	.36	(1.8)	46	963	423
Zentrum Mean Vote Share	-1.81	(10.05)	19	44	76	-1.37	(3.56)	24	442	210
<i>Post-War</i>										
Population 1950 (ln)	-.2	(.23)	30	188	214	-.15	(.15)	24	493	540
Male Population (%)	.34	(.39)	38	228	265	.05	(.13)	28	588	639
Protestant 1950 (%)	-5.97	(14.89)	33	202	231	-2.42	(4.86)	19	379	407
Industrial Employment 1950 (%)	2.47	(3.52)	27	176	192	-.31	(1.02)	18	366	398
Worker Share 1950 (%)	3.16	(1.93)	31	193	222	.3	(.55)	20	399	434
Refugees 1950 (%)	12.36***	(1.3)	33	199	229	.34	(.74)	20	390	424
Firms Dismantled	-.16**	(.08)	20	135	151	-.1	(.1)	28	590	640

This table presents regression discontinuity estimates examining political and economic differences between municipalities before and after WWII. Columns 1-5 examine neighboring municipalities across the French-American occupation zone border. Columns 6-10 examine neighboring municipalities across high and low denazification court district borders in the US occupation zone controlling for district \times district fixed effects; observations are sampled with replacement. Columns 1 and 6 show the estimates on an indicator for “High Denazification” municipalities. Columns 2 and 7 display standard errors. Columns 3 and 8 show the optimal bandwidth in kilometers. Columns 4-5 and 9-10 provide the number of observations around the cutoff. Rows are organized by outcomes. MSE-optimal bandwidths and bias-corrected estimates are implemented following [Calonico et al. \(2017\)](#). Robust standard errors are clustered at the district level.

population, the share of the urban population, and the share of the Protestant and Jewish populations. Similarly, I find no significant political differences in the historic vote patterns using the average vote shares of parties during the Weimar Republic (1920-1933), which points to the political similarity of municipalities across borders before the war.²⁴

²⁴Continuity on pre-war observables notwithstanding, the motorway might have been planned strategically by the Nazi-regime. The Nazis may have rewarded high-support districts or targeted districts that were susceptible to the allure of Nazi propaganda. [Voigtlaender and Voth \(2014, p. 28\)](#), however, find that districts with future Autobahn construction were statistically indistinguishable from the rest in terms of votes for the Nazis in March 1933, the last quasi-free election. This evidence is corroborated by the fact that the Nazis largely followed pre-existing plans set out by the *Studiengesellschaft für Automobilstraßenbau* (STUFA), a think tank developing least-cost plans for a highway network in the 1920s ([Vahrenkamp 2010, pp. 21f](#)). Yet [Voigtlaender and Voth \(2014\)](#) also provide evidence that in districts experiencing highway construction, opposition to the regime, measured as the change of vote shares for non-Nazi parties, was reduced by about one percentage point. This finding likely works against my finding as the US-occupied districts in my sample were disproportionately exposed to Nazi propaganda.

The second section of Table 2 examines differences after the war. While there were no differences in key economic dimensions, I do find important differences in other policies that differed between neighboring municipalities across occupation zones. Notably, the French did not accept any refugees, and extraction, as measured by the number of industrial firms which were dismantled, was higher.²⁵ These processes had important implications for the pattern of population and income growth after the occupation ended (Schumann 2014; Ciccone and Nimczik 2022).²⁶ Yet it was only over the 1960s that a difference in GDP per capita growth emerged. Importantly, “there was no significant growth differential during the 1935-1950 period. Also, in 1950, there was no significant difference in GDP per capita across the former occupation-zone border in South-West Germany.” (Ciccone and Nimczik 2022, p. 4)

Another important concern for the process that I study, is sorting across borders and municipalities in response to denazification. As questionnaires were distributed more narrowly in the French occupation zone, the probability of an incriminated person being registered and denazified was lower than in the US occupation zone. Indeed, anecdotal evidence suggests that individuals who were banned from exercising their profession in the American or Russian zones escaped to the British and French occupation zones (Niethammer 1982, pp. 570ff; Vollnhals 1991, p. 28). Yet differential sorting across the French-American border in Baden-Württemberg was unlikely during the initial phase after the war. From April to July 1945 the French were occupying all municipalities in the border sample, up to Stuttgart and Karlsruhe. Only once the Americans threatened to cut off their supply lines, the French troops withdrew. Further, migration during the occupation was unlikely to have taken place systematically. France expelled all persons that moved to the French-occupied territories after 1939 and did not accept expelees (Brommer 1985, p. 129).²⁷

²⁵In Appendix E, I explore in further detail whether other differences across Allied occupation zones including refugees, industrial dismantling, and education were likely drivers of the observed differences and provide suggestive quantitative and historical evidence that they were unlikely leading causal factors.

²⁶Note that such concerns are attenuated when comparing municipalities within occupation zones. Both the difference in refugees and industrial dismantling become smaller and statistically insignificant across court district borders (see section 4.2).

²⁷To manage the living space situation and to avoid fiscal costs for France, all persons that moved to territories later occupied by the French after 1939 were prompted to leave. In November 1945, the French repatriated 71,719 persons at the border in the district of Koblenz. Lastly, the French did not take in any refugees in the aftermath of the war. The only significant population inflow into the Southern French occupation zone were 35,000 refugees from Denmark (Borawski 1982). In return for accepting the expellees, the Danish provided food aid over three years. Only after 1950, refugees were relocated to the French occupation zone.

As the French-US occupation zone border in Baden-Württemberg has no natural nor historic relevance other than being close to a motorway, many concerns of other pre-war discontinuities that are important across administrative borders can be ruled out. Yet while the two occupation zones were merged into a single state after the Allies withdrew, occupation zone policies differed on multiple dimensions. It is thus important to restrict the analysis to variation within occupation zones, where no such differences existed.

4.2 Discontinuity across District Borders

The second comparison explores sharp variation in denazification across district borders due to idiosyncratic administrative differences within the US occupation zone. Using a fuzzy regression discontinuity design, I compare neighboring municipalities across high and low-denazification court districts and focus on the variation in denazification that is driven by district-level differences, controlling for district \times district comparison fixed-effects.²⁸ In this comparison, all municipalities in high denazification court districts adjacent to low denazification court districts are considered treated. I define high and low denazification court districts as being 1/2 SD above and below the mean.²⁹ The left-hand panel of figure 2 illustrates this empirical strategy graphically.

Empirically, I run fuzzy regression discontinuities of the following forms. In a first stage, I estimate the relationship between the forcing variable X_{ijd} and the standardized municipality-level denazification share:

$$\text{Denazification}_{ijd} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \mathbf{1}\{X_{ijd} > 0\} + f(X_{ijd}) + \kappa C_{jd} + \nu_{ijd} \quad (2)$$

where $\mathbf{1}\{X_{ijd} > 0\}$ is equal to one if the municipality i is located in a court district j with a high level of denazification and zero otherwise. The term $f(X_{ijd})$ is local linear function of the distance to the nearest border of district j with neighboring district d . The term C_{jd} is a vector of district \times district comparison fixed-effects. ν_{ijd} is an error term.

²⁸While I have analyzed discrete shifts across Allied occupation zones in section 4.1, differences across district courts should be analyzed in terms of changes in the probability of treatment as compliance can be imperfect.

²⁹Note that some districts will have municipalities used in multiple comparisons. If, for example, a municipality in a high-denazification district is sufficiently close to two distinct low-denazification districts, it will be sampled twice.

The second-stage regressions take the form of:

$$y_{ijd} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Denazification}_j + g(X_{ijd}) + \gamma C_{jd} + e_{ijd}, \quad (3)$$

where g is an unknown smooth function and β_1 represents the quantity of interest – the fuzzy RDD effect of denazification on various outcomes.

The results across occupation zones are mirrored when analyzing discontinuities across districts within the US occupation zone. Figure 5 shows that municipalities located along court-districts borders of high and low denazification districts differed sharply.

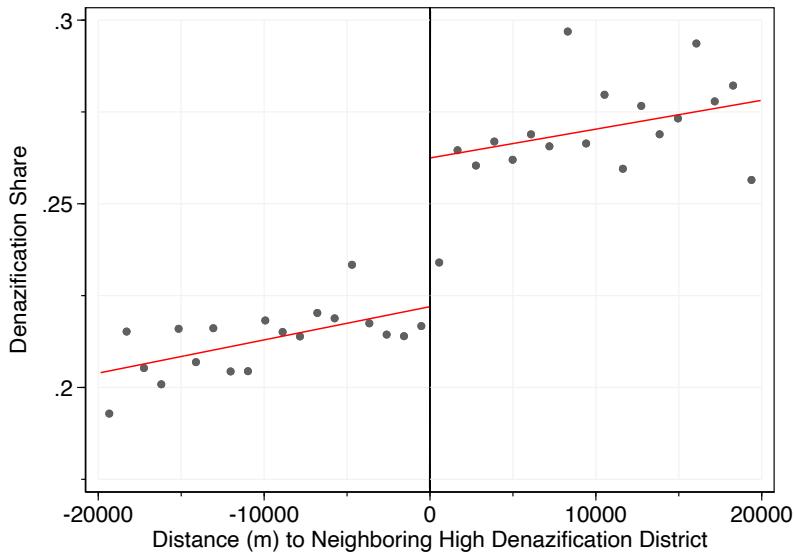


Figure 5: Discontinuity across Districts

This graph plots the number of denazification court cases as a share of the voting-age population between neighboring municipalities across the court districts within the US occupation zone.

Figure 6 reports estimates from a fuzzy regression discontinuity design using the variation in denazification of municipalities induced by being in a high or low denazification district. Comparing neighboring municipalities across contingent districts, I find dynamics echoing patterns across zones. Higher denazification negatively predicts the vote share for the FDP but this difference is attenuated once the FDP's nationalist wing loses influence.

The main identifying assumption is that no other factors besides treatment are continuous around the cutoff.³⁰ To assess potential violations of this assumption, Panel B in Table 2

³⁰In the fuzzy regression discontinuity design being in a high denazification district provides an instrument for the municipal-level denazification share. Note that in addition to the usual RD assumptions, this requires including monotonicity and excludability. Thus, the fuzzy RD also changes the estimand to the local average treatment effect for compilers.

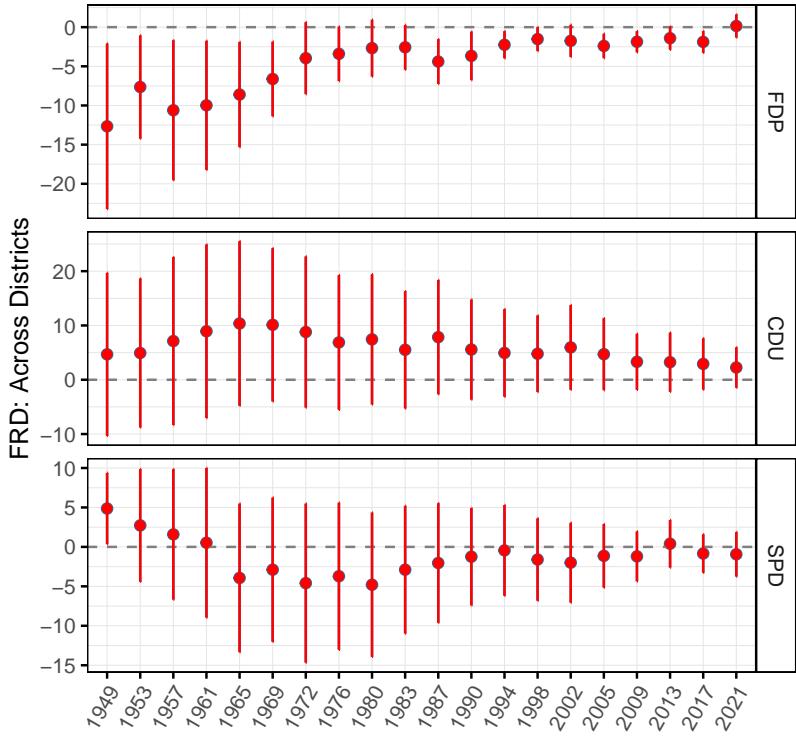


Figure 6: Fuzzy RD across Districts

This graph plots fuzzy regression discontinuity estimates examining differences in political behavior between neighboring municipalities across district borders within the US occupation zone. The outcome is the vote share for all major parties from 1949 to 2021. The instrument is whether a municipality is in a high denazification district. Municipal-level denazification is standardized and results display the effect of a one SD (6 pp.) change in denazification. MSE-optimal bandwidths and bias-corrected estimates are implemented following [Calonico et al. \(2017\)](#). Robust standard errors are clustered at the district level.

examines the economic and political differences of neighboring municipalities across court district borders before and after the Second World War.

Table 2 provides evidence that, when restricting the analysis to neighboring municipalities within the US occupation zone, most economic and political outcomes before and after the war were largely continuous across districts. Importantly, I find no differences in postwar policies that differed across the occupation zone border including the share of refugees and the number of dismantled industrial firms.

Analogous to the first empirical strategy, an important concern is selective migration across district borders. While there were limits to the extent of migration across the French-American occupation zone border, no such restrictions existed on intra-zonal migration. Yet in contrast to differences in denazification across occupation zones, which were common knowledge, differences across court districts were hard to predict. Ex-ante, it was not obvious which district courts would denazify more or less at the margin and the majority of

questionnaires were collected before courts started operating.³¹ Further, in individual-level denazification data within the US occupation zone, I find migration from individuals born in high denazification court districts but residing in low denazification court districts to play only a minor role quantitatively (approx. 1% of all cases). Lastly, my results are unchanged when measuring denazification by restricting the sample to non-migrants who resided in their district of birth. Taken together, this suggests a limited role of selective migration in my comparisons.³² Still, in the next comparison, I restrict the analysis to variation to municipalities that are subject to the same district court.

4.3 Differences within Districts

The third comparison uses variation in denazification within court districts in the US occupation zone. I consider the possibility that the geographic distance of a municipality to a district court imposed a cost to gathering information about the incrimination of individuals. I use the within-district distance to a court as an instrumental variable for denazification.

My instrumental variable (IV) analysis builds on the following first-stage equation:

$$x_{ij} = \alpha + \beta Z_{ij} + \phi \mathbf{M}_i + \gamma L_j + \nu_{ij} \quad (4)$$

where Z_{ij} is the instrumental variable measuring the distance to the district court of district j . The explanatory variable of interest is the extent of denazification x_{ij} , as measured by the standardized denazification share. The term \mathbf{M}_i is a matrix of control variables. The term L_j is a vector of district-level fixed effects, and ν_{ij} are independent and identically distributed errors.

The second-stage equation estimates:

$$y_{ij} = \alpha + \beta^{(IV)} \hat{x}_{ij} + \theta \mathbf{M}_i + \kappa L_j + \epsilon_{ij}, \quad (5)$$

where y_{ij} is the outcome in municipality i , district. \hat{x}_i are the fitted values of x_i from equation (4), and the β^{IV} estimate is a local average treatment effect, representing the effect

³¹Also note that for all persons who were dead or missing, absent, fugitive, or in custody and whose suspected level of incrimination was class I or II, municipal mayors had to submit a questionnaire.

³²Yet after the occupation ended, all restrictions on the freedom of movement ceased to exist, and sorting became likely.

of denazification on various outcomes in districts where denazification was higher because of the proximity to a district court.

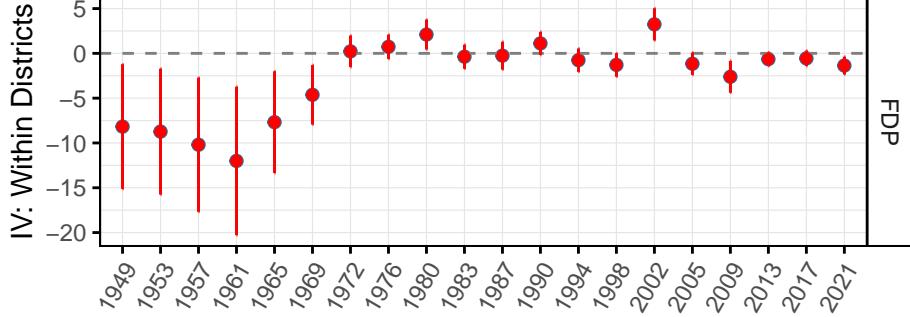
Table 3 reports the results examining neighboring municipalities within court districts, using the distance to district courts as an instrumental variable for denazification. The instrumental variable estimates reveal that differences in denazification induced by geography negatively predict electoral differences until the 1970s. Being 10 kilometers away from the court is associated with a 0.3 SD (1.8 pp.) lower denazification share. The estimate suggests that a one standard deviation change in denazification is associated with an approximately 6 pp. lower FDP vote share until the 1970s. Tracking the effect over time in Figure 7, I observe the same dynamics as observed across Allied occupation zones and court district boundaries. There is a strong negative effect of denazification on the FDP’s vote share until the 1970s and coinciding with the change away from nationalist policies these differences vanish.

To interpret these results it is important to note that unconditionally, the exclusion restriction might be violated. The distance to a court also proxies for the centrality of a municipality in a given district and thus might shape politics through other channels. Thus, in Table 3 column 2, I condition on time-invariant geographic controls including latitude, longitude, the distance to the district border, and the distance to the three largest cities including Stuttgart, the state capital. In column 3, I introduce a set of economic and political controls observed in 1950 including the logarithm of the population, the share of males, protestants, industrial employment, workers, refugees, internees, the number of dismantled firms, and a dummy indicating city status. Coefficients on all covariates included the IV analyses are reported in Appendix Section C.6. An important caveat of this strategy is that these control variables are only available post-treatment.

4.4 Denazification and Collective Memory

Where the demand for nationalist policies is attenuated, other behavioral changes followed. Table 4 reports differences in collective memory including the number of street names commemorating militarists and supporters of National Socialism, and Holocaust memorials. I observe that the number of streets whose names were associated with the Nazi regime

Figure 7: Instrumental Variables – Differences within Districts



A. IV Estimates	(1)	(2)	(3)
<i>Outcome: FDP Vote Share Before 1970</i>			
Denazification per Voting Population (SD)	-5.53** (2.58)	-6.73** (2.62)	-5.04** (2.19)
<i>B. IV First Stage</i>			
Distance to District Court (km)	-0.03*** (0.01)	-0.04*** (0.01)	-0.03*** (0.01)
F-Statistic	16.04	16.11	10.38
Observations	3096	3096	3096
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Geographic Controls	No	Yes	Yes
Controls 1950	No	No	Yes

Table 3: Instrumental Variables – Differences within Districts

Table 3 presents IV estimates examining differences in the FDP vote share between neighboring municipalities within districts within the US occupation zone before 1970. Panel A of the table presents the IV estimates where the outcome is the FDP vote share in 1949. The IV is the distance to a district court in kilometers. Panel B displays first-stage estimates. Geographic controls include: latitude, longitude, distance to the district border, and distance to the three largest cities. Controls in 1950 are: the logarithm of the population, the share of protestants, males, workers, industrial employment, refugees, internees, the count of dismantled firms, and a dummy indicating city status. Figure 7 above plots instrumental variable estimates over time, controlling for geographic controls. Robust standard errors are clustered at the municipal level.

is 0.3 (1/2 SD) lower in high denazification municipalities across the occupation zone and district borders. At the same time, the number of streets whose names were associated with the victims of Nazi persecution is 0.4 streets (or 1/2 SD) higher in high denazification municipalities, both in the comparison across and within districts. I find corroborating evidence that these municipalities are also around 30 percent more likely to have Holocaust memorials. I find no difference in the likelihood of observing a holocaust memorial across the occupation zone border, using the MSE-optimal bandwidth.³³ All regression analyses

³³Note that any fixed bandwidth below MSE-optimal yields a statistically significant difference in the likelihood of observing memorials across the occupation zone border of around 15 percent.

Table 4: Differences in Collective Memory

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	RD: Across Zones		RD: Across Districts		IV: Within Districts	
	β_H	SE	β_H	SE	β_H	SE
Militarist Street Names	-.379**	(.154)	-.305**	(.131)	.276	(.254)
Victim Street Names	.1	(.089)	.358**	(.163)	.608**	(.28)
Holocaust Memorial	.049	(.035)	.31***	(.103)	.291**	(.137)

This table presents estimates examining differences in collective memory. Columns 1-2 examine neighboring municipalities across the French-American occupation zone border. Columns 3-4 examine neighboring municipalities across high and low denazification court district borders in the US occupation zone controlling for district×district fixed effects; observations are sampled with replacement. Columns 5-6 examine neighboring municipalities within court districts. Columns 1, 3, and 5 display the estimates. Columns 2, 4, and 6 display standard errors. Rows are organized by outcomes. “Militarist Street Names” is the number of street names commemorating militarists and supporters of National Socialism. “Victim Street Names” is the number of victim named streets. “Holocaust Memorial” is an indicator for the presence of a Holocaust memorial. All regressions control for the total number of streets in a given municipality. The IV-specification controls for contemporary population (\ln), the share of protestants, foreigners, unemployed, and the population growth rate 1950-2017. MSE-optimal bandwidths and bias-corrected estimates are implemented following [Calonico et al. \(2017\)](#). Robust standard errors are clustered at the district and municipal level, respectively

control for the total number of streets per municipality.

4.5 Persistence

This subsection examines the impact of denazification on contemporary voting outcomes. Table 5 shows that historical variation in denazification predicts contemporary vote for the Alternative for Germany (AfD). In two out of three identification strategies, I find that a one standard deviation change in denazification is associated with a one percentage point lower vote share for the AfD on average. This finding provides suggestive evidence that the residual latent demand for nationalist policies can be reactivated by new political entrants. Note that the result across occupation zones is not robust to clustering standard errors at the district level using plug-in residual variance estimation.

Furthermore, using turnout data in all European elections since 1979, I observe that municipalities with a higher level of denazification exhibit a two percentage point increase in turnout for European elections. This result suggests that the effect of denazification extends beyond national elections and had implications for supranational elections.³⁴

³⁴For future research, this raises the question of whether the shift away from nationalist policies favored

Table 5: Persistent Differences in Voting Behavior

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	RD: Across Zones		RD: Across Districts		IV: Within Districts	
	β_H	SE	β_H	SE	β_H	SE
AfD Vote Share	-.829*	(.498)	.922	(.801)	-1.61**	(.645)
Turnout in European Elections	2.469***	(.652)	-1.068	(.91)	2.207*	(1.241)

This table presents estimates examining long-term differences in voting behavior. Columns 1-2 examine neighboring municipalities across the French-American occupation zone border. Columns 3-4 examine neighboring municipalities across high and low denazification court district borders in the US occupation zone controlling for district \times district fixed effects; observations are sampled with replacement. Columns 5-6 examine neighboring municipalities within court districts, controlling for contemporary population (ln), the share of protestants, foreigners, unemployed, the population growth rate 1950-2017, and controls as listed in Table 3. Columns 1, 3, and 5 display the estimates. Columns 2, 4, and 6 display standard errors. Rows are organized by outcomes. “AfD Vote Share” is the vote share for the Alternative for Germany in federal elections from 2013 to 2021. “Turnout European Elections” is the turnout in European Parliament elections from 1979 to 2019. All specifications include election-year fixed effects. MSE-optimal bandwidths and bias-corrected estimates are implemented following [Calonico et al. \(2017\)](#). Robust standard errors are clustered at the district and municipality level using the ten nearest neighbors.

5 Mass vs. Elite Denazification

The results raise the question of how denazification shaped political behavior. One possibility is that denazification changed the demand for nationalist politics in the population at large. Yet another explanation is that the political supply changed across my comparisons. First, it is important to note that my analysis focuses on the party list vote in federal elections. Voters, thus, face the same candidates and results hold even within electoral districts. Still, it is conceivable that denazification affected the supply of former elites through other channels. Indeed, prominent accounts of transitional justice suggest that either purges or lustrations of elites can be a key factor shaping trajectories after authoritarianism ([Huntington 1993](#)). Purges prior to and elite lustrations coinciding with denazification might have limited their subsequent organizational capacity. Or, by contrast, they could have fueled a backlash in places where many were purged.

Guided by these observations, I explore evidence on the former positions and ranks of over 370,000 individuals under denazification and use data on all internees in the US occupation zone. The fact that I do neither find differences in former elites under denazification nor in the share of internees, suggests that elites do not drive the observed differences. In contrast, post-nationalist forms of political identification.

I document variation across non-elites central to the dissemination of local norms.

Table 6 presents estimates examining differences in denazification by profession and rank in the US-occupation zone using a regression discontinuity across court district boundaries (columns 1-3) and an instrumental variable analysis within districts (columns 4-6). Panel A. in Table 6 indicates that there was no difference in the likelihood of denazification of former elites in top administrative, police, (para-)military, and party positions (columns 1, 3). Rather, a statistically significant difference is observable with respect to the denazification share of those who do not fall into one of the presumed incrimination categories under the Law of Liberation. These are cases where the level of incrimination is not readily inferred by occupation alone, underlining the role of evaluators' idiosyncratic effort in driving variation in denazification across districts. This finding aligns with studies that highlight the importance of transparency mechanisms in uncovering less overt forms of collaboration after authoritarianism ([Nalepa 2022](#)).

Panel B analyzes differences by sectors and documents strong differences in the denazification share in the manufacturing and the education sector, both across and within court districts. While manufacturing constituted the single largest category (around 1/3 of all denazification cases), teachers were “disproportionately targeted” by Nazi propaganda and “strongly represented” in the Nazi party base ([Kater 1985](#); [Falter 2020](#); [Voigtländer and Voth 2015](#)). By 1937, over 95% of all teachers had joined the National Socialist Teachers’ League ([Feiten 1981](#); [Welch 1993](#)). These findings are consistent with research emphasizing the norm-setting role of denazification. Higher denazification among indoctrinated peers sent a stronger signal that expressing nationalist beliefs became taboo (relatedly see [Bénabou and Tirole 2011](#)). Yet past norms persist where groups previously exposed to authoritarian norms are left out.

If denazification changed the demand for nationalist politics at large, a natural question is which features drove the wider population to adopt new norms. A central debate in the literature on the institutional design of transitional justice pertains to punishment ([Dancy et al. 2019](#)). How harsh, if at all, should former supporters be punished? Punishment might deter future behavior by signaling its cost. Yet a fear is that sanctions might trigger counter-reactions, especially in a subset of formerly strong supporters ([Huntington 1993](#)).

The evidence on internment in the US occupation zone in Panel C suggests limited

Table 6: Differences across Professions and Ranks

	(1) RD: Across Districts			(4) IV: Within Districts		
	β	SE	BW	β	SE	Mean
<i>Panel A. Denazification of Elites</i>						
Share in Top Categories (std.)	-.084	(.139)	22	.394	(.377)	.012
Share in No Category (std.)	.988***	(.016)	15	.955***	(.033)	.235
<i>Panel B. Denazification across Sectors</i>						
Share in Agriculture (std.)	.735***	(.157)	20	-.766	(.531)	.04
Share in Industry and Manufacturing (std.)	.534***	(.154)	12	1.535***	(.52)	.075
Share in Trade and Services (std.)	-.207	(.264)	17	1.448***	(.506)	.02
Share in State (std.)	.255	(.198)	15	.684**	(.328)	.028
Share in Education (std.)	.859***	(.237)	11	.874**	(.375)	.013
<i>Panel C. Internment</i>						
Share Internees	-.086	(.054)	22	-.004	(.157)	.307

This table presents regression discontinuity and instrumental variable estimates examining differences in denazification by profession and rank. Columns 1-3 examine neighboring municipalities across high and low denazification court district borders in the US occupation zone controlling for district \times district fixed effects. Columns 4-5 examine neighboring municipalities within districts. The specifications are the same as in Figure 2 but use standardized denazification shares by ranks and professions as independent variables. Recall, that Table 2 showed no differences in the share of internees across districts, suggesting that prior purges of former elites do not drive the observed differences. Similarly, Panel A examines differences for cases that fall into suspected incrimination categories I, II, and b under the Law of Liberation and those that do not. Panel B estimates differences in denazification across sectors. Panel C analyzes differences in the share of internees. Column 6 displays the mean share of the respective groups in the sample. MSE-optimal bandwidths and bias-corrected estimates are implemented following Calonico et al. (2017). Robust standard errors are clustered at the district and municipal level, respectively.

differences in an elite purge and particularly severe form of punishment.³⁵ More generally, while denazification courts could impose sanctions, the vast majority remained unpunished.³⁶ Of those who were sentenced, most received very minor sentences, were exonerated by subsequent amnesties or had their sentence revoked by a court of appeal (Niethammer 1982; Frei 2002). The facts that most people under denazification were not punished and that my findings hold comparing municipalities subject to the same denazification courts suggest that strong punishment was unlikely to be a leading causal factor in my comparisons.³⁷ By contrast, the absence of punishment might have allowed people to adapt

³⁵ Internment was interpreted as a form of advance punishment by denazification courts. As a result, the few denazification cases that resulted in prison sentences were considered served (Niethammer 2016, p. 107).

³⁶ Only 0.01 percent of the population in the US and French occupation zone were initially put in the top two offender categories Fürstenau (1969, p. 228).

³⁷ At the same time, the ex-ante possibility of punishment could have been an important feature of the process. In Appendix B, I find that the main effect is concentrated in places closer to internment camps. Further, it is instructive to note that mere reflection in the form of filing a denazification questionnaire was

personal narratives in ways consistent with the new social norm ([Leßau 2020](#); [Herbert 2019](#); [Frei 2002](#)). Denazification, thus, did not root out the bad apples. But denazification was indicative of an equilibrium in which nationalist policies increasingly became taboo.

This view and finding is consistent with prior work which has shown that German states with more denazification cases without punishment are associated with higher democratic support and lower anti-semitism ([Capoccia and Pop-Eleches 2020](#); [Mohr et al. 2019](#)). More generally, the results support recent research emphasizing that amnesties and prosecutions both can work ([Dancy et al. 2019](#)); and qualify a dichotomous understanding of transitional justice as a choice to “forgive and forget, or prosecute and punish” ([Huntington 1993](#)).

6 Political Equilibria

It is important to note that the findings originate from a specific intervention in a specific context. Several observations are relevant. First, Germany transitioned into fascism democratically. Voters and mass movements enabled the creation of the political machinery. Second, Germany lost the war. The total defeat loosened domestic political economy constraints on transitional justice. Third, the transition to democracy happened against the backdrop of sustained economic growth, aligning incentives across past political affiliations.

Notwithstanding these considerations, Germany’s political development is remarkable upon comparison. Consider Austria and Japan. Both countries lost the war and experienced strong economic growth afterward. Yet, in contrast to Germany, mass transitional justice remained limited, and ‘liberal’ parties continue to influence politics and collective memory along nationalist platforms. Critically, these observations raise the possibility that Germany’s coming to terms with its past was not inevitable. My analysis provides a possible perspective on how Germany evolved from a collective of former Nazis and bystanders into a society that has virtually institutionalized remembering its past – a past that shapes and constrains the political feasible up to the present ([Katzenstein 1997](#); [Olick and Levy 1997](#)).

unlikely to have caused the observed electoral differences, at least not within the US occupation zone. While the entire adult population of the US occupation zone had to file a questionnaire, it was only when a case was initiated that punishment became possible and differences in voting materialized.

7 Conclusion

In his ‘*Guidelines for Democratizers*’, Huntington (1993) issued a clear warning to new democracies: “do not attempt to prosecute authoritarian officials for human rights violations” and that “if replacement occurred and you feel it is morally and politically desirable, prosecute the leaders of the authoritarian regime [...] while making clear that you will not prosecute middle- and lower-ranking officials.” My paper reconsiders the role of mass transitional justice by analyzing one of its most canonical cases.

Denazification constituted the largest transitional justice program in history and played a leading role in shaping the emerging political landscape in postwar Germany. Variation in the extent of denazification across occupation zones, across districts, and within districts initially predict voting patterns for nationalist policies. Where the demand for nationalist policies was attenuated, norms changed. Places with higher denazification saw more Holocaust memorials and more Victim street names. Consistent with a view that denazification worked through norms, I find that differences in denazification were not driven by former elites but by wider groups previously indoctrinated and central to the dissemination of local norms. The results suggest that the wider public, not just elites, can be a target of transitional justice and respond in ways that shape political demand and the evolution of social norms.

Around the world, new democracies confront not only powerful prior elites but also face difficult choices about how to deal with supporters and followers. While the decision to ‘do nothing’ need not have direct consequences for the functioning of democracy, it can return to shape politics as prior norms of political identification may endure. In this sense, mass transitional justice can be understood as part of a broader effort to confront authoritarian legacies. Further analyses of the effects of other interventions on breaking the persistence of authoritarian legacies are an important area for future study. A key question for this research will be: if a prior political identity becomes taboo by what is it replaced? Or, perhaps more important, what conditions facilitate the adoption of norms? In Germany, the absence of punishment possibly allowed people to adopt personal narratives consistent with a post-nationalist identity. A better understanding of the individual-level mechanisms through which interventions enforce new norms will not only help to inform their design, but might also shed light on the dynamic construction of political norms and identities.

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Appendices

A Data

Table A1: Summary Statistics

	(1) Mean	(2) SD	(3) Min	(4) Max	(5) N
FDP Vote Share 1949	16.19	(12.84)	0.00	66.01	1101
CDU Vote Share 1949	50.64	(23.88)	5.41	100.00	1101
SPD Vote Share 1949	18.31	(10.87)	0.00	58.68	1101
AFD Mean Vote Share	9.47	(2.09)	4.01	17.36	1101
Turnout European Elections (Mean)	56.11	(4.56)	44.46	82.68	1101
Militarist Street Names	0.34	(0.76)	0.00	6.00	1101
Victim Street Names	0.23	(0.79)	0.00	10.00	1101
Holocaust Memorial	0.13	(0.34)	0.00	1.00	1101
Denazification (%)	0.22	(0.07)	0.06	0.46	808
Share in Top Categories (std.)	-0.00	(1.00)	-2.35	4.79	366
Share in No Category (std.)	0.00	(1.00)	-2.16	3.38	366
Share in Agriculture (std.)	-0.00	(1.00)	-1.31	6.36	366
Share in Industry (std.)	0.00	(1.00)	-2.23	4.63	366
Share in Trade (std.)	-0.00	(1.00)	-1.88	3.63	366
Share in Civil Service (std.)	0.00	(1.00)	-2.03	4.15	366
Share in Education (std.)	0.00	(1.00)	-2.27	4.77	366
Share of Internees	0.36	(0.41)	0.00	3.02	516
Population 1950 (ln)	7.93	(1.05)	5.01	13.12	1101
Male Population (%)	46.68	(1.66)	25.54	60.24	1101
Protestant 1950 (%)	44.80	(34.12)	0.86	98.51	1101
Industrial Employment 1950 (%)	38.52	(12.57)	6.37	71.89	1101
Worker Share 1950 (%)	23.26	(5.72)	8.51	45.30	1101
Refugees 1950 (%)	14.61	(7.55)	0.90	37.41	1101
Firms Dismantled	0.07	(0.50)	0.00	9.00	1101
City Indicator	0.28	(0.45)	0.00	1.00	1101
Population Growth 1950-2017 (%)	0.83	(0.80)	-0.47	11.79	1101
Population 2017 (ln)	8.46	(1.09)	4.61	13.28	1101
Protestants 2011 (%)	33.03	(17.43)	3.26	80.79	1101
Foreigners 2011 (%)	6.75	(3.83)	0.00	29.98	1101
Unemployment 2017 (%)	1.55	(0.51)	0.00	3.79	1101
Population 1933 (ln)	8.34	(0.80)	7.25	12.94	370
Urban Population 1933 (%)	80.81	(15.20)	25.63	98.71	370
Protestant 1925 (%)	52.97	(37.79)	0.37	99.29	383
Jewish 1925 (%)	0.49	(1.12)	0.00	9.17	383
NSDAP Members (ln)	1.36	(1.07)	0.05	5.40	293
NSDAP Mean Vote Share	20.00	(8.64)	0.00	70.02	379
DVP Mean Vote Share	3.90	(3.11)	0.06	25.45	398
DDP Mean Vote Share	10.87	(6.63)	0.43	35.92	396
Zentrum Mean Vote Share	25.44	(24.42)	0.06	86.11	398

This table presents summary statistics on municipal-level variables.

B Heterogeneity

In this section, I use data on the distance to internment camps to investigate one potential channel through which denazification acquired its effect. Although multiple channels may be relevant, I focus on the impact of the geographical proximity to internment camps, which possibly interacted with denazification by elevating the perceived threat of denazification.

Figure B1 presents estimates examining heterogeneity in the response to denazification by the distance to internment camps. I fully interact the three empirical designs linearly with the distance to internment camps and analyze the effect of denazification on the FDP vote share in 1949. Across specifications, I consistently detect that the impact of denazification was stronger in areas situated closer to internment camps. This finding is consistent with a hypothesis that denazification prompted conformity or caution, especially in places where the threat of denazification was more credible initially. In places further away from internment camps, the necessity to adjust political identities may have seemed less immediate.

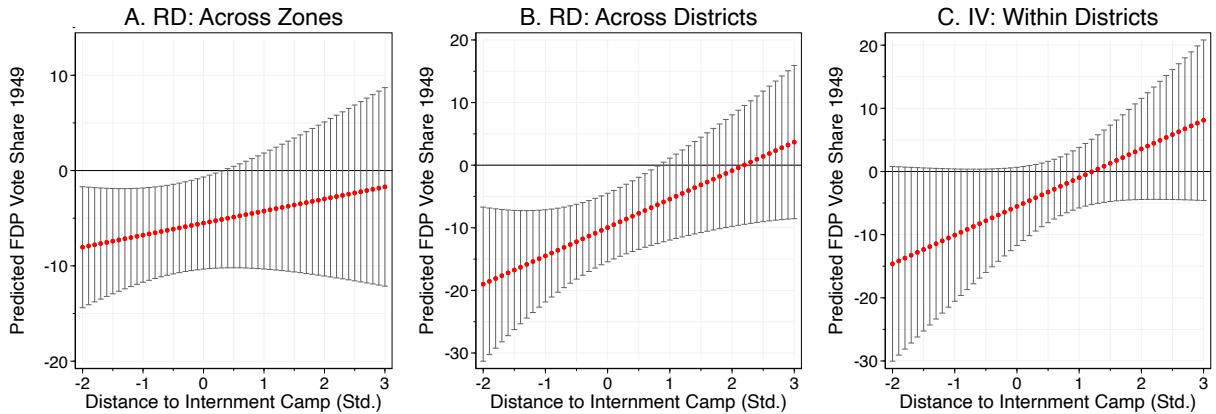


Figure B1: Heterogeneity in Denazification Effect by Distance to Internment Camps

This graph presents estimates examining heterogeneity in the response to denazification distance to internment camps. The results derive from a linearly interacted the designs with distance to internment camps. The outcome is FDP vote share in 1949. The Panel A and B display results from the regression discontinuity across occupation zones and districts, respectively. Panel C shows estimates from the instrumental variable analysis within districts.

C Robustness

C.1 Bandwidth

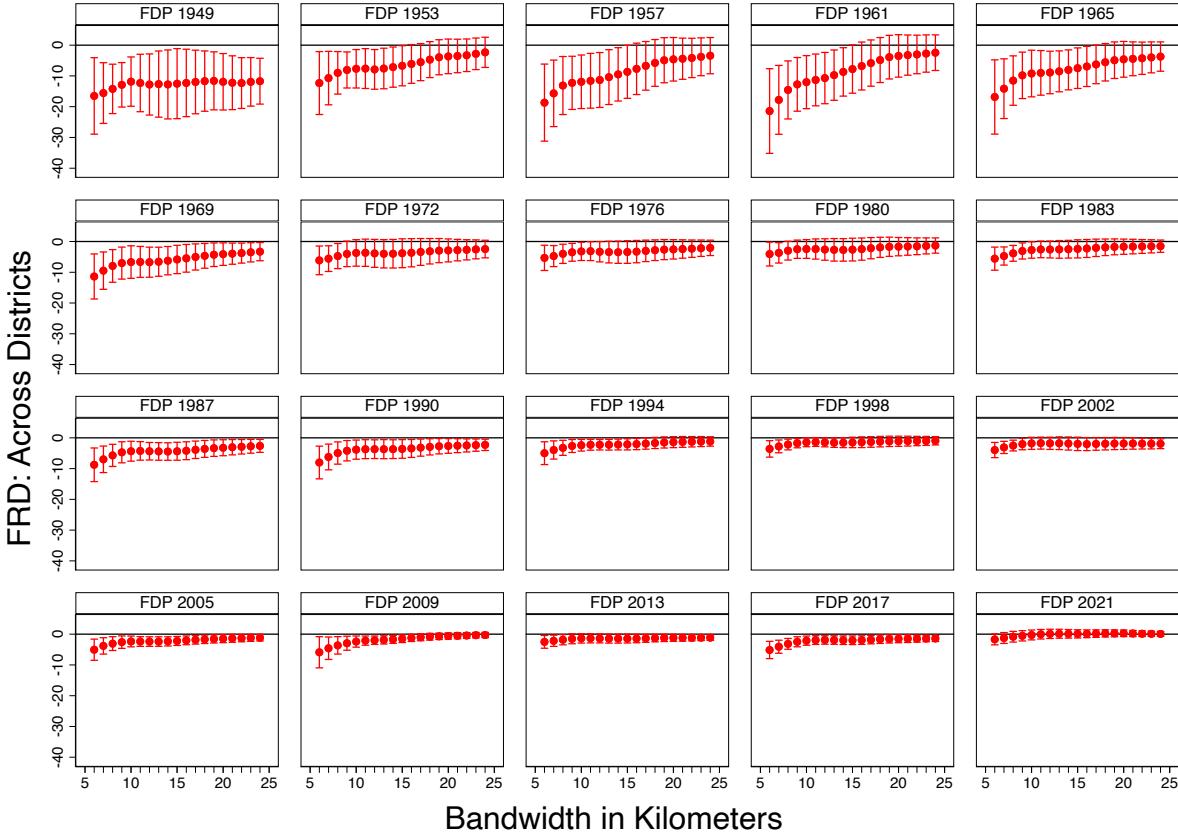


Figure C1: Fuzzy RD across Allied Occupation Zones

This graph plots fuzzy regression discontinuity estimates examining differences in political behavior between neighboring municipalities across district borders within the US occupation zone for varying bandwidths. The outcome is the vote share for all major parties from 1949 to 2021. The instrument is whether a municipality is in a high denazification district. Municipal-level denazification is standardized and results display the effect of a one SD (6 pp.) change in denazification. Robust standard errors are clustered at the district level.

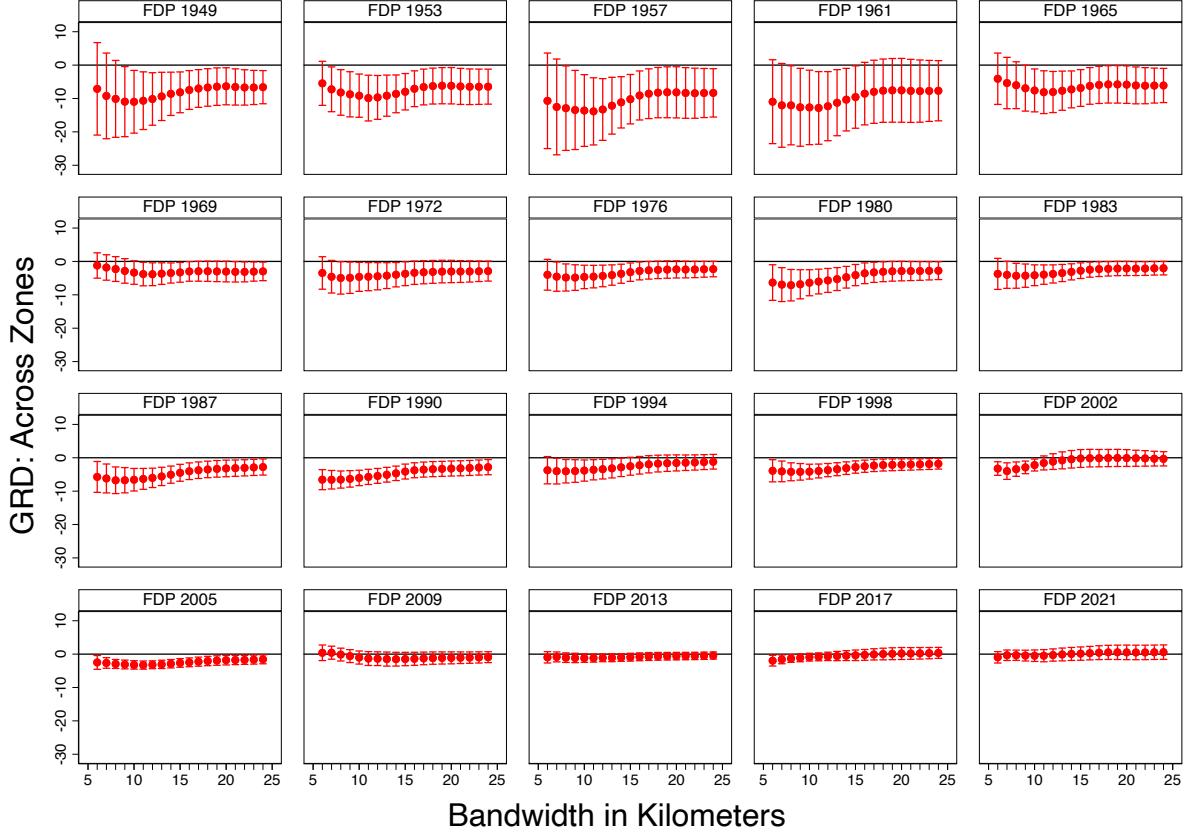


Figure C2: Fuzzy RD across Court Districts

This graph plots fuzzy regression discontinuity estimates examining differences in political behavior between neighboring municipalities across district borders within the US occupation zone for varying bandwidths. The outcome is the vote share for all major parties from 1949 to 2021. The instrument is whether a municipality is in a high denazification district. Robust standard errors are clustered at the district level.

Table C1: Robustness to Different Bandwidths

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Occupation Zone Border	Court District Border	β_H	SE
MSE-optimal	-5.935***	(2.165)	-10.529**	(4.271)
CER-optimal	-6.006***	(1.899)	-9.911**	(3.961)
5 Kilometers	-5.923	(7.852)	-13.394	(9.848)
10 Kilometers	-9.23**	(3.82)	-8.744*	(4.989)
15 Kilometers	-7.332***	(2.397)	-9.899*	(5.408)
20 Kilometers	-5.609***	(1.852)	-9.514**	(4.196)
25 Kilometers	-5.772***	(1.611)	-9.205***	(3.249)
30 Kilometers	-5.24***	(1.89)	-8.459***	(2.621)

This table presents regression discontinuity estimates examining robustness of the main result to using different bandwidths. Robust standard errors are clustered at the district level.

C.2 Polynomials

Table C2: Robustness to Different Polynomials

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Occupation Zone Border			Court District Border		
	β_H	SE	BW	β_H	SE	BW
Linear Polynomial	-7.187***	(2.787)	30	-10.529**	(4.271)	11
Quadratic Polynomial	-6.208***	(1.851)	28	-9.847**	(4.324)	24
Cubic Polynomial	-6.308***	(1.879)	36	-9.45**	(4.811)	37

This table presents regression discontinuity estimates examining robustness of the main result to using different polynomials. Robust standard errors are clustered at the district level.

C.3 Standard Errors

Table C3: Robustness to Different Variance Estimators

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Occupation Zone Border			Court District Border		
	β_H	SE	BW	β_H	SE	BW
Clustered SE (Municipal-Level)	-7.3***	(1.811)	33	-9.844***	(2.973)	25
Clustered SE (District-Level)	-5.935***	(2.165)	25	-12.604***	(4.278)	11
Robust SE	-7.286***	(1.807)	33	-9.467***	(2.75)	26
Robust SE (5 Nearest-Neighbors)	-7.397***	(1.803)	34	-9.44***	(2.813)	25

This table presents regression discontinuity estimates examining robustness of the main result to using different variance estimators.

C.4 Outliers

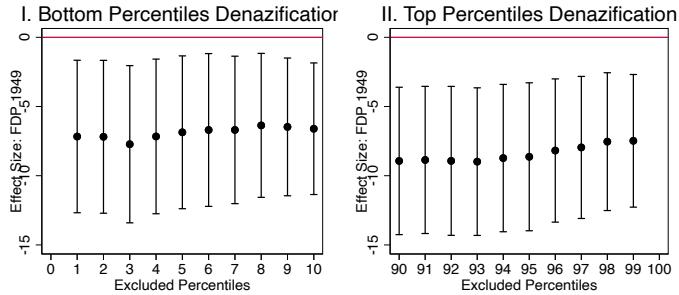
In Figure C3, I assess the robustness of the main findings to the exclusion of outliers in terms of denazification. Specifically, I investigate the consistency of the estimates for the main variable, FDP's vote share in 1949, when excluding the bottom and top ten percentiles of denazification.

Panel A focuses on the regression discontinuity analysis across occupation zones, where I restrict the data to fall within a 30-kilometer distance to the boundary before denazification percentiles are calculated. Panel B examines the regression discontinuity across districts. Panel C presents the results for the instrumental variable (IV) analysis within districts.

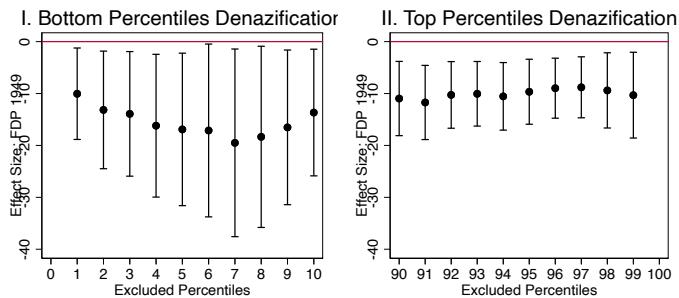
The results demonstrate that the estimates remain stable and are largely unaffected by the exclusion of outliers.

Robustness: Excluding Outliers

A. RD across Zones



B. RD across Districts



C. IV within Districts

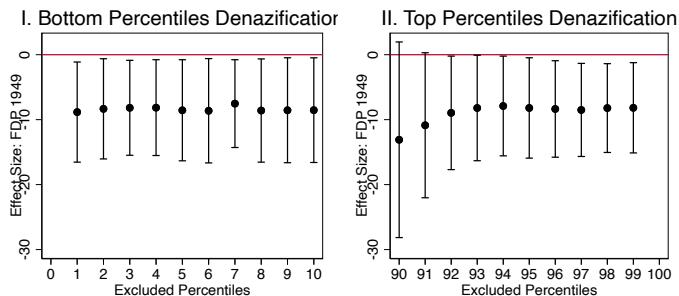


Figure C3: Robustness to Excluding Outliers

This graph plots regression estimates examining the robustness of the main results to the exclusion of outliers in terms of denazification. The outcome is FDP vote share in 1949. Panel A explores the regression discontinuity across occupation zones, which restricts the data to fall within 30 kilometers along the boundary before calculating the denazification percentiles. Panel B investigates the regression discontinuity across districts, and Panel C presents the results for the instrumental variable (IV) within districts. Within each panel, sub-panel I. and II. exclude the bottom and top ten percentiles in denazification, respectively.

C.5 Specification Check

In Figures C4-C6, I run a specification check reporting the distribution of t-curves and effect size derived from the three specifications using every possible combination of control variables, as specified in Section 4.3. The outcome is the main variable, the FDP's vote share in 1949.

The results indicate that the t-statistics is centered around 2 and the effect size stays with the mass of estimates centered around -6. results to the order in which the control variables are sequentially included.

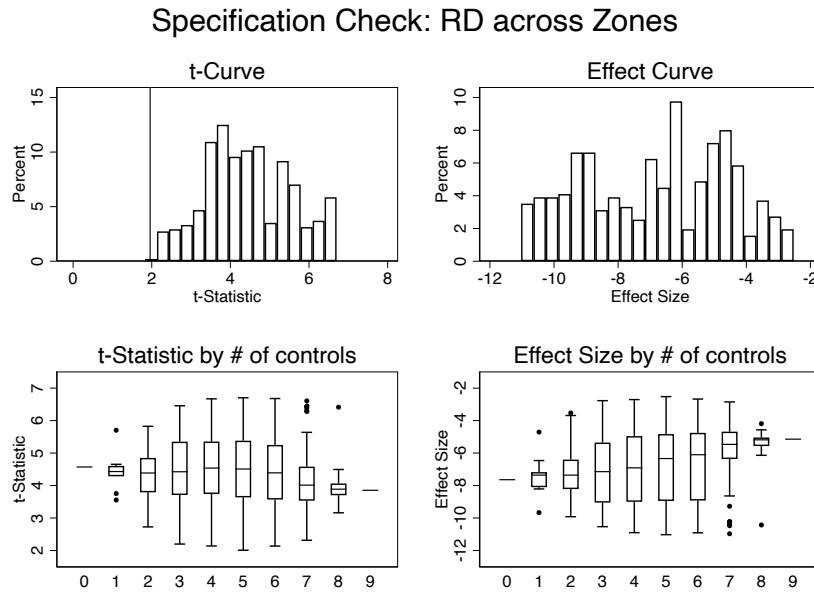


Figure C4: Robustness to Permuting Controls in RD across Zones

This graph plots regression estimates examining the robustness of the main regression discontinuity across districts results to different specifications using all possible combinations of controls. The outcome is FDP vote share in 1949. The upper-left panel plots the distribution of t-Statistics. The upper-right panel display the distribution of effect sizes. The lower panels show t-Statistics (left) and effect sizes (right) by the number of controls included.

Specification Check: RD across Districts

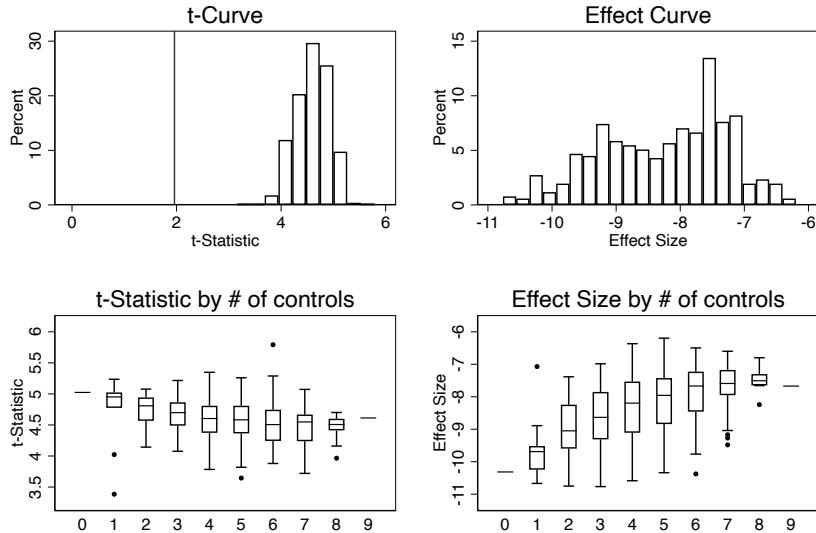


Figure C5: Robustness to Permuting Controls in RD across Districts

This graph plots regression estimates examining the robustness of the main regression discontinuity across districts results to different specifications using all possible combinations of controls. The outcome is FDP vote share in 1949. The upper-left panel plots the distribution of t-Statistics. The upper-right panel display the distribution of effect sizes. The lower panels show t-Statistics (left) and effect sizes (right) by the number of controls included.

Specification Check: IV within Districts

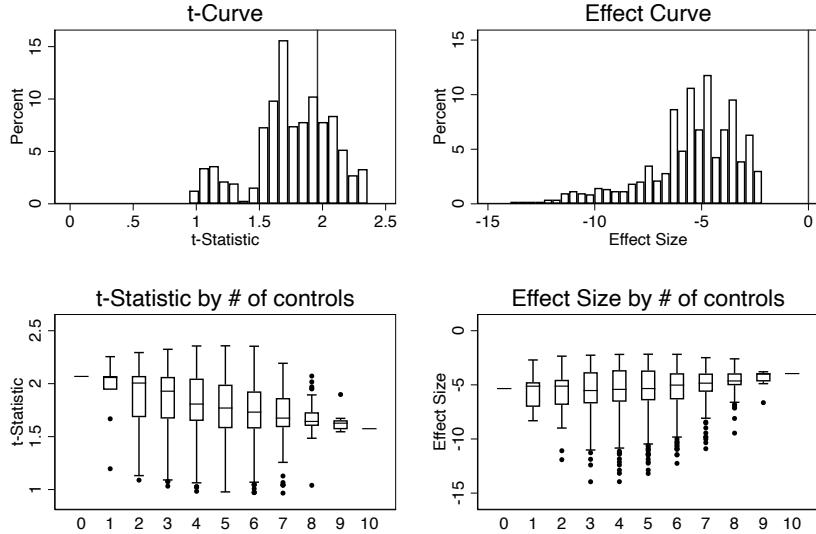


Figure C6: Robustness to Permuting Controls in IV

This graph plots regression estimates examining the robustness of the main IV results to different specifications using all possible combinations of controls. The outcome is FDP vote share in 1949. The upper-left panel plots the distribution of t-Statistics. The upper-right panel display the distribution of effect sizes. The lower panels show t-Statistics (left) and effect sizes (right) by the number of controls included.

C.6 Full Instrumental Variable Tables

In Table C4, I report the coefficients on all covariates in the instrumental variable analysis.

Table C4: Instrumental Variables – Differences within Districts

	(1)	(2)	(3)
<i>A. IV Estimates</i>			
<i>Outcome: FDP Vote Share Before 1970</i>			
Denazification per Voting Population (SD)	-5.53** (2.58)	-6.73** (2.62)	-5.04** (2.19)
Latitude	0.44 (10.95)	1.99 (7.63)	
Longitude	12.38 (17.69)	-8.55 (10.45)	
Distance to District Border (km)	-0.20** (0.09)	0.08 (0.06)	
Distance to Stuttgart (km)	-0.22** (0.09)	-0.10 (0.07)	
Distance to Karlsruhe (km)	0.01 (0.14)	0.17 (0.11)	
Distance to Mannheim (km)	0.03 (0.21)	-0.13 (0.13)	
Population 1950 (ln)	0.44 (0.44)		
Male Population (%)	0.11 (0.28)		
Protestant 1950 (%)	0.24*** (0.03)		
Refugees 1950 (%)	0.10 (0.06)		
Industrial Employment 1950 (%)	-0.06 (0.06)		
Worker Share 1950 (%)	-0.27** (0.13)		
Firms Dismantled	0.35 (0.36)		
Share of Internees	0.58 (0.89)		
City Indicator	2.18* (1.12)		
<i>B. IV First Stage</i>			
Distance to District Court (km)	-0.03*** (0.01)	-0.04*** (0.01)	-0.03*** (0.01)
F-Statistic	16.04	16.11	10.38
Observations	516	516	516
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Election FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Geographic Controls	No	Yes	Yes
Controls 1950	No	No	Yes

This table presents IV estimates examining differences in the FDP vote share in elections before 1970 between neighboring municipalities within districts within the US occupation zone and reports coefficients on all covariates.

Table C5: Instrumental Variables – Differences within Districts

	Outcomes									
	Collective Memory					Persistence				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)					
<i>A. IV Estimates</i>										
Denazification per Population (SD)	0.28	(0.25)	0.61**	(0.28)	0.29**	(0.14)	-1.49**	(0.61)	2.29*	(1.20)
Streets	1.07**	(0.44)	4.30***	(0.65)	0.60***	(0.19)				
Latitude	-0.18	(0.86)	-0.86	(0.91)	0.12	(0.44)	4.46**	(1.82)	0.42	(4.04)
Longitude	0.40	(0.98)	0.64	(1.28)	0.77	(0.66)	-2.46	(2.50)	-3.19	(6.81)
Distance to District Border (10 km)	-0.01	(0.07)	-0.06	(0.07)	0.06*	(0.03)	-0.15	(0.16)	-0.08	(0.29)
Distance to Stuttgart (10 km)	-0.13	(0.10)	0.14*	(0.08)	0.03	(0.04)	0.37*	(0.19)	-0.45	(0.39)
Distance to Karlsruhe (10 km)	0.09	(0.12)	-0.10	(0.13)	-0.12*	(0.07)	-0.42	(0.31)	0.28	(0.66)
Distance to Mannheim (10 km)	0.01	(0.11)	0.14	(0.15)	0.10	(0.08)	-0.29	(0.28)	-0.52	(0.78)
Population 1950 (ln)	0.27	(0.30)	0.25	(0.27)	0.32*	(0.17)	-1.47**	(0.74)	3.16**	(1.33)
Male Population (%)	0.02	(0.03)	0.02	(0.03)	0.01	(0.02)	0.03	(0.07)	-0.10	(0.15)
Protestant 1950 (%)	0.00	(0.00)	-0.00	(0.00)	-0.00	(0.00)	0.01	(0.01)	-0.01	(0.02)
Refugees 1950 (%)	0.02**	(0.01)	-0.02**	(0.01)	0.00	(0.00)	0.03	(0.02)	-0.02	(0.03)
Industrial Employment 1950 (%)	0.00	(0.01)	-0.01	(0.02)	-0.00	(0.00)	-0.01	(0.02)	-0.00	(0.03)
Worker Share 1950 (%)	-0.01	(0.01)	0.01	(0.03)	-0.01	(0.01)	0.02	(0.05)	0.04	(0.07)
Firms Dismantled	-0.10	(0.10)	0.01	(0.11)	-0.13**	(0.05)	-0.10	(0.10)	-0.23	(0.23)
Share of Internees	-0.08	(0.07)	-0.15*	(0.09)	-0.06	(0.04)	0.46**	(0.22)	-0.55	(0.44)
City Indicator	0.03	(0.10)	-0.24**	(0.11)	-0.07	(0.06)	0.27	(0.23)	-0.36	(0.47)
Population 2017 (ln)	-0.04	(0.26)	-0.42*	(0.25)	-0.22	(0.16)	1.10	(0.74)	-4.68***	(1.32)
Protestants 2011 (%)	-0.01	(0.01)	-0.01	(0.01)	-0.01	(0.00)	0.03	(0.02)	-0.09**	(0.04)
Foreigners 2011 (%)	0.01	(0.02)	0.01	(0.02)	-0.01	(0.01)	0.00	(0.04)	-0.11	(0.09)
Unemployment 2017 (%)	-0.05	(0.15)	-0.29*	(0.15)	-0.04	(0.08)	2.05***	(0.38)	-2.83***	(0.69)
Population Growth 1950-2017 (%)	0.08	(0.11)	0.15*	(0.09)	0.08	(0.06)	-0.43*	(0.25)	0.93*	(0.48)
<i>B. IV First Stage</i>										
Distance to District Court (km)	-0.03***	(0.01)	-0.03***	(0.01)	-0.03***	(0.01)	-0.03***	(0.01)	-0.03***	(0.01)
F-Statistic	10.24		10.24		10.24		11.88		12.17	
Observations	516		516		516		4644		1548	
District FE	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	
Election FE	-		-		Yes		Yes		Yes	
Geographic Controls	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	
Controls 1950	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	
Controls 2010	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	

This table presents IV estimates examining differences in collective memory and contemporary voting behavior between neighboring municipalities within districts within the US occupation zone and reports coefficients on all covariates. Outcomes are reported by columns: (1) the number of militarist street names, (2) victim street names, (3) Holocaust memorials, (4) AfD Vote Share 2013-2021, (5) Turnout in European Parliament Elections 1979-2019.

C.7 Contemporary Differences across Borders

Table C6: Contemporary Differences across Occupation Zone and District Borders

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
	A. Occupation Zone Border					B. Court District Border				
	β_H	SE	BW	N_L	N_H	β_H	SE	BW	N_L	N_H
<i>Contemporary</i>										
Population 2017 (ln)	-.12	(.25)	30	187	214	-.17	(.14)	21	402	447
Protestants 2011 (%)	-.31	(8.19)	35	213	239	-2.16	(2.56)	23	455	502
Foreigners 2011 (%)	-.05	(.92)	29	180	206	-.24	(.31)	20	391	428
Unemployment 2017 (%)	-.02	(.09)	28	178	201	-.05	(.07)	29	606	657
Population Growth 1950–2017 (%)	.15	(.19)	26	166	189	-.03	(.12)	22	435	478

This table presents regression discontinuity estimates examining political and economic differences between municipalities today. Columns 1-5 examine neighboring municipalities across the French-American occupation zone border. Columns 6-10 examine neighboring municipalities across high and low denazification court district borders in the US occupation zone controlling for district \times district fixed effects; observations are sampled with replacement. Columns 1 and 6 show the estimates on an indicator for “High Denazification” municipalities. Columns 2 and 7 display standard errors. Columns 3 and 8 show the optimal bandwidth in kilometers. Columns 4-5 and 9-10 provide the number of observations around the cutoff. Rows are organized by outcomes. MSE-optimal bandwidths and bias-corrected estimates are implemented following [Calonico et al. \(2017\)](#). Robust standard errors are clustered at the district level.

D History

This appendix provides further discussion on: (1) denazification, (2) nationalism in early postwar politics, (3) occupation zone borders.

D.1 Denazification

From 1945 to 1949, German denazification courts processed around 14 million denazification case files ([Leßau 2020](#)). Initially, the Allied control council set forth a denazification directive:

“All members of the Nazi Party who have been more than nominal participants in its activities and all other persons hostile to Allied purposes shall be removed from public and semi-public office, and positions of responsibility in important private undertakings. Such persons shall be replaced by persons who, by their political and moral qualities, are deemed capable of assisting in developing genuine democratic institutions in Germany. [...] German education shall be so controlled as to completely eliminate Nazi and militarist doctrines and to make possible the successful development of democratic ideas.”

Table D1: Denazification in the Occupation Zones

	US Zone	French Zone	British Zone	Soviet Zone
Population	16,779,600	5,879,000	21,886,900	17,180,400
Interned	95,250	18,963	68,500	67,197
of which released by 1947	44,244	8,040	34,000	7,214
Convicted as part of Nazi Organization	144,139	17,033	19,000	18,061
Questionnaires completed	13,500,000	669,068	2,144,000	-
Sentenced by Spruchkammern	950,126	669,068	2,041,454	-
Category I: Major Offenders	1,654	13	-	-
Category II: Offenders	22,122	938	-	-
Category III: Lesser Offenders	106,422	16,826	27,177	-
Category IV: Followers	485,057	298,789	222,028	-
Category V: Exonerated	18,454	3,489	1,191,930	-
Cases dropped	316,417	349,013	600,319	-

Table D1 summarizes aggregate statistics on internment and denazification across Allied occupation zones. The first row indicates the population of the respective zone. The following three variables depict the initial arrest phase. The next set of variables reflects outcomes during denazification. Population figures in 1946 come from the Statistisches Jahrbuch für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland (1952). Figures on internation come from Vollnhals [Vollnhals \(1991, p. 164f\)](#), the British figure is an estimate by [Wember \(1992, p. 367\)](#). Figures on denazification court charges and classifications come from [Vollnhals \(1991, p. 228\)](#), the British estimates were pooled for the first three categories and only contain cases after February 1947. Figures on the Questionnaires come from [Judt \(2005\)](#); there is no figure for the Soviet zone but estimates indicate that 850,000 former members of the NSDAP were registered and examined by the Soviets.

The actual implementation of denazification, however, varied across and within Allied occupation zones. In this subsection, I provide more detail on the major differences in denazification and related policies across Allied occupation zones. Table D1 displays aggregate statistics on initial internment and denazification across occupation zones.

D.1.1 Denazification in the US Occupation Zone

The American denazification program was by far the most comprehensive in scope ([Cohen 2006, p.9](#)). Initially, a highly punitive denazification policy was planned ([Biddiscombe 2007, p. 30f; Bloxham 2004, p. 27](#)). The Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) designed automatic arrest categories for high-ranking Nazi cadres from national to local group leaders, spanning a wide range of organizational affiliations including the SA, SS, SD, Gestapo, Hitler Youth, Peasant's League, Labor Front, and Nazi party members

who joined before 1933 ([Ziemke 1975](#), p. 379). By 1947, the US military has held 95,250 suspects in internment camps and sentenced 144,139 as members of criminal organizations. [Frei \(2002](#), p. 207) observes that internment affected public support for denazification: “[t]he fewer the number of war criminals sitting in Allied prisons, the more uncompromising the solidarity being expressed for them.”

The entire adult population of the US zone was subjected to a questionnaire about their political past (*Frage- und Meldebogen*). Completion rates were high as the questionnaire served as a basis for decisions pertaining to prosecution, employment restrictions, and access to food rations ([Olick 2005](#), p. 125). While being instrumental for the screening process, the questionnaire also “forced all respondents to reflect on their Nazi past; to reconsider their relationship with the regime and to rewrite their personal history” ([Dack 2016](#), p. 286).

The court trials in the US zone initially were comparatively punitive. Of the 950,126 cases that were initially sentenced by the denazification courts, 13.7 percent were classified in the three top offender categories. In comparison, the corresponding share in the French occupation zone amounted to 2.7 percent. Per 100000 inhabitants, the US zone has put 45 times as many individuals in the major offender category, 8 times as many in the offender category, and 2 times as many in the lesser offender category; yet only half as many in the lowest follower category, and was 3 times less likely to drop the case altogether. These harsher sentences also followed from a reversal of the burden of proof ([Vollnhals 1991](#), pp. 40ff). The defendants had to provide evidence in favor of their innocence. Punishment ended up, at times, being harsher for rank and file than for major perpetrators ([Herz 1948](#)).

Initial public support for denazification in the US zone soon backfired. In the US-occupied territories, public support decreased from 57 percent in 1946 to 17 percent by 1949 ([Mohr et al. 2019](#)). [Capoccia and Pop-Eleches \(2020\)](#) suggest that the perceived unfairness resulted in a backlash.³⁸ In 1946, Konrad Adenauer, who was to become the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic, demanded that those categorized Nazi followers should be left in peace.

³⁸[Leßau \(2020](#), pp. 436ff) cautions that attitudes towards denazification expressed in surveys might not accurately reflect the consequences of denazification. Theodor Adorno, for example, believed that the “indignation about denazification has relatively little to do with the matter at hand, but a lot to do with: the political and social ideology, the psychological makeup of the respondents”. Adorno thought that claims against denazification may have been exaggerated and be driven more by a sense of group conformity rather than genuine conviction. Further, respondents undergoing denazification are naturally inclined to respond negatively when asked about their evaluation of the process.

Adenauer claimed that “confronting Germans with the crimes of the Nazis—whether in trials, tribunals or reeducation projects—was more likely to provoke a nationalist backlash than induce contrition” ([Judt 2005](#), p. 55f).

Notwithstanding initial differences in the classification of denazification cases, it is important to note that most were not punished. By March 1946, large parts of the judicial denazification process were handed over to German courts yet supervision remained in the hands of the military government. During that time, many suspects who were initially placed in higher categories and thus subject to employment restrictions were reclassified to lower categories. Additionally, the amnesty laws implemented in 1949 and 1954 resulted in the clearing of charges for a large proportion of individuals who had been previously sentenced by the German courts. These laws led to the removal of the rulings made by the de-Nazification tribunals from their criminal records ([Herbert 2019](#), p. 535).

D.1.2 Denazification in the French Occupation Zone

Denazification was less broad in the French occupation zone ([Biddiscombe 2007](#); [Fürstenau 1969](#)). Initially, weak administrative capacity, and internal fights between military administration and government, other priorities³⁹, and a lack of planning⁴⁰, rendered initial attempts at denazification uncoordinated and largely ineffective.

In the first phase after the war, arresting high-ranking Nazis took priority but the lack of precise instructions to the officers on the ground made enforcement difficult. By 1947, the French have held 18,963 in internment and sentenced 17,033 for membership in a criminal organization.

For a short period after that, local committees were established that served as self-cleaning initiatives in which information about local Nazis was gathered. However, France eventually adopted the US’ legal approach to denazification. In contrast to the Americans, however, France did not follow the US by extending the denazification process to the entire

³⁹France’s priorities were fundamentally shaped by its recent war history. A war-ridden century with neighboring Germany left France to advocate for the fragmentation and decentralization of Germany. Further, the economic disruption brought on by the German occupation from 1940 to 1944, resulted in France’s strict insistence on reparation payments and de-industrialization efforts of the German territories under France’s occupation ([Grohnert 1991](#); [Willis 1962](#)).

⁴⁰In contrast to the British and Americans, the French had few formal plans to fall back on. Between the conference of Jalta, where the French were granted their zone, and the start of the military occupation lay a mere six weeks ([Henke 2010](#), p. 56).

adult population of their zone, not least because NSDAP membership per se was not seen as sufficient ground for further scrutiny ([Cohen 2006](#), p. 77). The denazification questionnaire was distributed more narrowly than in the US zone. Only around 669,000 questionnaires were completed. Of the 669,000 cases processed by the denazification courts, only 13 were classified as major offenders (the highest offender category). Another 938 were put in the second-highest category (offenders). In contrast to the US zone, those who awaited a decision by the courts didn't face any provisional employment restrictions ([Vollnhals 1991](#), p. 40f). In total, the courts in the French occupation zone dropped around 350,000 cases.

In consequence, the probability of being confronted with denazification, either directly or indirectly, was lower in the French occupation zone. Further, sentences within the same category tended to be harsher in the US-occupied territories. Those judged as followers escaped punishment en masse. On a per capita basis, eight times as many cases had been considered by the denazification courts in the US Zone relative to the French occupation zone; forty-five times as many cases were classified under the highest offender category; and eight times as many cases were put in the second-highest offender category.

When the purges and bans from the public and the private sector were enforced, it was done so with a particular focus on the public sector. In per capita terms, dismissals from public office roughly equaled the purges in the US zone. Much of this initiative was driven by efforts in Württemberg-Hohenzollern, the Western part of the French occupation zone ([Fürstenau 1969](#), p. 141). There, the social-democratic regional government enjoyed some degrees of freedom from May 1946 to spring of 1947. The key distinguishing feature was the political nature of the procedure; there was no judicial process and as such no right to appeal ([Cohen 2006](#), p. 80). District committees classified cases but all decisions had to be approved centrally by the state commissioner for political cleansing, Otto Künzel, and the French military government⁴¹. The partial autonomy of Württemberg-Hohenzollern notwithstanding, any decision had to run through the auspices of the French military government. Württemberg-Hohenzollern's special status, however, was short-lived; the right was revoked in spring of 1947 and the process was unified within the zone by strictly adhering to the US judicial-based procedure ([Cohen 2006](#), p. 80).

⁴¹Decisions taken by local cleansing committees were later translated into the American classification ([Vollnhals 1991](#), p. 42)

Further, years of collaboration between the Vichy regime and Nazi Germany left its mark. Some *collaborateurs* had formed ties with the Germans. Personal bribes and gifts were widespread and accepted as ‘personal reparation payment’ to avoid sanctions ([Fürstenau 1969](#), p. 137; [Friedmann 1947](#), p. 29; [Cohen 2006](#), p. 79).

Raymond Schmittlein, director-general for cultural affairs and public education in the French occupation zone from 1945 to 1951, later commented on the French approach to denazification: “Le tragique dans cette histoire, c'est que la dénazification n'a rien dénazifié” (cited in [Henke 2010](#), p. 7).

D.2 Occupation Zone Borders

When the Allies started negotiations on how to split up Germany in the Spring of 1943, the Western Allies had yet to set foot on the Atlantic coast, cross the Channel, and overcome the Alps. The first formal proposals set out to divide Germany into three parts: a North-Eastern, a North-Western, and a Southern zone. France, still subject to German occupation, was absent from these plans. A joint British-Soviet proposal allocating the South to the US was quickly counteracted by a US proposal putting the British in charge of the South (see Figure D1). The US’s unwillingness to agree to a US occupation of the South-West was informed by a fear of being stuck with a war-ridden France, that “will take a lot of nursing to bring it to the point of walking alone” (Roosevelt to Churchill in a telegram on the 7th February 1944 – cited in [Ziemke 1975](#), p. 118). France, Roosevelt feared, might fall into US responsibility through such an arrangement. The North-Western zone, in contrast, would guarantee a quick withdrawal through the North Sea. With the talks in a deadlock, it took another year and a handful of disheartened exchanges for a resolution to materialize.

While the negotiations over the zonal divisions were stuck, US troops rolled across France. General Eisenhower soon came to acknowledge that his troops would enter Germany sooner than he had expected. By September 1944, these facts on the ground pushed the US to accept the occupation of a Southern zone ([Ziemke 1975](#), p. 124).

By the end of 1944, however, the situation had changed. France was liberated; run by a provisional government; and determined to resume its place among the Allies ([Ziemke 1975](#), p. 129). At the conference of Jalta in February 1945, the three Allies conceded to de Gaulle’s

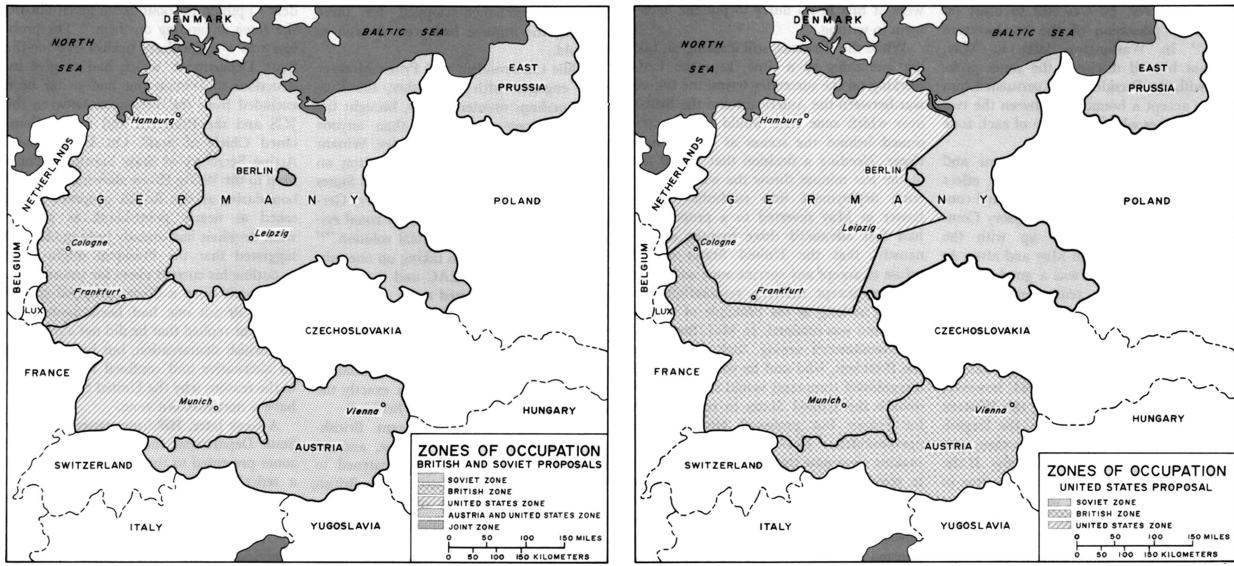


Figure D1: Occupation zones under the joint British-Soviet proposal (left) and the US counter proposal (right) from 1943 ([Ziemke 1975](#), p. 119).

demands of granting France a seat in the Allied Control Council and agreed to establish a fourth, French occupation zone. Given Stalin's reluctance to make territorial concessions, the French occupation zone was carved out of British and American territories. In contrast to the rest of the zones, the demarcation line in the South-West was drawn right through the middle of the two states *Baden* and *Württemberg*⁴² (see Figure 1).

The border between the French and the US zone in Baden and Württemberg was neither planned before the end of the war nor did it correspond to existing or historical borders; it was simply drawn along the highway *A8* between Karlsruhe and Ulm ([Willis 1962](#), p. 96). All districts that contained the highway were kept by the US, while those districts south of the highway were conceded to the French. The partition of South-West Germany was a result of logistical considerations by the US military government that outweighed a proclaimed aim to preserve historical borders: “The boundary between the French and American zones was to be drawn to leave in the American zone the main highway, or Autobahn, through Ulm-Stuttgart-Karlsruhe, as well as the trunk railroad. Administrative and traditional divisions were disregarded completely. The sole concern was to assure access under American control to the Middle Rhine region and the seaports” ([Moseley 1950](#), p. 600). Yet the French insisted

⁴²British persistence ensured the emergence of a minimal consensus regarding the preservation of existing state borders. The borders delimiting the respective zones should correspond to and respect the historical borders of the states and the Prussian provinces.

Table D2: Vote Share Correlation between the NSDAP and Postwar Parties

	(1) FPD	(2) CDU	(3) SPD	(4) BHE	(5) DP	(6) DRP	(7) NPD
NSDAP Vote Share 1933	0.316***	-0.276***	0.0325	0.00293	0.194***	0.209***	0.373***
Observations	322	322	322	322	322	322	322

This table presents correlation coefficients examining variation between the NSDAP vote share in 1933 and the average vote share of various postwar parties before 1970.

on consolidated control for the entire state of Baden. It was not until July 1945 “before the French accepted the zone as offered, with a provision for a review of the boundaries later” ([Ziemke 1975](#), p. 307). A review never took place.

D.3 Nationalism in Early Postwar Politics

Among major parties, the early postwar FDP had a contentious history with nationalistic politics in general and anti-Semitism in particular.

Alongside the radical right Deutsche Partei DP and Deutsche Reichspartei DRP, the FDP was the most vocal critique of denazification ([Kiani 2013](#), pp. 227ff). The early postwar FDP consistently demanded an end to denazification. On an election poster in 1949, the FDP propagated to end “incapacitation” and the “deprivation” of rights of those under denazification.⁴³ In September 1951, the FDP demanded a general amnesty of the ‘so-called war criminals.’ Together with DP and DRP, the FDP repeatedly put forward motions that either intended to weaken the denazification or demand general amnesty altogether ([Kiani 2013](#)).

Erich Mende, soon-to-be leader of the FDP and Vice-chancellor of Germany, threatened that he and two dozen other parliamentarians would reject the ratification of the EEC and German Treaties if a large number of war criminals were not released ([Leuschner 2005](#), p. 11). On festive occasions, Erich Mende wore the Knight’s Cross, the highest military honor in Nazi Germany. Mende, together with Zoglmann, would later establish the National-Liberale-Aktion, a nationalistic movement aimed at unifying nationalist movements across Germany.

⁴³Typography, color theme, and subtle spelling choices left little doubt as to who was targeted. The poster was black, red, and white, and used “ss” in italics to write “Schluss” (end), instead of using the common “ß”; a choice that resembled the former symbol of the Waffen-SS.

The presence and influence of former Nazis was particularly strong in the North-Rhine Westphalian FDP. The wing around Friedrich Middelhauve, deputy party leader from 1952 to 1956, worked out a “German program” which was to transform the FDP into a German national collective movement ([Leuschner 2005](#), p. 12). Part of this effort: Hans Fritzsche, former chief commentator of the NS radio and charged at the Nuremberg Trials. Shortly after, a circle of ex-Nazis around Werner Naumann, whom Hitler had chosen in his will to succeed Goebbels, attempted to infiltrate and ultimately capture the FDP in North-Rhine Westphalia. While the inner circle consisted of around 15 individuals, the outer circle spanned a network of more than 1000 supporters ([Baldow 2013](#)). In 1953, the British intervened and arrested the conspiring Naumann clique ([Buchna 2010](#)). Most other members of the circle, however, were allowed to remain in the party ([Baldow 2013](#)).

Despite this setback, the influence of former Nazis in the FDP was still growing. Among them: Ernst Achenbach, deputy leader of the FDP’s parliamentary group, defender of IG Farben at the Nuremberg Trials, and vocal campaigner for the general amnesty for all Nazi crimes. His legal assistant: *SS-Obergruppenführer* and Heydrich’s right-hand Werner Best. Two key figures of Achenbach’s entourage in the North-Rhine-Westphalian FDP were Wolfgang Diewerge, the personal assistant of Middelhauve, and Heinz Wilke. Wilke had been a full-time Hitler Youth leader in the Third Reich, Diewerge was even a holder of the “Blood Order,” i.e. a participant in the Hitler coup in 1923 ([Görtemaker and Safferling 2016](#), p. 341). Achenbach served as an FDP member in the parliament from 1957 to 1976. Shortly before his death it became known that he had participated in the deportation of Jews as an embassy official in Paris ([Leuschner 2005](#), p. 17).

While the FDP/DVP in Baden-Württemberg in the immediate postwar years was considered more liberal, its regional chapters in the formerly French occupied had a clear nationalistic outlook. The Southern Württemberg district repeatedly got into conflict with the more moderate parts of Northern Württemberg ([Adam 1979](#), p. 230). Eduard Leuze, leader of the regional association in southern Württemberg, until 1972 Member of the State Parliament of Baden-Württemberg, Minister of the Economy of Baden-Württemberg from 1960 to 1966, and Member of the FDP’s Federal Executive Committee. Leuze rejected denazification and tried to set the party on a nationalistic course as propagated by Middelhauve and Euler ([Adam 1979](#), p. 235f). Leuze only resigned as a party leader and

regional leader of Southern Württemberg when the party was taken over by its left-wing in 1969 ([Adam 1979](#), p. 242f).

Table D3: Roll-Call Votes on Denazification across the Border

	All Parties			FDP		
	(1) FR-Zone	(2) US-Zone	(3) Difference	(4) FR-Zone	(5) US-Zone	(6) Difference
Pro-Denazification	0.288	0.429	0.140*	0.000	0.130	0.130*
Anti-Denazification	0.308	0.294	-0.014	0.583	0.652	0.069
Abstained	0.415	0.277	-0.138*	0.417	0.217	-0.199
Observations	53	119	172	12	23	35

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Large parts of the FDP's voter base were nationalistic. A large survey, conducted by the Americans in December 1952, found that the FDP was the party of the “Nazi sympathizers”. While only four percent of the general population would welcome a resurgence of National Socialism, a quarter of the FDP voters wanted a second Third Reich. The question of whether ex-Nazis should be given the same opportunities in politics and business was answered positively by 36 percent of the total population, but a staggering 80 percent agreed among FDP supporters ([Leuschner 2005](#), p. 12).

At the end of the 1960s, however, the nationalistic wing was losing influence. In September 1967, the party leader Erich Mende announced that he will step down from his role as party leader after the next elections. With the party's right-wing substantially weakened and the liberal current of the FDP in command, the party repositioned itself to the left and entered a coalition with the social democrats in 1969.

In the 1980s, a “Manifesto of the Market Economy” authored by Economics Minister Lambsdorff heralded the FDP's turn towards market-liberal policies and clientelistic interests of large businesses. The publication deliberately provoked the break-up of the coalition with the social democrats.

While the party had transformed radically since the 1970s, at the end of the 1980s national-conservative forces within the FDP regained influence. Manfred Brunner, former European Commissioner for the single market, who had contacts with nationalistic fraternities, the clique around Haider in the Austrian FPÖ, and right-wing radicals around

the newspaper “Junge Freiheit.” Brunner brought a legal action to the Constitutional Court, arguing that the Maastricht Treaty led to the “undermining of German sovereignty” ([Leuschner 2005](#), p. 235). Another lawyer and prominent member of the FDP, Alexander von Stahl, defended the right-wing newspaper “Junge Freiheit” in front of the constitutional court.

In 2002, an intermezzo with short-term FDP member Jamal Karsli, who condemned the influence of the “Zionistic Lobby” in an interview with the far-right media “Junge Freiheit” was followed by one of the largest debates on anti-Semitism in postwar Germany. Jürgen Möllemann, 1987 to 1991 federal minister for education, minister of the economy from 1991 to 1993, and 1992 Vice-Chancellor of Germany in 1992, accused the deputy secretary-general of the Central Council of Jews in Germany of perpetuating anti-Semitism by means of his “spitefulness.” Möllemann’s openly anti-Semitic remarks propelled an anti-Semitic discourse within Germany and coincided with an almost threefold increase in anti-Semitic crimes compared to the prior quarter of 2002 ([Salzborn and Schwietring 2019](#), p. 30).

E Differences Across Occupation Zones

The first empirical design provides LATE estimates across occupation zones. Yet occupation zones differed along multiple policy dimensions. Notably, occupation zones differed in their intake of refugees from the East, industrial dismantling, and education. In this section, I discuss the potential role of other occupation zone policies that could have shaped voting behavior using quantitative and qualitative evidence.

E.1 Refugees

The military government of the French occupation zone did not take in any refugees from the East in the aftermath of the war. While the rationale was mainly to minimize the ensuing fiscal burden, the French also justified their expellee policy on grounds of a potential foreign infiltration of the native population ([Brommer 1985](#), p. 129). In the US zone, in contrast, the average share of refugees in the municipal population was 17.7 percent. Figure E1 provides evidence for this pattern in the sample across the occupation zone border.

Many refugees voted for the Bloc of Expellees and Deprived of Rights [*Block der Heimatvertriebenen und Entrechteten*] (BHE). The BHE was founded to grant parliamentary representation to expellees. refugees overwhelmingly came from the eastern territories of the German Reich. These territories served as electoral strongholds of the Nazi party before World War II. The BHE provided a political refuge for former Nazi cadres and its successor party eventually merged into the neo-fascist National Democratic Party (NPD) in 1964. [Menon \(2023\)](#) argues that differences in expellee intake affected the propensity to vote for the far-right. Counties that initially received a higher proportion of expellees, were more likely to vote for the radical right in the short-, medium-, and long-term. [Hangartner et al. \(2019\)](#) provide contemporary evidence that refugee arrivals induce a shift to the right. If this result extends to my setting, it would attenuate the finding of a higher nationalist vote in the French occupation zone.

Yet it is also conceivable that votes for the FDP and the BHE were strategic substitutes for the political right. Voters across the border might have just voted for different parties on the right. In that sense, the observed effect may be driven by the share of expellees. While I also detect a positive effect for the BHE in the formerly US-occupied municipalities,

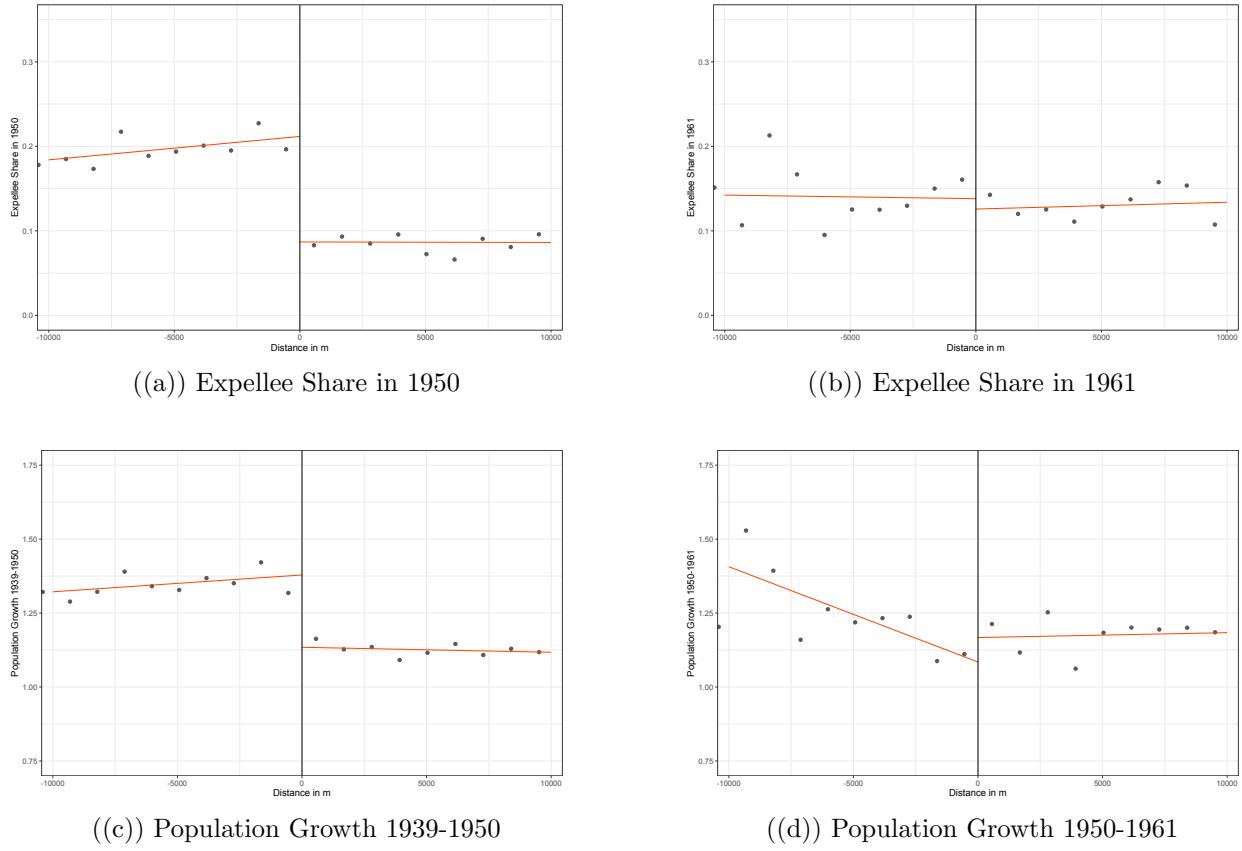


Figure E1: Population Change across the Border

it should be noted that:

1. The effect for the FDP is already observable in the federal elections in 1949 – a point at which the BHE did not exist;
2. The effect for the FDP is an order of magnitude larger compared to the effect of the BHE;
3. While the effect for the BHE vanishes after three elections⁴⁴ and does not translate into longer-term success for the radical right, the effect for the FDP persists;
4. While the effect for the BHE vanishes after conditioning on the share of refugees in 1950, the effect for the FDP does not change or gets slightly larger (see Figure ??; although I acknowledge that controlling for refugees might introduce post-treatment

⁴⁴Taking into account the BHE's successor party. In 1961, the BHE merged with the radical right German Party (*Deutsche Partei*) into the All-German Party (*Gesamtdeutsche Partei*).

bias)⁴⁵.

Lastly, to distribute refugees more equally, the federal government initiated a relocation program (*Umsiedlungsprogramm*). Throughout the 1950s, over 200,000 refugees were relocated from formerly American and British occupation zones to territories formerly occupied by France. Already by 1961, there is no observable difference in the share of refugees across the border (see Figure E1 (b)). Thus, if a bias resulted from the differential intake of expellees, I expect the bias to phase out over time.

E.2 Industrial Dismantling

The Allies dismantled industrial firms to extract reparations in-kind, demilitarize the German economy, and restitute loot taken by the Germans during the war. The extent of these reparations, however, differed across zones. Table E1 summarizes differences across the American and French occupation zones in the state of Baden-Württemberg. In the French-occupied part of Baden-Württemberg, approximately 50 percent more firms were affected by the removals compared to the neighboring US Zone. The fair value of the dismantled machines in municipalities under French occupation was put at 331 million RM (1938), roughly twice the corresponding value in the US-occupied part of Baden-Württemberg.⁴⁶

A: Documented		B: Undocumented		C: Demilitarization		D: Restitutions		
Firms	Value RM (mil.)	Firms	Value RM (mil.)	Firms	Value RM (mil.)	Firms	Value RM (mil.)	
U.S. Zone	56	58.953	1025	46.696	7	7.081	872	26.786
French Zone	1571	209.063	966	78.911	117	36.553	617	6.469

Table E1: Industrial Dismantling in Baden-Württemberg

Note: The U.S. Zone includes Württemberg-Baden, while the French Zone Württemberg-Hohenzollern and Südbaden. Values are indicated at their fair value in 1938 RM. Figures are sourced from the official Dismantling Index File [*Reparationskartei*] (HStF F30/2 646). The Dismantling File was created by German authorities after the occupation ended in order to assess and compensate the damage incurred by the removals.

⁴⁵A possible – though imperfect – solution to this problem is to instrument the expellee share by using the distance to local expellee camps or the usable housing stock directly after the war.

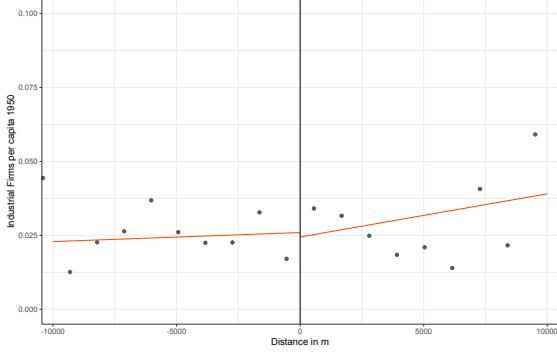
⁴⁶Firms in the British and Soviet Zones suffered even greater losses than in the French occupation zone, both in per capita and in absolute terms. The value of dismantled machines in the British Zone amounted to 2.6 billion RM, and the corresponding value in the Soviet Zone is estimated at around 5 billion RM.

Shortly after the end of the war, the Allies carried out *wild* removals of machines. These unilateral removals were considered “war loot” and thus were not fully counted towards the reparations set out by the Allied Control Council. The wild phase ended in June 1946 when the Allied Control Council passed the “Plan for Reparation,” initiating the second phase of dismantlement. The first list included about 1800 firms ([Harmsen 1951](#), p. 28f). To distribute the broader reparations, the 1945 Potsdam agreement established the Inter-Allied Reparations Agency (IARA)⁴⁷. The second list issued by the Allied Control Council as of November 1947 included 868 firms: of which 496 were located in the British zone, 186 in the US zone, and 236 in the French occupation zone. The dismantling lists stirred unrest among the population, especially in the Ruhr area (British zone). Protests, sabotage, refusal to work, and even violent conflicts followed ([Fiereder 1989](#), p. 225). After attempts to reduce the extent of machine removals, a joint resolution by the heads of the German states pushed against the continuation of the dismantling programs. Under the initiative of the CDU in August 1948, the government of Württemberg-Hohenzollern collectively stepped down in protest of continued dismantling ([Fiereder 1989](#), p. 221). At the federal level, the SPD was the fiercest critic of the dismantling program among the major political parties. The SPD organized protests and campaigned on an anti-dismantling agenda during the 1949 federal elections ([Tøllefsen 2016](#), p. 271).

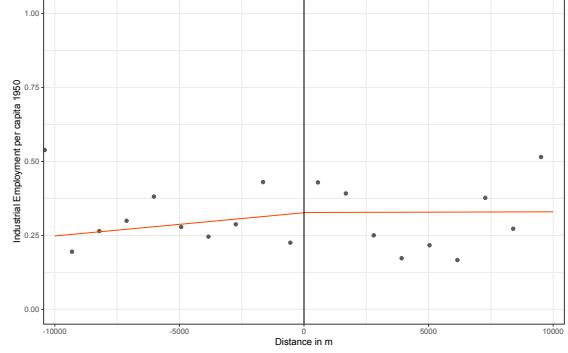
[Ciccone and Nimczik \(2022\)](#) show that there were no difference in the number of industrial firms and workers per capita across the French-American occupation zone border in 1950. Figure E2 corroborates this finding and shows that there is no discontinuity in the number of industrial firms and workers in 1950 per capita, suggesting that the aggregate economic effects on firms and employment were limited.

While the removal of industrial capacity had no observable effect on aggregate measures of industrial activity in 1950, the direct consequences of the dismantling policy might have been psychological. Thus, I collected information on the official dismantling lists from 1947. The estimates presented in the main text are robust to controlling for the number of dismantled firms.

⁴⁷The IARA’s balance sheet in 1951 denoted that Germany had paid USD 502.3 million RM in 1938 prices ([Inter-Allied Reparation Agency 1950](#), p. 539f). The figures by the IARA, however, don’t contain information on the extent of unilateral removals.



((a)) Industrial firms per capita in 1950



((b)) Industrial workers per capita in 1950

Figure E2: Industrial activity across the border

E.3 Education

Differences in education policies across French and US occupation zones might have impacted the 1949 voting patterns. The Allies attempted to reeducate Germans by instilling democratic practice through educational reform. Both, the US and France saw the Weimar education system at the root of Hitler's rise. Thus, both states envisioned structural reform of the education system.

In all three Western zones, subjects pervaded by Nazi ideology were either banned or suspended early on: biology was stripped of racial theory, history restricted to antiquity, and geography limited to the study of geology ([Gehrz 2002](#), p. 122f). All textbooks produced by the Nazis were banned. To counteract the resulting shortage, the Americans reprinted Weimar-era textbooks preserved on microfilm. The French imported and translated textbooks from Switzerland, Luxembourg, and France ([Vaillant 1984](#), p. 207). Yet all three Western Allies had to deal with a shortage of paper: “new texts did not appear in any real quantity until 1949.” ([Gehrz 2002](#), p. 123f)

Many of the structural reform plans, such as the introduction of comprehensive schools, the extension of primary school duration, the abolishment of school fees, and the banning of confessional schools, failed in both zones. At the time when the responsibility for the education system was put back in German hands, no substantial structural change was achieved ([Braun 2004](#), p. 176).

One realized difference across occupation zones, however, was the introduction of French as a foreign language. This constituted a major blow to the longstanding primacy of Latin in

the German education system ([Benz and Scholz 2009](#), p. 122). The Americans on the other hand established social studies as a school subject. The course was intended to serve as an introduction to the social sciences and democratic modes of thinking and living. However, the precise content of the course was at the discretion of individual teachers ([Braun 2004](#), p. 176ff). These policies were implemented comparatively late, which suggests they were not a significant factor for voting by 1949.

In conclusion, the failure of many education reform plans and the timing of changes, suggests that difference in education are likely insufficient to rationalize the observed discrepancy in voting in 1949.

In contrast, the denazification of teachers might have been a significant factor contributing to the observed voting differences across the zones in 1949. The original teacher denazification process varied notably between the occupation zones. At the end of the war, 97 percent of the teachers in Germany were part of the National Socialist Teachers League and around 23 percent were also members of the Nazi party ([Jarausch and Arminger 1989](#), p. 199f). The Americans and the French proceeded by removing all teachers that had been part of the Nazi party or its auxiliary organizations until approved for readmission by an officer. The US initially removed two-thirds of all teachers in North-Württemberg ([Vollnhals 1991](#)). In October 1947, of 3767 dismissed teachers about one-third still were still employed and 2500 were still waiting for their denazification proceedings ([Braun 2004](#), p. 65). In northern Baden, the conditions were even more unfavorable relative to its size. For the 11,000 schools in the entire American zone, there were only 42,000 teachers. In the French occupation zone, in contrast, only 25 percent of the teachers in the *Volksschulen* (primary and lower secondary schools) had been fired ([Ruge-Schatz 1977](#), p. 72f). An analysis of differences within the US occupation zone and their potential effects on political behavior can be found in the main text Section 5.

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