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**THE CHURCH AS ARBITER:
THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE RIGHT
IN INTERWAR FRANCE**

This paper assesses how centrally-situated elites shape political structures. It specifically focuses on the condemnation of L'Action Française, a monarchist movement, by Pope Pius XI in interwar France and hypothesizes that this condemnation prompted a divide within the French Right. As a consequence of the condemnation, Catholics had to choose between a potential involvement in L'Action Française and accessing Catholic sacraments. We use difference-in-differences estimates to assess how this later shaped L'Action Française. First, in the immediate aftermath of the condemnation, L'Action Française re-organized : it created more branches and held less public meetings. Second, the Papal condemnation shaped the geography of this reaction. After the condemnation, religiosity hampered the creation of new branches. At the same time, more branches sprang up in places under the authority of anti-Action Française Bishops. Third, additional results on voting and political violence suggest that L'Action Française radicalized to cope with its decreasing influence among its historical supporters. L'Action Française mutated from an intellectual royalist organization in the early 1920's with strong links to the Catholic sphere to a more extreme organization nurturing a violent and anti-parliamentarian Right in the 1930's. We show that this transformation impacted the structure of the Right in France even after World War II.