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Delusions of Grandeur and France's Grandes Écoles: "Big Time" Prestige or "Big Time" Elitism?

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Poster Presentation P26

DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR AND FRANCE'S GRANDES ÉCOLES: "BIG TIME" PRESTIGE OR "BIG TIME" ELITISM?

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The Grandes Écoles, or "great schools," are highly selective institutions in France that guarantee their students a top position in fields such as business and engineering. Historically, such schools were established to foster the elite and maintain its influence, and they remain separated from France's universities by preparatory classes and competitive exams. Today, over sixty percent of directors and leading executives of one hundred of the largest French companies attended the Grandes Écoles, and graduate success rates remain high. However, the schools are often criticized since they continue to pursue their foremost goal of preserving the power of France's upper class. This presentation will examine the impact of the schools and their graduate's innovative businesses as well as France's response to their divided school system. The Grandes Écoles will also be compared to the U.S.'s universities and viewed from the perspectives of other countries. These institutions hold a highly valued reputation, but if their elitist aims persist there may exist future feelings of resentment.