

Latin American Dictatorships in the Era of Fascism

Latin American Dictatorships in the Era of Fascism focuses on the reverse-wave of dictatorships that emerged in Latin America during the 1930s and the transnational dissemination of authoritarian institutions in the era of fascism.

António Costa Pinto revisits the study of authoritarian alternatives to liberal democracy in 1930s Latin America from the perspective of the diffusion of corporatism in the world of inter-war dictatorships. The book explores what drove the horizontal spread of corporatism in Latin America, the processes and direction of transnational diffusion, and how social and political corporatism became a central set of new institutions utilized by dictatorships during this era. These issues are studied through a transnational and comparative research design to reveal the extent of Latin America's participation during the corporatist wave which by 1942 had significantly reduced the number of democratic regimes in the world.

This book is essential reading for students studying Latin American history, 1930s dictatorships and authoritarianism, and the spread of corporatism.

António Costa Pinto is Research Professor at the Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon. He has been a visiting professor at Stanford University, Georgetown University, and a senior visiting fellow at Princeton University, the University of California, Berkeley, and New York University. He is the author of *The Nature of Fascism Revisited* (2012) and co-edited *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Europe* (2014) and *Corporatism and Fascism* (2017).

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The Corporatist Wave

António Costa Pinto

First published 2020
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Pinto, António Costa, author.

Title: Latin American dictatorships in the era of fascism: the corporatist wave / António Costa Pinto.

Description: London; New York, NY: Routledge/

Taylor & Francis Group, 2019.

Identifiers: LCCN 2019016626 | ISBN 9780367243852 (hardback) |

ISBN 9780429282164 (ebk)

Subjects: LCSH: Latin America—Politics and government—20th century. |

Latin America—History—20th century. | Dictatorship—Latin

America—History—20th century. | Fascism—Latin America—History—

20th century. | Authoritarianism—Latin America—History—20th century. |

Corporate state—Latin America—History—20th century.

Classification: LCC F1414 .P58 2019 | DDC 980.03—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019016626>

ISBN: 978-0-367-24385-2 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-0-429-28216-4 (ebk)

Typeset in Times New Roman
by codeMantra

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Preface

This book is an interpretive examination, from a transnational and comparative perspective, of Latin American dictatorships during the so-called fascist era. Its aim is to understand how and why the Latin American authoritarian regimes fit into the authoritarian wave of the 1930s and in the dynamic of the global spread of corporatist models during the inter-war period. This book is the result of a wider research project and is a kind of detour from the “Corporatism and Authoritarianism in Modern Politics” project that has already produced a number of publications in English and Portuguese.¹

The first rule we give to young scholars when writing a book proposal or submitting an article for publication is that they should avoid the word ‘gap’. As one anonymous reviewer once wrote about the author of a chapter in a book of mine: we do not write books or articles to fill gaps, after all, he wrote, ‘we are not dentists. We do not fill gaps’. But quite frankly there was a gap to fill in this case, since there are few comparative studies of inter-war authoritarianism in Latin America. I hope this contribution will inspire more comparative and transnational research.

Note

- 1 A. C. Pinto and F. P. Martinho, eds., *A Onda Corporativa: Corporativismo e Ditaduras na Europa e na América Latina*, Rio de Janeiro, Editora da Fundação Getúlio Vargas, 2016; A. C. Pinto, ed., *Corporatism and Fascism: The Corporatist Wave in Europe*, London, Routledge, 2017; A. C. Pinto and F. Finchelstein, eds., *Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Europe and Latin America: Crossing Borders*, London, Routledge, 2019.

Acknowledgements

When I began writing this book, I remembered what Seymour Martin Lipset believed to be ‘Linz’s dilemma’ (my own expression) when he noted this expert on authoritarianism and democratization adapted with difficulty to the academic outlets: writing too much for articles, and too little for books. In fact, the work produced by Juan Linz (1926–2013), a great political scientist whose work has been a big influence on me, was always halfway between articles and monographs. In my case, I had to severely cut my chapter, ‘Authoritarianism and corporatism in Latin America: The first wave’, in *Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Europe and Latin America*, which I co-edited with Federico Finchelstein and which gave rise to this volume. Nowadays, academic publications are much more flexible than they were in Linz’s day.

This book began taking shape thank to the excellent bibliographic resources at the New York University library. There is a lot of Spanish and Portuguese language sources and bibliographies to consult, and my time there as a Remarque Fellow in 2017 was crucial to the development, as were the various short research missions in Brazil, particularly to the Getúlio Vargas Foundation in Rio de Janeiro, in Mexico City to take part in a seminar organized by Clara Lida and Ernesto Bohoslavsky at the Colégio de México, and to Buenos Aires at the invitation of Ernesto Bohoslavsky, to take part in a panel at CLACSO in 2018.

Parts of this research have been presented at some seminars and conferences. The first was the ‘Crossing Borders: Intellectuals of the Right and Politics in Europe and Latin America – Transnational Perspectives’ conference, and the second the ‘Corporatism and “Organic” Representation between Authoritarianism and Democracy’ workshop I co-organized at Lisbon University’s Social Science Institute in November 2016 and January 2018 and in two seminars at the Getúlio Vargas Foundation School of Social Science in Rio de Janeiro, 26–27 June 2017, at the ‘New Perspectives on Corporatism: Latin America and Iberian Corporatist Experiences’ conference, and on 22–24 October 2018 at the NETCOR

meeting, 'Authoritarianism, Corporatism and Democracy', both organized by Marco Vannuchi.

Parts of this book were also discussed in the panel 'Authoritarian Corporatism between Europe and Latin America' at the Lasa Meeting in Barcelona, co-organized with Pedro Ramos-Pinto, in May 2018; at the First Convention of the International Association for Comparative Fascist Studies (COMFAS), at the Central European University in Budapest in April 2018, thanks to Constantin Iordachi, and at the 'New Approaches to the Study of Dictatorships in Twentieth Century' conference at the S. Daniel Abraham Center for International and Regional Studies, Tel Aviv University, 14 May 2018, thanks to Rannaan Rein.

I would like to thank the following for their comments on earlier drafts and bibliographical information: Luciano Aronne de Abreu, Ernesto Boholavsky, Vera Cepeda, Victoria De Grazia, Paulo Drinot, Álvaro Garrido, Fabio Gentile, Annarita Gori, Ângela de Castro Gomes, Herbert Klein, Jorge lanzaro, Francisco Palomanes Martinho, Pedro Ramos-Pinto, Rannaan Rein, Andrés Malamud, Antonio Muñoz Sánchez, Melissa Teixeira, Marco Vannuchi, and Claudia Viscardi. I am particularly indebted to Federico Finchelstein and Aristotle Kallis, who read parts of the manuscript, to Kurk Weyland, for his very inspiring work, and to the two anonymous reviewers for the very useful comments.

As Seymour M. Lipset once said: 'A person who knows only one country basically knows no country well', but in comparative research with a strong empirical component and nine different national cases, mistakes (I hope small) are always present and the author welcomes comments and suggestions for further reading. When I met Philippe Schmitter for the first time and read his works on Portuguese and Brazilian corporatism, I did not think that I would come to revisit some of his research topics; however, I must point out that my experience as his student and his colleague has always been important.

Finally, and most importantly, I would like to make the final dedication to my two sons, Filipe Costa Pinto and Vicente Costa Pinto.

Introduction

In 1952, President Laureano Gómez tried (and failed) to reorganize political representation in Colombia along authoritarian corporatist lines, with this attempt perhaps being the end of the first wave of corporatism associated with the era of fascism. A Catholic corporatist with Francoist sympathies and authoritarian tendencies, and leader of the Colombian Conservative Party, Gómez hoped to bring about constitutional reform that would have transformed him into the president of a new authoritarian, paternalist, and more confessional state with an executive that was increasingly independent of the legislature and with a corporatist Senate.¹ This failed experiment marked the end of a time of authoritarian institutional reform inspired by corporatism, which was one of the most powerful authoritarian models of social and political representation to emerge during the first half of the twentieth century.²

This book revisits the study of authoritarian alternatives to liberal democracy in 1930s Latin America from the perspective of the diffusion of corporatism in the world of inter-war dictatorships and authoritarian elites. What drove the horizontal spread of corporatism in Latin America? What processes of transnational diffusion were set in motion and from where to where? How did social and political corporatism become a central set of new institutions created by dictatorships in the 1930s? At what type of critical junctures were they adopted? The book tackles these issues by adopting a transnational and comparative research design. We will operationalize the concepts of social and political corporatism and their particular application to the study of inter-war authoritarian regimes, and the carefully constructed balance between the theoretical-transnational and the case-study sections of the book will, we hope, contribute to the theoretical parameters of the study of both authoritarianism and corporatism. Our focus on political institutions associated with political and social

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corporatism captures a rich array of entanglements between authoritarian political actors, and we will also emphasize the impact of political learning and diffusion from seemingly successful institutional innovations and precedents elsewhere.³ Powerful processes of institutional transfers were a hallmark of inter-war dictatorships, and we argue corporatism was at the forefront of this process of cross-national diffusion of authoritarian institutions in Latin America, both as a new form of organized interest co-optation by the state and of an authoritarian (and new) type of political representation that was an alternative to liberal democracy. To what extent and how Latin America participates in the corporatist wave is the subject of this book.

Transnational entanglements between dictatorships and corporatist ideologies generated a rich field of circulation of ideas and practices that shaped the experience of inter-war dictatorships far more than has previously been assumed.⁴ With this book, we wish to move the research on inter-war dictatorships in Latin America to a relational and institutionalist perspective that scrutinizes processes of ideological, political, and institutional diffusion over the time and space of inter-war world.⁵ In order to capture this dynamic process, the book has the following sequence.

In Chapter 1, I frame the concepts of social and political corporatism, defining the two faces of the relation between corporatism and dictatorship used in this book. During the 1930s, social corporatism became synonymous with the forced unification of organized interests into single units of employers and employees that were closely controlled by the state and which eliminated their independence: especially that of trade unions. Social corporatism offered autocrats a formalized system of interest representation to manage labour relations, legitimizing the repression of free labour unionism. However, during this period political corporatism was also (and in some cases mainly) used to refer to the comprehensive organization of political society beyond state-social groups relations seeking to replace liberal democracy with an anti-individualist system of representation. Much of the appeal of corporatism in the inter-war years was related with this doing 'away with the instability and conflict of representative democracy'.⁶ It is from this perspective, we revisit the processes of the institutional crafting of social and political corporatism, exploring two axes: transnational diffusion of corporatism in Latin America, travelling models and debates and national experiences of institutionalization.

In Chapter 2, I deal with the main transnational agents of diffusion of corporatism in Latin America, giving particularly salience

to the Catholic Church, and the main intellectual-politicians that introduced and developed corporatist proposals. The concept of the intellectual-politician will be used here to define those intellectuals who were participating in the institutional crafting of these regimes as formal or informal members of the decision-making elite (i.e. as advisers, deputies, cabinet members or party leaders). They provided space for interaction among politicians and the transnational intellectual arena, cementing ideological and political relations and models. As in Europe, and with the obvious exception of the paradigmatic case of Mexico under Cárdenas, the most important models were Italian Fascism, the Primo de Rivera dictatorship in Spain, and Salazar's New State in Portugal.

In the third part of the book, I analyse the institutionalization of Latin American authoritarian regimes during the 1930s and the introduction of corporatist institutions. Particular attention will be given to the 'critical junctures' of the consolidation (and failure of) of these regimes and the external models of institution building through a 'thick description' of nine Latin American regimes. The book as a whole, therefore, analyses corporatism as an ideology and, especially, as a practice of power that was widely shared, reformulated, and applied to Latin America during the so-called 'reverse' authoritarian wave of the inter-war period.⁷

Notes

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- 2 M. Manoilescu, *Le Parti Unique: Institution Politique des Régimes Nouveaux*, Paris, Les Oeuvres Françaises, 1936, p. viii. On Manoilescu see C. Iordachi, ‘Mihail Manoilescu and the debate and practice of corporatism in Romania’, in Pinto and Finchelstein, eds., *Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Europe and Latin America*, pp. 65–94.
- 3 M. Manoilescu, *Le Siècle du Corporatisme*, Paris, Librairie Félix Alcan, 1934.
- 4 For a more developed version of this chapter, see A. C. Pinto, ‘Corporatism and “organic representation” in European dictatorships’, in Pinto, ed., *Corporatism and Fascism: The Corporatist Wave in Europe*, pp. 3–41.
- 5 Like Alfred Stepan and Juan Linz, we use this expression to refer to the ‘vision of political community in which the component parts of society harmoniously combine ... and also because of the assumption that such harmony requires power and the unity of civil society by “the architectonic action of public authorities” – hence “organic-statism”.’ See A. Stepan, *The State and Society: Peru in Comparative Perspective*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1978; J. J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, Boulder, CO, Lynne Rienner, 2000, pp. 215–17.
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- 15 P. C. Schmitter, 'Still the century of corporatism?', in F. B. Pike and T. Stritch, eds., *The New Corporatism: Social-Political Structures in the Iberian World*, Notre Dame, IN, Notre Dame University Press, 1974, p. 94. As Howard Wiarda noted, even when associated with different kinds of political regime, this definition 'was still tied to the more authoritarian versions [...]'. See H. J. Wiarda, 'The political sociology of a concept: Corporatism and the "distinct tradition"', *The Americas*, Volume 66, Number 1, July 2009, p. 90.
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