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Introduction

IN AUGUST 1941, Marcello Caetano (1906–80), Portuguese law professor and future dictator, arrived in Rio de Janeiro for a conference to commemorate recent constitutional innovations in Brazil and Portugal. In the 1930s, both nations eschewed liberal and laissez-faire conventions to adopt constitutions that overturned protections for individual liberties and formally installed a corporatist system that emboldened state powers to regulate labor relations and market competition. It was an unusual moment to celebrate constitutional matters: World War II was a struggle between democracy and authoritarianism, and it had become increasingly difficult for the dictators in power in Brazil and Portugal to fend off growing opposition that their constitutions were anything but a farce. And yet the intellectuals, jurists, and government officials gathered at this conference redoubled their efforts to celebrate their corporatist path as a “third path”—one neither liberal nor socialist, neither laissez-faire nor state controlled—guiding their societies to political stability, social peace, and economic progress. To them, corporatism remained key to solving pressing challenges, those lingering from the Great Depression and mounting with each country’s drive for economic development. Corporatism was not only better suited to these societies than liberalism, so they constructed their argument, but also had nothing to do with Fascist Italy—a necessary disclaimer during the war. “Corporatism is a timeworn principle, one that maintains its relevance,” Brazil’s *Correio da Manhã* concluded from reporting on Caetano’s visit.¹

A *Third Path* explores Brazilian and Portuguese efforts to overcome the Great Depression by reinventing, as they saw it, a medieval guild system in order to explain why corporatism proved so enduring in Europe and Latin America. In the 1920s and 1930s, countries as diverse as France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Austria, Romania, Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina, among others, experimented with corporatist modes of organizing political representation, labor relations, and economic production. Corporatism offered new possibilities for how to harness the powers of expanding government bureaucracies to improve

societal welfare, increase domestic food production, and industrialize quickly, and many proponents of this third path advocated for programs similar to those adopted by countries experimenting with other models of the mixed economy. Corporatism is thus key to understanding the rise of new forms of the state's management of economic life in the interwar decades, and yet it has also remained a somewhat vague concept, partly because, as political scientist Philippe Schmitter notes in his iconic essay "Still the Century of Corporatism?," it "can be found everywhere and, hence, is nowhere very distinctive."² What made corporatism unique, however, was how this technocratic project got grafted onto older utopian visions of society comprised not of atomized individuals but instead vertically organized social and economic interests. To study corporatism is then to consider some of the forgotten ideological and institutional origins of the midcentury regulatory state.

I explain the emergence and persistence of modern corporatism by looking at its parallel, and connected, rise in Brazil under dictator-turned-populist president Getúlio Vargas (1882–1954) and Portugal under the dictatorship of António de Oliveira Salazar (1889–1970), where each regime took the name of *Estado Novo* (New State). Vargas took power following the 1930 Revolution that toppled Brazil's First Republic (1889–1930), in which political power rested with regional oligarchs tied to commodity-export sectors. He governed Brazil from 1930 until his ouster from power in 1945—a period largely defined by the authoritarian corporatist *Estado Novo* regime installed through his self-coup in 1937. A political chameleon, Vargas managed to return to power in 1951 by popular electoral mandate, shedding his associations with interwar dictatorships, and embracing a populist and developmentalist platform.³ Salazar was a university professor who started his improbable political rise as finance minister in 1928, imposing a severe austerity program to address Portugal's financial crisis. Appointed prime minister from power in 1932, Salazar governed Portugal until 1968. He implemented his own corporatist, authoritarian *Estado Novo* that survived until 1974 under his successor, Caetano. As committed as Brazilian and Portuguese officials were to their united efforts to reinvent past traditions in order to displace political and economic liberalism, their corporatist experiments to address long-run problems—especially underdevelopment—were hardly straightforward translations of doctrine into practice. On both sides of the South Atlantic, jurists, intellectuals, and political officials debated the meaning of corporatism for the modern world as they stretched the illiberal logic underpinning their ambitions to new programs and policies in order to fix economic problems. The Vargas and Salazar dictatorships show the durability of corporatism, and the historical as well as continued relevance of this conservative, hierarchical, and statist worldview.

Defining Corporatism

Corporatism itself is not easy or obvious to define, and indeed its mutable definitions and different uses are a key theme throughout this book. This ism had no founder, canonical text, or country of origin. It was an inherently transnational phenomenon, with multiple intellectual genealogies that, at times, appeared at odds.⁴ The jurists, intellectuals, bureaucrats, industrialists, landowners, and workers who supported corporatism held a variety of opinions and ideological leanings. They also themselves struggled with definitions, frequently united more by their opposition to other ideologies than by their own policies.

In broadest and simplest terms, corporatism is a system that sets out to organize society according to economic and social interests, and vertically integrate these groups into the state so that it can intervene in labor relations and economic production. While committed to private property and individual initiative, corporatists wanted these impulses subordinated to the greater needs and interests of the nation. Corporatism mirrored other mixed economy experiments in the 1930s in which the state regulated economic activities. Distinctively, however, it disavowed individual freedoms and emphasized the preservation of existing social hierarchies. Corporatists instead stressed the importance of social rights and representation through sectoral interest groups that were supported and protected according to national imperatives.

Beyond this simple definition, corporatism contains multitudes and paradoxes. Corporatists were nationalists who supported increased state powers over national life, but did not envision a state that directly controlled the mode of production. Corporatism was a strategy for political legitimacy and survival too. Sometimes, corporatism is lumped with fascism or allied with nebulous intellectual tendencies on the Right.⁵ Still others see corporatism as a general orientation, neither Left nor Right, but conservative and Catholic, or they treat it as a narrow and well-defined set of institutions to organize industrial relations.⁶ Sometimes it is defined with a school of economic thought that promoted state-led coordination of the economy with special attention to the collective rights of labor and capital, and sometimes it is a political system in which both democratic participation and governments are organized around profession and class. Others see corporatism as a corrupted system of regulations and controls that has benefited certain industries and groups above others, viewing it as synonymous with categories like state capitalism, crony capitalism, or regulatory capture.⁷

Despite or because of corporatism's categorical ambiguity, this book contends that its proponents attempted to assert the originality of their experiment by mounting powerful critiques of the failures of democratic political

institutions, laissez-faire capitalism, and liberal internationalism in the 1920s and 1930s. Its history is as essential to understanding the breakdown of liberal governance as it is to explaining the lure of dictatorships in these crucial decades. Historian Eric Hobsbawm famously suggests in *The Age of Extremes* that the history of the twentieth century was not as simple as a contest between the two “binary opposites” of capitalism and socialism.⁸ For Brazil and Portugal, this book shows the complexity that lay between or, better, outside two extremes.

This struggle for a third path was global. Corporatism was transnational in its application as well as its theoretical evolution. Comparison and translation were at its core.⁹ As a point of departure, this book builds on the richly established field of transnational history to consider how debates within and across national contexts shaped the meaning and practice of corporatism.¹⁰ It features a loose network of jurists, intellectuals, economists, and public officials between Brazil and Portugal, while also recognizing the asymmetrical nature of this exchange as well as how these networks stretched into other contexts such as Fascist Italy or the New Deal United States. Brazil and Portugal are often cast as passive recipients of ideas and models from the industrial North Atlantic. By turning the gaze southward and utilizing this multicentered and transnational approach in the South Atlantic, this book positions a region not often studied for its legal or economic creativity as a major hub of policy experimentation.¹¹

In combining methodologies of transnational history, intellectual history, and political economy, this book is ultimately a history of economic life that captures the rise of state-led development in Brazil and other contexts. It demonstrates how the economies of the South Atlantic embarked on a global project to carve out an alternative to liberal or laissez-faire capitalism. With a few notable exceptions, corporatism has been left out of recent histories of capitalism in the twentieth century because scholars characterize it as a deviation from so-called proper stages of development, conflate it with fascism, or dismiss it as the window dressing of nationalist dictatorships. While corporatism has been a vibrant area of research among historians in Brazil and Portugal, it is less familiar for English-language audiences.¹² This book expands that scholarship by asking new questions: How did corporatist experiments inform new ideas of economic development and social peace? How did these ideas shape how national governments intervened in economic life in the 1930s and 1940s? How did corporatism survive into the postwar period to shape the rise of bolder state-led projects for modernization, industrialization, and development?

These questions are especially salient because increased state intervention in labor relations, economic production, and commerce is not exclusive to corporatist regimes. Over the past few years, historians have explored the ways that states tinkered with the economy during the interwar decades to

understand how the state emerged as a primary actor for economic development in the twentieth century.¹³ Sociologist Johanna Bockman and others have questioned or upended older dichotomies between “capitalist” and “command” in twentieth-century histories of development, either by exploring the connections or parallels between capitalist and socialist contexts, or debunking prior assumptions of ideological purity.¹⁴ Corporatism is missing in this conversation about the emergence of new economic regimes in the twentieth century. Corporatist experiments were neither ephemeral nor reducible to the dictators who first introduced them, and persisted through democratic and authoritarian governments.

Corporatism is so difficult to pin down in part because it is not exclusively a law, institution, or government but rather a framework, logic, and worldview concerning state-society relations with long-lasting legacies. Brazil and Portugal stitched corporatist ideas into their legal and constitutional fabric, which is one of the features that distinguished their corporatist experiments from other forms of the mixed economy. Corporatism codified the notion that rights should be unequally distributed according to economic function and the greater national interest, thereby transforming a *de facto* feature of most liberal regimes from an institutional failure into a necessary ingredient for social peace and economic development. Consequently, I argue that corporatism was not an interwar exception to liberal governance; its institutions and logic survived World War II to shape how the state intervenes in labor and market relations to the present day.

A History of Corporatism

When Vargas and Salazar used corporatism, they were not inventing a new concept but instead refashioning an ancient one to modern uses. Corporatism derives from the Latin word *corpus*, or *body*, and when applied to society suggests a singular organism in which each part has a designated role, in contrast to a collection of atomized individuals. This ideal of society as more than the sum of its parts is one unifying thread among the many corporatisms that evolved over centuries. Corporatist antecedents existed in Roman law, for example, with the corporation a “legal fiction” representing a collective of people in a lasting entity that would survive any individual person, but the concept is generally associated with the Middle Ages.¹⁵ By the fourteenth century, Roman conceptions of the corporation were applied to self-governing city-states and guilds in Europe, granting legal personality to these governing units. Corporate personhood was defined hierarchically as well as by economic and social function, whether granted to guilds, the church, or the military. Laws issued by these legal entities regulated local economic conditions. Merchants and artisans formed guilds to control entry into their industry, and regulate the price

and quality of goods. The Spanish and Portuguese Empires extended this system to their overseas colonies, assigning rights and privileges to corporate institutions, and in effect legalizing social and racial hierarchies. In Brazil and the Spanish Americas, distant monarchs sent bureaucrats and magistrates to preside over diverse colonial populations and dispense justice in ways that afforded distinct legal protections to each corporate group, but always in accordance with the goals of the Crown.¹⁶ This system of variegated justice epitomized, for instance, with the *fueros* in the Spanish Empire in which different classes, communities, or regions were governed according to distinct legal codes was predicated on a logic of inclusivity but not equality.¹⁷ Centuries later, modern corporatist dictatorships would take inspiration from earlier monarchical and imperial models.¹⁸

The French Revolution, independence wars in the Americas, and liberal revolts during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries shattered this system of controls and privileges, giving rise to constitutional monarchies and republican governments. Both Brazil and Portugal established constitutional monarchies following Brazil's independence in 1822. Those advocating for liberal reforms wanted protections for individual rights and property, a separation of church and state, the dissolution of trade monopolies, and free trade as engines of growth and progress.¹⁹ But liberalism and its emphasis on individual freedoms was not endorsed by all social groups, and not only because of the persistence of slavery in Brazil and the Portuguese Empire.²⁰

Historians call the “long” nineteenth century the century of liberalism, but corporatism as an ideal and economic system never really disappeared. Nineteenth-century French political economist Henri de Saint-Simon, for example, urged technocratic and coordinated political solutions to address the hardships that the working classes endured with industrialization, calling on industrialists to head the effort.²¹ His critiques of liberalism and individualism informed positivist thinkers like French philosopher Auguste Comte, who became especially influential to Brazilian military generals and engineers in the late nineteenth century.

After the abolition of slavery in Brazil in 1888, military generals overthrew the monarchy to drive greater modernization. Positivism and corporatism have distinct genealogies, but these ideologies overlapped in that they both described society as a living organism comprised of the sum of its specialized parts—the family, military, and different productive classes. Brazilian historians debate the finer points of positivist influence on the First Republic, but generally agree that it offered a model for “progressive conservatism” or “modernizing conservatism.”²² Scholars trace the origins of modern authoritarianism to positivists like Alberto Torres, who influenced a later generation of corporatists.²³ Insisting on Brazil's lack of preparedness for elections and

representative government, positivists promoted technocracy and rule by experts, guided by military personnel and engineers. Positivists also shaped republican projects to address Brazil's stagnation, especially in public health and infrastructure, but always with the goal of progress with order.²⁴

The persistence of corporatism can partly be explained as a conservative reaction to the rise of anarchist, socialist, and syndicalist movements. For conservative intellectuals in particular, corporatism aligned closely with anticommunism and rising Catholic social thought, with its emphasis on duties over rights and social peace over class conflict. This is as much the case in Brazil as in Portugal. In 1891, Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*, subtitled *Rights and Duties of Capital and Labor*, called on governments and employer classes to respect the dignity of workers and concede collective bargaining solutions to improve their conditions. The encyclical lamented the diminished role of corporate bodies during the nineteenth century, and called for workers and employers alike to organize themselves into associations along vocational lines. In Catholic societies, these intermediary institutions—between the individual and the state—would be responsible for the moral and material well-being of their members.²⁵ *Rerum Novarum* denounced the inherent greed of capitalism that impoverished the working classes while magnifying the lure of anarchism, socialism, and other anti-Catholic movements.²⁶

The interwar resurgence of corporatism was further stoked by alarm over the Bolshevik threat. Historians have largely explained the rise of corporatist dictatorships as responses to fears that social unrest could end with revolution, as in Russia. This “red scare” led Vargas's and Salazar's governments to create secret police and national security laws for political purges that targeted the Communist Party, trade unions, and other leftist groups.²⁷ Corporatist institutions, especially labor policies, allowed these conservative governments to defuse class conflict by turning it into a legal or technical problem, arbitrated by the state. This book, however, argues that anticommunism does not explain the economic policies implemented in the 1930s. Jurists, economists, and government officials in Brazil as much as in Portugal became far more preoccupied with how to fix the excesses of liberal capitalism. Corporatists turned their critique of the laissez-faire order into a new system designed for economic renewal and development.

Conservative intellectuals in Brazil or Portugal understood the value of crafting corporatism as the refashioning of a medieval or colonial order while updating this system to address contemporary challenges. The corporatist idiom fit comfortably with older Iberian traditions, including the privileged role of the Catholic Church and centralized-decentralized model of governance across Portugal's vast empire. Adherents in Brazil and Portugal argued that liberalism was an imported ideology—one that might work for Britain or France, but not for their societies.²⁸ Nearly all the books written by interwar corporatist

theorists began with invectives against the French Revolution—with its proclamation of liberty, equality, and fraternity—as the root cause of recent economic and social crisis, targeting especially laws that had abolished guilds in favor of free enterprise. To be sure, liberalism was itself hardly a consistent or coherent ideology, with its own distinct national traditions, internal contradictions, and slippery definitions.²⁹ Corporatists nonetheless relied on superficial and reductive depictions of liberal doctrine and the failures of past governments. Yet this book carefully interrogates the overwrought arguments made by Brazilian and Portuguese intellectuals to discredit the core liberal values of equality and liberty precisely because they used those arguments to build their own authoritarian, hierarchical, and profoundly unequal political system.³⁰

Hence corporatism was hardly a new idea when dictators started seizing on this model, but rather an attempt to rehabilitate older traditions. Brazilian and Portuguese intellectuals latched onto their shared language and history to create a political alternative to liberalism.

Corporatism as a Nationalist and Transnational Experiment

Brazilian and Portuguese efforts to mobilize the deep historical roots of corporatism also served a political purpose, allowing its proponents to insist that their system did not share its origins with fascism. The relationship between fascism and corporatism—whether these two isms are synonymous or productively distinguished in practice—was a question that interwar intellectuals could not ignore. And it remains central to the historiography on interwar corporatism, with scholars often falling into one of two camps. For some, corporatism and fascism were all but synonymous, and any attempt to disaggregate them amounted to an apologia to fascism. For others, corporatism was a labor and economic system that could be adapted to different political regimes, while fascism was a mass political movement underpinned by violent, racist impulses.³¹ This camp contends that the two isms should not be confused or conflated, even if they happened to overlap in some regimes. This book argues for taking corporatism seriously on its own terms while still insisting that the two ideologies share a political and intellectual history. This is especially true for corporatist economics. The rise of corporatism as a new economic system, as this book shows, cannot be divorced from its Italian influence and the entangled intellectual networks that connected Fascist Italy to dictatorships in Latin America and Iberian Europe.

Rather than assume corporatism to be a pathology of poor, underdeveloped Latin countries, *A Third Path* reframes it as a political experiment among

other transnational experiments in the interwar decades. As societies worldwide grappled with the outbreak of revolutions, collapse of empires, social unrest, and financial and broader economic crises, they enacted new political programs. The 1920s saw rising experiments with socialism, radical republicanism, dictatorship, nationalism, self-determination, and fascism. From the ruins of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires in eastern and central Europe, a flurry of constitutions ratified in the early 1920s converted territories in the Balkans and along the Baltic Sea into nascent democracies. The drive to create new governing systems was also evident at the constitutional apex of the Mexican Revolution in 1917, and how President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–40) would later give political expression to its promises for social and economic justice with the corporatist-style system he created.³² This revolutionary fervor, however, had other expressions too, including the 1917 Russian Revolution along with the rise of Benito Mussolini in Italy in 1922 and Miguel Primo de Rivera in Spain in 1923. New dictatorships promised order, stability, and modernization. Modern corporatism was but one of many possible paths at this global juncture as new—or previously unsavory and marginal—ideas vied for influence.

At first glance, corporatism fits comfortably with the narrative of heightened nationalism, protectionism, and isolationism in the interwar decades. Corporatist dictators supported policies to grow internal markets and secure national self-sufficiency, while celebrating national greatness and renewal. Yet despite the ferocity with which Vargas and Salazar proclaimed their *Estado Novo* to be national revolutions against toxic, foreign, liberal ideologies, or exploitative and volatile international markets, their experiments with corporatism crystallized in a deeply transnational and global context. The intellectual origins of modern corporatism, as scholars often note, are largely found in French, German, or Italian writings.³³ Yet for Brazilian and Portuguese intellectuals, corporatism was not borrowed but instead a by-product of collaboration and mutual inspiration. When political and intellectual elites in Brazil and Portugal denounced so-called imported ideas, they rejected a model of diffusion from core to peripheral countries, and instead emphasized that they too were active participants in the search for new political and economic orders. One of the challenges, and I hope innovations, is to show how a nation-centric project was constituted through transnational conversation, debate, and exchange. Ideas circulated in multiple and unpredictable directions, and were translated, appropriated, and misunderstood along the way.³⁴

More specifically, I center the production of economic knowledge and practice in the Portuguese-speaking Atlantic to explore how interwar governments approached economic decline and political instability. With the rise of regional and area studies in the latter half of the twentieth century, Brazil's development is frequently compared to that of neighboring Latin American

economies while Portugal is often inserted into eurozone histories. Over the past twenty years, historians have made a strong case that we must think beyond the nation-state to understand how new ideological tool kits and policies emerge. Connections between Brazilian and Portuguese intellectuals and bureaucrats not only amplified the diffusion of corporatist ideas abroad but also legitimized this third path at home. Those who supported Vargas's and Salazar's regimes consistently defended corporatism as ideally suited to their societies by mobilizing sociological, cultural, and racial arguments.³⁵ To anchor this study in Brazil and Portugal is also to contend with the real and imagined afterlives of imperial bonds.³⁶

Brazil provides a unique vantage point for examining the rise and fall of corporatism for its connections to several regions—cultural and historical ties with the Portuguese Empire, growing influence from Fascist Italy and the New Deal United States, and increasing ties to other Latin American countries—as well as its impressive economic and social transformations during the twentieth century. Brazil's population was about fourteen million in 1890, doubling to thirty-one million by 1920, and reaching fifty-two million by 1950. In 1920, agriculture accounted for 32 percent of Brazil's GDP and industry 17 percent; by 1960, industry outpaced agriculture, and so Brazil's industrial takeoff cannot be separated from the Vargas era.³⁷ This trend accelerated in the 1960s with Brazil becoming an industrial powerhouse. Historians have debated whether the 1930 Revolution was more a point of rupture or continuity, yet few deny that Vargas's dictatorship not only intensified all the above processes but shaped their institutional form and political focus too.

In the case of Brazil, Vargas's rule did not initiate processes of industrialization, domestic market diversification, or the rise and organization of the working classes. Rather, Brazil was already undergoing a profound transformation in its economic and social organization when Vargas seized power in 1930s. As historian Steven Topik has argued, the *laissez-faire* logic was more myth than reality during Brazil's First Republic (1889–1930) as both state and federal governments intervened in markets with valorization schemes to prop up coffee prices and subsidies for railroads.³⁸ Such forms of state intervention, however, were limited in scope and largely relegated to commodity sectors. More important, they were often defended as exceptional or emergency measures, driven more by necessity than doctrine. Vargas's state-led economic programs were not just more profound, systematic, and large-scale but defended on doctrinal terms as well, formally elevating as norm and obligation the state's role in the economy.³⁹

During the Vargas era, intellectuals, industrialists, and government officials used corporatist ideas to design state intervention in labor, price, and production. The corporatist structure of Brazil's development path is especially evident

in labor relations. Corporatists seized on the notion of “social peace” that was implicit in legal theory about the social question circulating throughout the civil law world to make their case for the dissolution of preexisting forms of labor activism. Prior to 1930, workers in both rural and urban settings had organized autonomous *sindicatos* (labor unions) to demand better conditions, the right to arbitration, minimum wages, and government measures to stabilize the rising cost of living. Following the 1930 Revolution, Vargas implemented several decree laws to require that all *sindicatos*, cooperatives, associations, and other collective organizations be recognized by the state.⁴⁰ These efforts to manage labor relations, Brazilian historians emphasize, were essential to Vargas’s emergent state developmentalist model by generating a vast system of welfare and social rights to support the growth—loyalty—of an industrial labor force.⁴¹

The corporatist structure of Brazil’s economy is most evident in labor relations, but corporatism went beyond this arena. Indeed, corporatism as it persisted and survived became both the ideological and institutional substrate through which the state increased its role in Brazil’s economy, and is a missing piece that explains some of the puzzles and paradoxes of its economic development. This was apparent in the rise of technocratic modes of governance, in which economic policy was debated and drafted by special commissions created in the 1930s and 1940s—commissions staffed by not only bureaucrats but industry representatives too, whether agricultural, industrial, or commercial.⁴² Corporatist institutions also increasingly shaped how goods were produced, traded, and exported in Brazil. For agricultural staples like coffee, sugar, or maté, Vargas’s government created national institutes to discipline producers as well as establish price control and export regulations. But here corporatist ideal and practice frequently diverged, not only because the corporatist system never extended to all sectors or all regions, but also because not all forms of economic planning fit squarely with corporatist doctrine. This is key to the durability of corporatism in Brazil: this system was flexible enough that it could comfortably accommodate, for example, the creation of state-owned steel plants or oil companies. Corporatism was one approach to state-directed economic development, and one way of coordinating private capital, independent producers, and the citizenry in the name of national progress. What made it “corporatist” was that interests were understood according to sector, and rights and privileges were negotiated within sector associations.

The very ambiguity and multivalent meanings of corporatism make the transnational perspective essential for understanding not only how it shaped Brazilian and Portuguese economies but also for why corporatism matters in twentieth-century debates over development and the role of the state in economic life. Salazar oversaw one of the most complete and long-lasting

experiments with corporatism. In the case of Portugal, as much as for Brazil, corporatist strategies to organize national production in the 1930s and 1940s created the institutional foundations for postwar development efforts.

Portugal is an ideal counterpart to Brazil not just because the two countries share language, history, and legal systems. Portugal's Estado Novo dictatorship was in place for over forty years, meaning that corporatism could evolve and expand.⁴³ While Portugal's model would also depart from pure theory, many of Salazar's closest advisers were theorists of corporatism, responsible for its normative and practical elaboration. Portugal's economic transformation in the twentieth century was less dramatic than that of Brazil's, but no less disruptive to social, political, and cultural life. Portugal's population was about 6 million in 1920 and jumped to 8.5 million by 1950, remaining stable at this number for several decades as lower infant mortality rates coincided with high emigration rates. Agriculture remained the base of Portugal's economy throughout the Estado Novo, but industry made important advances too; 56 percent of the active Portuguese population was employed in agriculture and fishing in 1920—a number that decreased to 44 percent by 1960.⁴⁴ As in Brazil, the urban working classes were organized into *sindicatos* recognized by the state, but in Portugal this system was most pronounced among those rural workers and producers who joined *grêmios*, or agricultural guilds. For some sectors, membership in *grêmios* was mandatory; for others, it was voluntary. *Grêmios* were responsible for not only representing members' interests and providing social security benefits but also regulating local market conditions, ensuring that price controls and production quotas were observed by members, and facilitating the acquisition of machinery and other licensing. For export sectors such as wine, cork, or cod, *grêmios* oversaw the warehousing and export of goods, again with the goal of price stability.

When Salazar came to power, Portugal was a small and impoverished country on the edge of the Iberian Peninsula. But it was also an empire stretched across Africa and Asia, and so Estado Novo officials constantly vacillated between a state of resignation about the country's second-rate status in Europe and pompousness about its former imperial greatness. Following Brazil's independence in 1822, Portugal attempted to reconstitute its empire with schemes to build settler colonies in Africa, particularly in Angola and Mozambique, and harness their economic potential. Despite grandiose ambitions, it endured financial failures, territorial losses, and geopolitical embarrassments, which is why Salazar made imperial renewal central to his governing ideology.⁴⁵ The Estado Novo extended its corporatist bureaucracy to the empire in order to increase commodity production and supply Portuguese industries with raw materials. While Salazar's corporatist project in the empire remained limited and threadbare, it is not possible to explain the evolving meaning or

practice of corporatism in Portugal without accounting for the symbolic and economic importance of efforts to tighten commercial relations between metropole and colonies. The specter of past—and promise of future—imperial glory also animated renewed intellectual and political connections between Brazil and Portugal in the 1930s. Empire became essential to why corporatism held such appeal in both countries.

Brazilian and Portuguese intellectuals looked to each other, although the nations diverged in size, geography, and demography. This book is not an exercise in comparison but instead one in how comparison gets used politically. In Portugal, “scientific pessimism” infused how intellectuals, scientists, and political leaders contended with the alleged social pathologies of the Portuguese people.⁴⁶ For the Portuguese, the nineteenth century was a period of decline and stagnation, with the loss of both Brazil in the 1820s and territories in Africa to the British in 1890. Portuguese intellectuals, sociologists, and anthropologists obsessively debated the geographic, economic, or cultural traits that limited the country’s development. They made all but unavoidable comparisons with Britain or Germany as competition between nations intensified over colonial possessions. Portuguese intellectuals, however, looked increasingly to Brazil for evidence that it was once a great imperial power.

Brazil also wrestled with the notion of empire in the 1920s, albeit in different ways. Brazilian elites worried not about decline but rather degradation. Brazil had been a slave society for nearly four hundred years, during which slavery had underpinned continued political and social support for monarchy following its independence from Portugal. In 1822, Brazil transformed from colony to empire. Its political and legal institutions continued to support the interests of the landholding classes, with law and violence wielded to enforce a social and racial hierarchy in which enslaved labor constituted the pyramidal base.⁴⁷ By the end of the nineteenth century, Brazilian elites embraced Darwinian social theory, positivism, and scientific racism to further assert the supposed innate superiority of some races over others even as Brazilian intellectuals and scientists tried to celebrate their population’s unique adaptability to local climates and geographies.⁴⁸ The abolition of slavery in 1888 occurred during a period of mass migrations to Brazil from the Middle East, Japan, and especially southern Europe. From the 1870s onward, Brazil’s state and federal governments intervened to support European migration in particular in order to “whiten” their multiraced population, turning miscegenation into a civilizing tool.⁴⁹ By the 1920s, Brazil was the world’s most diverse multiethnic, multiracial society. For political and economic elites, demographic trends became a source of pessimism—a hinderance to Brazil’s ability to reach the ranks of wealthy, industrialized nations. In the years following abolition, sociologist

Mara Loveman argues, “the idea of progress itself became racialized.”⁵⁰ By the 1920 census, Portuguese immigrants in Brazil accounted for nearly 30 percent of the foreign-born population.⁵¹ Brazilian elites emphasized ties with Portugal as a strategy to erase or minimize the country’s Afro-Brazilian heritage. As conservative jurist Levi Carneiro later articulated, the growing closeness between the two Portuguese-speaking nations owed not just to their “shared language” and “common past.” It was a vehicle for Brazilian intellectuals to stress the nation’s “Europeanness.”⁵²

Across the Luso-Atlantic, Brazilian and Portuguese intellectuals underpinned their corporatist models with an imperial logic, promising modernization while preserving the existing social and racial hierarchy. The corporatist model attempted to formalize, not equalize, social and economic differences across classes and regions. By drawing Brazil and Portugal together, it becomes possible to see the multiple and entangled ways in which ideas broadly labeled *corporatist* circulated across the Atlantic. Ideas and institutions did not flow unilaterally from Brazil to Portugal (or vice versa). Rather, the 1930s and 1940s were years of mutual influence and admiration. There was no “original” or “copy.”⁵³ And with corporatism, theory cannot be emphasized at the expense of implementation because both nations were working simultaneously to fix mounting economic problems.

Corporatism as Law

The working out and fixing of economic problems through corporatism is evident especially in law. In Vargas era Brazil, law became a primary tool for putting the corporatist economic system into practice, and thus I put corporatist legalism under a microscope in this book. The centrality of law is not surprising given Brazil’s legal culture, like other civil law contexts in which law is more aspirational than a reflection of social realities.⁵⁴ Similar dynamics unfolded in Salazarist Portugal, a regime largely run by jurists and law professors who demonstrated a consistent—and even obsessive—tendency not just to draft constitutions and laws but also to detail new legal theories to defend how these laws departed from normative conventions.

Law, in this book, is useful for what it reveals about the intellectual history of competing economic visions and political stakes. The fact that authoritarian regimes on both sides of the Atlantic obsessed over writing and rewriting laws also reveals something about the ongoing struggle for political and popular legitimacy, evident in the almost compulsive need for both Estado Novo regimes to constantly outline their ambitions to the public. Brazilian political scientist Vanda Maria Ribeiro Costa explains that for corporatist intellectuals, their “utopia” was to believe in law as a corrective instrument and moral force

for social change.⁵⁵ In the 1930s in particular, the jurists' task was to create legal parameters for the social transformations wrought by Brazil's economic transformations—in other words, to correct the injustices and disequilibriums produced by industrialization. This legal history reveals the competition between liberalism and corporatism as well as among different corporatist visions.

Constitutions are a primary focus. Brazil and Portugal are two of only three corporatist dictatorships that ratified corporatist constitutions in the 1930s. Legal scholars are often quick to dismiss Brazilian and Portuguese corporatist constitutions as shams, or window dressings for dictatorships. Partly this skepticism stems from the fact that corporatist constitutions tended to come and go with new dictators, and derives from the North Atlantic standard that “constitutions have the aspiration to remain stable.”⁵⁶ Political theorists and legal scholars have long debated whether autocratic rulers can effectively limit the exercise of their powers with institutions of their own making, arguing that “self-binding” is so difficult to enforce in authoritarian contexts because dictators can change or violate their own rules with impunity.⁵⁷ While corporatist constitutions might not pass the test of real constitutions—those that guarantee individual rights and limit the powers of government—this does not mean that they were irrelevant. Historians and social scientists are increasingly paying attention to how dictatorships attempt to institutionalize their power, whether to appease elite power-sharing or promote autocratic stability.⁵⁸

In Brazil and Portugal, dictators wrote constitutions (alongside trusted legal advisers) to quell ideological conflict and respond to political and economic crises. With each new constitution, previous models might have been preserved or abandoned, and dictatorship itself constituted a choice. Constitutions, after all, are aspirational documents. This is as much the case for dictatorships as for democracies, even if the aspirations of dictators do not include liberty or equality. Brazilian historians and legal scholars in particular have placed renewed attention on authoritarian constitutions in order to unpack the ideological underpinnings of dictatorship, and explain the continuities between the *Estado Novo* and the military dictatorship installed in 1964.⁵⁹ Vargas and Salazar defended dictatorship as modern and progressive in contrast to the chaos of “too much choice” in liberal democracies.

To the extent that interwar corporatist constitutions have been analyzed in a global context, scholars then—and now—have debated if and how foreign influences might have corrupted national ideals. Brazil's 1937 Constitution, for example, is often discredited because it “copied” the Portuguese and Polish Constitutions as well as the Italian *Carta del Lavoro*.⁶⁰ Its foreignness is frequently taken as the reason why democratic principles were betrayed, but the transnational flow of similar models was precisely what made legal authoritarianism possible. This point is key. As Brazilian historians Luciano Aronne

de Abreu and Luis Rosenfield recently argued, the 1937 Constitution was not just Vargas's attempt at legitimacy but rather a legal project to defend authoritarian modes of government.⁶¹

These constitutions and laws mattered, moreover, because they transformed economic life, even if in unintended and unpredictable ways. I am concerned not only with legal theory and lawmaking but also with laws in action. Where the implementation of labor courts and protections afforded to the working classes are often studied as the pinnacle of the corporatist system, I focus instead on how both the Vargas and Salazar regimes mobilized special police forces and tribunals for economic crimes and enforced laws concerning fair price and just competition. Vargas and Salazar deployed censorship, secret police, special military tribunals, and other legal and extralegal tactics to suppress left-wing movements, labor activism, liberals, and even extreme right-wing opposition forces in order to usurp power as well as legitimize their regime in the name of national security. These dictatorships, however, also wielded these draconian legal tools and policing strategies to intervene in market life and hold accountable merchants who gouged prices or producers who failed to abide by price controls on essential goods. The extension of authoritarian legal tools to the marketplace required a reinvention of the ideologies and institutions that had previously regulated commerce: a liberal emphasis on the primacy of private contracts and private property gave way to a corporatist emphasis on disciplining private interests for national imperatives.⁶² Rather than take the legal experiments of the Brazilian and Portuguese dictatorships as failures, this book explores how jurists and lawmakers used law to both imagine and create new powers for the state to intervene in national economic life, and how citizens customized these laws to their own ends.

Across the nineteenth century, law was primarily concerned with the protection of property rights and enforcement of individual contracts. During the first decades of the twentieth century, legal scholar Duncan Kennedy contends, jurists and social reformers questioned this limited scope as the stresses of industrialization along with unbridled competition proved too serious to ignore. Increasingly, law became a tool for achieving social ends and economic development.⁶³ In the South Atlantic, this trend began to crystallize under interwar corporatist dictatorships. Debates over corporatist law, legislation, and policy were debates over how to structure the relationship between state and market, how to order and organize interests, and how to assert a hierarchy for economic development. Rather than emphasize how the Vargas and Salazar dictatorships deviated from liberal constitutional norms, I ask how their authoritarian legal tool kit was used to build something different: a new economic system.

Corporatism as an Economic System

Ultimately, then, this is a history of economic ideas in action. It shows how intellectuals and technocrats in the South Atlantic attempted to build a new economic system out of the interwar crisis of capitalism.⁶⁴ *A Third Path* takes the state as its primary object of analysis, and highlights the voices of low-, mid-, and high-level public officials as they responded to economic problems. Corporatism was not always explicit in their debates or policy designs, but it provided the scaffolding for how they thought about the economy. Without ceding rhetorical or political ground to leftist logics of class conflict as engines for economic transformation, state actors looked beyond individual actions and decision-making in order to organize and integrate economic groups into the state and thereby balance competing interests according to national development objectives. Driving this history of corporatism is the challenge to take seriously the history of the state in relation to the economy.

Corporatist intellectuals in Brazil and Portugal were often technocrats employed by the state who crafted theory in the process of designing policy.⁶⁵ Corporatism was ideally suited to address three distinct (but connected) economic problems: underdevelopment, dependency on international markets, and inchoate domestic production. Inside new government ministries, corporatists pushed ideas and policies to discipline prices, production, and commerce. Historians of Brazil in particular have emphasized the importance of looking beyond law as written on paper in order to understand how workers and industrialists alike maneuvered within the political frame to advocate for their rights and interests, and the consequences for those excluded.⁶⁶ The jurists and bureaucrats who designed these laws and institutions also had to confront the shortcomings of their planning, as their legal and economic thinking evolved to address new problems. Their concept of the state and how it should function, moreover, was sometimes nebulous, incomplete, or inconsistent.⁶⁷ While many chapters probe the limitations and frustrations with these corporatist experiments, the story I tell is not one of failure but rather evolving expectations of the state, and the persistence of broken or inadequate models.

In this light, this book also tells a new history of the Great Depression—one that shifts the intellectual and technical landscape of crisis management to new spaces on the margins of global capitalism. The US New Deal or Nazi Germany are the focus of many global studies.⁶⁸ Still, there are lessons to be learned beyond the industrialized world. Brazil and Portugal show how a crisis of capitalism in the center jolted bold programs for government action in the periphery.⁶⁹

By starting with the problems facing agricultural producers in both Brazil and Portugal, I highlight the importance of corporatist ideas and institutions

in how governments on both sides of the Atlantic tried to protect and grow the domestic production of agricultural staples not only for export but also increasingly for domestic consumption too.⁷⁰ In the economic sphere, corporatist experiments zeroed in on price as a key variable in their theory, models, and policy. To legitimize government actions to control prices for key goods, stakeholders had to combat classical economic models that asserted price as a variable dictated by laws of supply and demand along with liberal legal codes that asserted the primacy of private contracts between individuals.

In the corporatist worldview that emerged in both Brazil and Portugal, price acquired a different meaning. Fair prices became another instrument of economic justice and social peace under corporatist dictatorships. This focus on price was not unique to interwar corporatist dictatorships as evident with the rise of price controls and fair competition regulations in the United States or Chile.⁷¹ But in each country, governments had to justify new pricing policies according to local ideological and institutional traditions. And for Brazil and Portugal, legal and moral definitions of fair pricing depended on corporatist critiques of the free market. Corporatists seized on their efforts to stabilize prices and wages as evidence of how they offered a new type of democracy as they attempted to detach democracy from a liberal emphasis on liberty and representation to instead assert their *Estado Novo* regimes as guarantors of economic justice. Promise and practice diverge under these dictatorships; nevertheless, the experiment changed public expectations of the role of the state in economic life.

Authoritarian Development

Brazilian and Portuguese intellectuals who embraced corporatism ultimately claimed it as a newer, more progressive model for democracy—one that valued order over liberty and in which rights were defined by economic profession and sector. Forging an alternative economic model to *laissez-faire* or free market capitalism also became a project to define economic values like prices, wages, and interest, not according to market forces but instead careful negotiations between group interests and the greater economic imperatives of the nation. This project to brand corporatist dictatorships as democratic was not just authoritarian doublespeak, I argue, but an intellectual, legal, political, and institutional project to devise new rules and responsibilities for the state's intervention in economic life, and new channels by which industrialists, agricultural producers, and consumers could stake their claims to economic justice. At the same time, in both Brazil and Portugal, corporatist states were decreed following political coups, and put into practice by regimes that embraced state censorship and police repression as essential tools to remain in power. The history

of twentieth-century corporatism is inseparable from the history of authoritarianism, at least in southern Europe and Latin America. Key to understanding this nexus is not just how Vargas and Salazar touted promises for economic justice to vindicate their dictatorships but also how they seized on promises for economic recovery and transformation.

Corporatist ideas were so readily absorbed in Brazil and Portugal in part because of long-standing anxieties over delayed or lagging development. I emphasize the concept underdevelopment, to be clear, not to categorize either country's economic performance. Rather, underdevelopment was an intellectual and discursive project in the twentieth century, as historians Joseph Love and Paul Gootenberg have shown in their works on Brazil and Peru, respectively—one that informed how public officials grappled with economic problems.⁷²

The problem of underdevelopment became one of the threads connecting Brazil's corporatist experiment to that of Portugal. It has also been central to debates over the relationship between corporatism and authoritarianism. Social scientists writing on corporatism in the 1960s and 1970s in particular often interpreted it as a deviation from proper capitalist development, dominant in southern Europe and Latin America on account of their cultural-historical traditions.⁷³ Historian John D. Wirth acknowledged that much was new in Vargas's *Estado Novo*, but still framed corporatism as an update of "old Iberian traditions of patrimonialism" that Vargas "revamped into the mystique of technocracy."⁷⁴ Other scholars turned to corporatism to explain the rise of dictatorships, especially as a new wave of authoritarianism took hold in Latin America.⁷⁵ Corporatism seemed to offer a strategy for overcoming "delayed dependent capitalist development" by having the state integrate key groups into the decision-making structure of government to ensure political stability and coordinated developmentalist policies.⁷⁶ Latin America and southern Europe—the latter less theorized—were latecomers to the transition from agrarian to industrial societies, which was presumably why strong, centralizing, and authoritarian states guided the modernization process.⁷⁷ Some social scientists writing about the resurgence of corporatism across South America in the 1960s and 1970s, moreover, took the examples of Salazarist Portugal and Francoist Spain as archetypes for the rise of institutionalized—and highly bureaucratized—authoritarianism.⁷⁸ Portugal's *Estado Novo* was not a "fossil" still responding to bygone crises of the 1920s and 1930s, Schmitter contends, but a relevant case study in how a dictator and his narrow circle of advisers managed to build a governing system for steering "development without change; participation without freedom; capitalism without capitalists."⁷⁹ Corporatism, however, was hardly a static system, nor could its architects ever quite insulate it from change—or fully define it outside of capitalism.

This argument that corporatism offered a variety of capitalism without capitalists nonetheless dominated much of the early scholarship on corporatism. For historians and social scientists writing about Brazil and Portugal as both countries navigated transitions from dictatorship to democracy in the 1970s and 1980s, debates over corporatism turned into debates over the relationship between economic system and democratic possibilities. For Brazil in particular, a group of social scientists, largely from the University of São Paulo, explained the country's repeated turn to authoritarianism in terms of its incomplete transition from an agrarian society to an industrial one, in which no dominant class emerged powerful enough to temper the actions of the state and ground democratic practices.⁸⁰ Since the 1980s, historians such as Eli Diniz and Barbara Weinstein have challenged these notions about Brazil, rejecting the premise of Brazil's "missing bourgeoisie" by showing how industrialists maneuvered within Brazil's corporatist apparatus to impose their interests and design the very laws governing this system.⁸¹ As much as powerful interests were able to tilt the corporatist scale to benefit capital over labor and thereby shape Brazil's economic trajectory, the intellectual and political project to carve out a third path did not evaporate but rather evolved into debates over the possibilities of building new models to fix economic problems.

A Third Path does not intervene in debates over whether corporatism should be considered its own system or enfolded as a variation of capitalism. Rather, it considers how those who supported corporatism were themselves trapped by this debate. It does so by bringing the history of development back to the interwar period and reframing it as a response to the crisis of capitalism.⁸² The history of developmentalism as it has evolved over the past twenty years largely focuses on the post-World War II period, which couples the rise of developmentalism to the advance of liberal democracy and decolonization.⁸³ At first glance, the dichotomies of the Cold War might suggest that only two options were available to the developing world: capitalism or communism. This study of corporatism, however, illuminates not only the creative efforts to forge an intermediate path between those competing systems but also the importance of looking to alternative spaces to understand how interwar disruptions continued to shape postwar competition between different economic models. Rather than conclude that corporatism failed because it diverged too much in practice from its ideal type, in Brazil and Portugal we see how these interwar experiments generated durable models for public-private collaboration in the drive for economic development. Essential to their corporatist logic, Vargas and Salazar oversaw the design of new administrative channels for policymaking, conflict resolution, and enforcement, all while isolating these channels from public scrutiny and democratic accountability. Corporatism cannot be reduced to an authoritarian model for development, but its history is essential to

understanding the enduring appeal of top-down, technocratic, and even undemocratic policy actions in times of economic crisis.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 explores how corporatism emerged out of the 1920s' crises that discredited liberalism and laissez-faire capitalism. The Great Depression in 1929 was the culmination of decades-long political, economic, and financial crises impacting Brazil and Portugal, together explaining the rise of corporatism. Chapter 2 argues that the project to replace liberalism began as a legal experiment. This chapter traces the entangled histories of Brazil's experiments with corporatist constitutionalism and Portugal's 1933 Constitution. It excavates the many drafts written and discarded in both nations to examine how liberal democratic institutions were dismantled and replaced with corporatist-inspired ones. Jurists, political leaders, and intellectuals insisted that their aim was not to eliminate democracy but instead to replace liberal democracy with "authoritarian democracy."

Chapter 3 follows a network of economists that encompassed Brazil, Portugal, and Italy working to design "corporatist economics," or an economic model that could replace classical economic theories. One of this network's main theoretical interventions was to rethink price as an economic variable that needed to respond to social and economic interests. To ensure harmony between different economic groups and sectors, corporatist intellectuals emphasized the role of the state in national economic life, presenting the state as the necessary antidote to the failures self-adjusting markets. Chapter 4 shifts from ideas to institutions to show how corporatist economics shaped policy-making. Chapter 5 draws together legal and constitutional ideas with the initiatives to correct the failures of laissez-faire capitalism to consider how Brazil's experiment with corporatism altered the economic lives of merchants, bankers, and bakers. The chapter follows how Vargas and his legal team decreed a law to defend "popular economy," targeting the petty crimes of price gouging in food markets, usury, and other monopolistic activities.

The last two chapters describe the failures of corporatism as well as its survival in the postwar decades. Chapter 6 looks at the economic consequences of World War II in Brazil and Portugal. War disrupted the corporatist experiment inaugurated in the 1930s, but those same state institutions were seamlessly adapted to meet the wartime emergency. The chapter concludes with a paradox: the war strengthened Brazil's and Portugal's commitment to a state-directed economy, even as popular support for such interventions buckled, with citizens blaming inflation, shortages, and black markets on the excess of controls. Finally, Chapter 7 explores the decline of corporatist thinking, but

also its paradoxical survival with the rise of economic planning and developmentalism from the 1940s to the 1960s. By the war's end, the conviction with which intellectuals and technocrats alike had at one point defended the anti-liberal, top-down, and authoritarian project was tempered on both sides of the Atlantic as they came to terms with the shortcomings of their experiment. This was certainly more the case for Brazil than for Portugal, where competition between ideas was always more dynamic and a formal alliance with the Allied powers drew it into the democratic opening at the war's end. But Salazar had to contend with a groundswell of criticism and opposition too. In 1945, that one regime survived while the other did not was neither evident nor inevitable during the war. In Brazil, *corporatism* disappeared in name, but it survived in institutions well into the postwar period. By contrast, in Portugal, corporatism survived in both name and law, yet was reformulated to fit new postwar economic paradigms. In both countries, corporatist institutions survived to guide economic planning and developmentalism in the postwar decades.

Economic crises create opportunities for bold experimentation. Across seven chapters, *A Third Path* explores corporatism as an intellectual project and as a project in state making in order to recover the ideological and institutional coordinates that guided the process of economic recovery and development in twentieth-century Brazil and Portugal. Corporatism is no relic of interwar dictatorships, but a governing logic that continues to evolve as new economic problems emerge and different collective interests try to influence political power. To revisit earlier experiments with corporatism is to contend with the inherent problems of a system designed to channel (or limit) how citizens exert influence on national economic policies and priorities, but also to be reminded of the allure of new paths when old formulas appear broken.

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