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# **AUTHORITARIANISM AND CORPORATISM IN EUROPE AND LATIN AMERICA**

**CROSSING BORDERS**

Edited by

António Costa Pinto and Federico Finchelstein





# Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Europe and Latin America

What drove the horizontal spread of authoritarianism and corporatism between Europe and Latin America in the 20th century? What processes of transnational diffusion were in motion and from where to where? In what type of ‘critical junctures’ were they adopted and why did corporatism largely transcend the cultural background of its origins? What was the role of intellectual-politicians in the process? This book will tackle these issues by adopting a transnational and comparative research design encompassing a wide range of countries.

**António Costa Pinto** is Research Professor at the Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon. His research interests include fascism and authoritarianism, political elites and democratization. He is the author of *The Nature of Fascism Revisited* (2012), and he co-edited *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Europe* (2014) and *Corporatism and Fascism. The Corporatist Wave in Europe* (2017).

**Federico Finchelstein** is Professor of history at the New School for Social Research, New York. He is the author of several books on fascism, populism, the Holocaust and Jewish history in Europe and Latin America, including *Transatlantic Fascism* (2010), *The Ideological Origins of the Dirty War* (2014) and *From Fascism to Populism in History* (2017).

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Finchelstein**

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# Preface and acknowledgements

This book brings together scholars with established international expertise in corporatism, fascism and authoritarianism in Europe and Latin America and is the result of an informal working group that meets irregularly at the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon. The group has always brought together a number of political scientists and historians working in different countries and areas of expertise and had already published several books on topic such as charisma, political elites and decision-making processes, and theories of fascism.<sup>1</sup>

The theme of the diffusion of corporatism in European dictatorships of the era of fascism was already developed in a previous volume published by Routledge: António Costa Pinto, ed., *Corporatism and Fascism. The Corporatist Wave in Europe* (2017). This book should be seen as a companion volume to that one, since it expands the comparative and transnational study of corporatism both across and within Europe and Latin America. This book is also related with a previous project, comparing the European and Latin American corporatist experiences as well, already published in Portuguese.<sup>2</sup>

This volume is the product of some workshops and discussions held in Lisbon, at the Institute of Social Science, in New York, at the Remarque Institute of New York University, at the New School for Social Research, and at the Getúlio Vargas Foundation, in Rio de Janeiro, during which draft papers were presented, discussed extensively and subsequently revised in the light of both conceptual guidelines agreed at the workshops and feedback provided by the editors and by three anonymous reviewers. The editors also commissioned some chapters, and have worked closely with the contributors to harness their individual expertise along with maintaining the coherence of the work.

We would like also to thank the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon for its generous support; and Stewart Lloyd-Jones for translating and editing some of the texts for publication. António Costa Pinto is grateful to New York University where he benefited greatly from a Remarque Fellowship in 2017, and where he completed the research for this book. Finally, we would like to thank all the authors, for their active support and encouragement throughout the preparation of this book.

## Notes

- 1 Previous publications are A. C. Pinto and A. Kallis, eds, *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Europe*, London, Palgrave, 2014; A. C. Pinto, ed., *Rethinking the Nature of Fascism*, London, Palgrave, 2011; A. C. Pinto, ed., *Ruling Elites and Decision-Making in Fascist-Era Dictatorships*, New York, SSM-Columbia University Press, 2009; and A. C. Pinto, R. Eatwell and S. U. Larsen, eds, *Charisma and Fascism in Interwar Europe*, London, Routledge, 2007.
- 2 A. C. Pinto and F. C. P. Martinho, ed., *A Vaga Corporativa. Corporativismo e Ditaduras na Europa e na América Latina*, Lisbon, Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2016, and, *A Onda Corporativa. Corporativismo e Ditaduras na Europa e na América Latina*, Rio de Janeiro, Editora da Fundação Getúlio Vargas, 2016.

# 1 The worlds of authoritarian corporatism in Europe and Latin America

*António Costa Pinto and Federico Finchelstein*

In 1952, President Laureano Gómez tried (and failed) to reorganize political representation in Colombia along authoritarian corporatist lines and this attempt might be the end of the first wave of corporatism associated with the era of fascism in Europe and Latin America. A Catholic corporatist with Francoist sympathies and authoritarian tendencies, and leader of the Colombian Conservative Party, Gómez hoped to bring about a constitutional reform that would have transformed him into the president of an authoritarian, paternalist and more confessional state with an executive that was increasingly independent of the legislature and with a corporatist senate.<sup>1</sup> 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 20th century.<sup>2</sup> But corporatism was not entirely gone. After 1945, this authoritarian corporatism would be highly influential in the development of the new populism, especially in Latin America when populists first reached in power.<sup>3</sup> If Gómez had failed, leaders like Juan Domingo Perón in Argentina will not forget the interwar legacy of corporatism.<sup>4</sup>

Corporatism left an indelible mark on the first decades of the 20th century – during the interwar period particularly – both as a set of institutions created by the forced integration of organized interests (mainly independent unions) into the state and as an organic-statist type of political representation, alternative (and more rarely complementary) to liberal democracy.<sup>5</sup> Variants of corporatism had inspired conservative, radical-right and fascist parties, not to mention the Roman Catholic Church and the ‘third way’ favoured by some sections of the technocratic and even by left-wing elites.<sup>6</sup> Democracies and hybrid regimes, from Ireland, to Weimar Germany, Brazil or France, were also to create corporatist institutions, but corporatism stimulated the political crafting of dictatorships, from Benito Mussolini’s Italy through Primo de Rivera in Spain and the Austria of Engelbert Dollfuss, to Getúlio Vargas’s ‘New State’ or the brief dictatorship of José Felix Uriburu in Argentina. Some of these dictatorships, especially Italian Fascism in the 1930s made corporatism a universal alternative to economic liberalism.<sup>7</sup> As one of the most cited theoreticians of corporatism, Mihail Manoilescu, noted, ‘of all the



political and social creations of our century – which for the historian began in 1918 – there are two that have in a definitive way enriched humanity's patrimony ... corporatism and the single party'.<sup>8</sup> Manoilescu dedicated a study to each of these political institutions without knowing in 1936 that some aspects of the former would be long-lasting and that the latter would become one of the most durable political instruments of dictatorships.<sup>9</sup>

This book deals with the diffusion of corporatism in Europe and Latin America, and especially as a set of authoritarian institutions that spread across the interwar period. Powerful transatlantic processes of institutional transfers and ideological and political diffusion were a hallmark of interwar dictatorships and corporatism was at the forefront of this process of cross-national diffusion of authoritarian institutions, both as a new form of organized interest co-optation by the state and of an authoritarian type of political representation that was an alternative to parliamentary democracy.<sup>10</sup> The book represents the first attempt to analyse the transnational processes of intellectual and political diffusion of corporatism in both sides of the Atlantic and of its processes of institutionalization in Europe and Latin America.<sup>11</sup>

### **Social and political corporatism during the first wave of democratization**

Corporatism was a modern take on past forms of organization with the aim of disputing emerging forms of liberal democracy across the Atlantic and beyond. The model was the medieval corporations but the enemy were the political forms that emerged out of the ideals of the enlightenment. Also corporatism was a key dimension of what historian Zeev Sternhell has powerfully described as the anti-enlightenment<sup>12</sup>

Corporatism as an ideology and as a form of organized interest representation was first promoted strongly by the Roman Catholic Church, from the late-19th through to the mid-20th century, as a third way of social and economic organization in opposition to both socialism and liberal capitalism.<sup>13</sup> Pope Pius XI assumed that as a result of the Great Depression liberal capitalism and its associated political system was in decline and that new forms of economic and social organization were now needed.<sup>14</sup> The powerful intellectual and political presence of corporatism in the political culture of Catholic elites both in Europe and Latin America paved the way for other more secular influences.

Corporatism became a powerful ideological and institutional device against liberal democracy during the first half of the 20th century, but the neo-corporatist practices of some Dictatorships and democracies during its second half – both in Europe and Latin America and the different traditions of the use of the concept within the social sciences in the 1970s and 1980s – demands a conceptual clarification of the phenomenon being studied in this book. This includes disentangling social from political corporatism.<sup>15</sup>

*Social corporatism* 'can be defined as a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into a limited number of

singular, compulsory, non-competitive, hierarchically-ordered and functionally-differentiated categories, recognized or licenced (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and support'.<sup>16</sup>

*'Political corporatism* can be presented as a system of political representation based on an "organic-statist" view of society in which its organic units (families, local powers, professional associations and interest organizations and institutions) replace the individual-centred electoral model of representation and parliamentary legitimacy, becoming the primary and/or complementary legislative or advisory body of the ruler's executive.'<sup>17</sup>

During the interwar period corporatism existed across the right wing political spectrum and beyond. It permeated the main political families of the conservative and authoritarian political right: from the Catholic parties and Social Catholicism to radical right and fascists, not to speak of Durkheimian solidarists and supporters of technocratic governments associated with state-led modernization policies. Royalists, republicans, technocrats, fascists and social-Catholics shared 'a notable degree of common ground on views about democracy and representation' and on the project of a functional representation as an alternative to liberal democracy, namely as constituencies of legislative chambers or councils that were established in many authoritarian regimes during the 20th century.<sup>18</sup> However, there were differences between the Catholic corporatist formulations of the late-19th century and the integral corporatist proposals of some fascist and radical-right-wing parties.

Many ideologists of social corporatism – particularly within Catholic circles – advocated a societal corporatism without the omnipresent state, but the praxis of corporatist patterns of representation was mainly the result of an imposition by authoritarian political elites on civil society.<sup>19</sup> In fact,

whatever pluralist elements there were in corporatism (notably the stress on the autonomy of corporations), they were annihilated by a foundational commitment to a supreme common good, infusing with a sense of purpose and direction a complex pyramidal edifice that had the state at its apex.<sup>20</sup>

In practical terms, the institutionalization of social corporatism followed models close to the proclamations contained in the Italian labour charter (Carta del Lavoro), thereby demonstrating its primacy among transnational corporatists of the time. State intervention, a large imbalance between business and labour associations (with the former having greater influence and the independence of the latter eliminated) and the creation of strong para-state institutions, was typical of almost all the corporatist experiments. In fact, the elimination of free unions and their forced integration into the state was the dominant characteristic.

However, during this period corporatism was also 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.<sup>21</sup> From Oliveira Vianna or Azevedo Amaral, in Brazil, to Manoilescu in Europe, ‘what did unite the corporatist was their indifference to the concept of democracy and democratic norms’ and from this it was just a small step to corporations as a representational structure.<sup>22</sup> Corporatist theorists presented a reasonable diversity of the ‘organic basis of representation drawing on the permanent forces of society’, in their alternatives to liberal democracy, but as the Marquis de La Tour du Pin (1834–1924) noted, this representation must be ‘essentially consultative’.<sup>23</sup> The curtailment of this new legislature’s powers and the autonomy of an executive with a head of government who is not responsible to parliament is an almost universal proposal of corporatists in early 20th-century Europe and Latin America.

It is from this perspective we revisit the processes of the institutional crafting of social, economic and political corporatism, on three axes: transnational diffusion of corporatism both across and within Europe and Latin America, travelling models and debates, and experiences of institutionalization. Thus, the book as a whole analyses corporatism as an ideology and practice of power which was widely shared and it was discussed, reformulated and applied on both sides of the Atlantic.

### **The book**

Mihail Manoilescu is probably the most cited of corporatist authors and his works the most influential in the interwar period. His classic book, the *Century of Corporatism*, was translated into many languages. Less known is his role in his native Romania. In Chapter 5 (‘Mihail Manoilescu and the debate and practice of corporatism in Romania’), Constantin Iordachi gives us an excellent introduction to Manoilescu’s tumultuous political career in Romanian politics, as Minister, political activist, counsellor of King Carol II, President of his own National Corporatist League (1933–1938) and ‘fellow traveller’ of the Iron Guard, the major Romanian fascism movement. As Iordachi states, always motivated by the primary goal, ‘he set to his political activity... the complete reorganization of the Romania along corporatist lines’ – state, economy and society.

In Chapter 12 (‘The appropriation of Manoilescu’s *The Century of Corporatism* in Vargas’s Brazil’), Angela de Castro Gomes puts in ‘dialogue’ or ‘conversation’ the books of Manoilescu with the books of Azevedo Amaral, Manoilescu’s Brazilian translator in 1938 and one of the most important right-wing intellectuals and supporters of the Getulio Vargas’s ‘New State’. In a juncture where corporatism was read by Azevedo Amaral, not only as a possibility of political reform of the liberal order of representation, but as a ‘true’ model of national organization, encompassing government institutions and organizations corporatism became a nodal point for triggering an entire proposal

for national reorganization that also significantly involved the pro-nationalization and pro-industrialization of Brazil.

Oliveira Vianna, ideologue of the authoritarian state and a legal adviser of the Ministry of Labor in the 1930s, is undoubtedly the most important author of the institutionalization of social corporatism in Brazil. In Chapter 10, 'Fascism and corporatism in the thought of Oliveira Vianna. A creative appropriation', Fabio Gentile analyses the appropriation of fascist and corporatist ideas in the thinking of Brazilian intellectual and functionary, Oliveira Vianna. His aim is to open a dialogue between the debate on fascism as a 'transnational' and 'transatlantic' phenomenon and the process of 'shared-circulation'<sup>24</sup> of ideas at a global level between the two world wars. Gentile explains how corporatism was received from the Italian model and reworked in the authoritarian nationalist thinking of Oliveira Vianna.<sup>25</sup> His thesis is that fascism updated the instrumental authoritarianism of Oliveira Vianna's search of a new model of organization for the processes of modernization that were going on in Brazil in the late 1930s.

Oliveira Vianna is very much present on Chapter 11 as well ('Law and legal networks in the interwar corporatist turn: The cases of Brazil and Portugal'), by Melissa Teixeira. She deals with the exchange of legal ideas and promotion of shared experiments with corporatism between Portuguese and Brazilian Jurists, exploring the rise of corporatism in Brazil and Portugal in the 1930s and 1940s. Teixeira follows the legal networks that facilitated intellectual and policy exchanges between the two Estado Novo dictatorships. In tracing these 'transatlantic conversations', she demonstrates how changing legal norms sustained the Estado Novo regimes, as the function and content of law was reimagined in these extra-legal and authoritarian contexts across the Atlantic. Corporatist ideologues like the Portuguese Marcelo Caetano or the Brazilian Oliveira Vianna excelled at constructing arguments that denied, subverted or rebranded the arbitrary powers exercised by Salazar and Vargas. In Portugal and Brazil, corporatist supporters of the Estado Novo regimes increasingly disavowed comparisons with the 'totalitarian' regimes of Adolf Hitler in Germany or Benito Mussolini in Italy. To make these claims, one of the buzzwords on both sides of the Lusophone Atlantic became 'democracia autoritária' (authoritarian democracy), offered not as a contradiction in terms, but as an evolved form of democracy.

If fascist Italy becomes the most powerful agent of the 'universalization' of corporatism, the Portuguese 'New State' of Oliveira Salazar emerges in the 1930s as a sort of a conservative corporatist 'third way' between totalitarian fascism and democracy and its example is positively taken by many segments of conservative political elites both in Europe and Latin America. This is the topic of Chapter 4, 'Self-fashioning of a conservative revolutionary: Salazar's integral corporatism and the international networks of the 1930s conservative revolution', where José Reis Santos interprets Salazar's reception in the inter-war authoritarian corporatist wave and measures his influence in the 1930s' political-intellectual debates. Fuelled by the propaganda apparatus of Salazarism this presenting of the *Estado Novo* as a third way alternative to fascism

and Nazism would contribute even after the First World War to the revival of corporatist concepts in the 1950s.

Matteo Pasetti explores in Chapter 8 ('From Rome to Latin America: The transatlantic influence of fascist corporatism') the transatlantic connections between the Italian and the corporatist experiences in the Americas. He stresses how, when bridges were established, hybridization rather than imitation was the key to the corporatist experiences on the other side of the Atlantic. The Italian experience was central in this regard. But Spanish authoritarian intellectuals, mainly conservative Catholics and Action Française-inspired reactionaries, were also very important 'brokers' in the transatlantic diffusion of corporatism. As Valerio Torregiani cogently illustrates in Chapter 9 ('A travelling intellectual of a travelling theory. Ramiro de Maeztu as a transnational agent of corporatism'), the Spanish intellectual Ramiro de Maeztu, for example, personifies a typical transnational agent in the elaboration and diffusion of corporatist thought, having lived and worked in Spain, the United Kingdom and Latin America with numerous travels to France, Italy, Germany and the United States. More interesting in this case is that De Maeztu's 'corporatist turn' resulted during his British period, under the influence of a vast and heterogenic corporatist political movement that is the New Age Circle. During the 1920s, he fully developed his traditional, catholic and authoritarian version of corporatism and, after supporting Primo de Rivera, he was appointed Spanish Ambassador in Argentina in 1927. Returning to Spain in 1930, he founded the right-wing monarchist movement *Acción Española* in 1931 before taking the side of Francisco Franco in the Spanish Civil War. As Torregiani stresses: 'Retracing the individual experience of Ramiro De Maeztu helps us underpin the interpretation of corporatism as a "travelling theory in the political culture of the interwar Europe", as recently put by Matteo Pasetti.'

## **Experiences**

How has corporatism morphed from theory to practice? Since representation is an essential element of modern political systems, authoritarian regimes of the interwar period tended to create political institutions in which the function of corporatism was to give legitimation to organic representation and to ensure the co-optation and control of sections of the elite and organized interests. In the following section we look at European and Latin American Experiences.

In Chapter 2 ('Corporatism and Italian Fascism') Goffredo Adinolfi deals with the tensions around the slow institutionalization of corporatism in fascist Italy. This process of institutionalization is particularly interesting because while it was a key element in the spread of social corporatism as it increasingly became the dominant model, its implementation was especially sluggish. In fact, it significantly had more inter-institutional tensions than the other transitions to authoritarianism such as the Spanish or the Portuguese ones. Even as an integral part of the Italian National Fascist Party (PNF) programme and quickly outlined in the declaration of principles in the 1927 Labour Charter, it

was to take another 11 years for the new system to be integrated and completed with the creation of the *Camara dei Fasci e dei Corporazione*.

Quisling's brief and limited rule in Nazi-occupied Norway is another interesting case because it represents the takeover of (limited) power by a small fascist party, National Unity (NS – *Nasjonal Samling*), which was closer to Nazi Germany in its international relations but influenced by both National Socialism and Italian Fascism in both its ideology and political programme. In Chapter 6 ('Corporations against corporatism in Quisling Norway, 1940–1950s') Stein Larsen analyses Quisling's plan and praxis for the introduction of social and political corporatism and its abrupt end provoked both by the resistance from organized interests, particularly from within the economic sector, as well as that of the Nazi authorities, fearing social conflict. In fact Reichskommissar Terboven believed the situation to be critical and anticipated a situation in which vital German interests came under threat, so, in response, he overruled the NS and cancelled the Riksting plan.

The corporatist experiences in Latin America were rich and far-reaching as well. Latin America participated in what has been called the first wave of democratization, and in the following 'reverse wave'. Starting in the early 1920s, but especially in the context of the Great Depression, a surge of dictatorships reduced the proportion of competitive systems, establishing an impressive spectrum of authoritarian regimes, in some cases very unstable and poorly institutionalized, with others more consolidated. In Chapter 7 ('Corporatism and authoritarianism in Latin America. The first wave'), António Costa Pinto introduces the main agents of the diffusion of corporatism among elites in Latin America, namely the Catholic Church, reactionary intellectuals and fascists, concentrating on the 'critical junctures' of institutionalization of authoritarian regimes where corporatist alternatives were present, namely in Getulio Vargas's Brazil, and the dictatorships of Uriburu in Argentina, Sanchez Cerro in Peru, David Toro in Bolivia, and Rafael Franco in Paraguay.

In this context of transatlantic circulation and the enduring Latin American experiences with corporatism, Colombia and Chile experienced both failed corporatist projects as reformulations of ideology to local needs. In Chapter 14 ('Nationalist authoritarianism and corporatism in Chile'), Mario Sznajder illustrates how local Chilean intellectuals elaborated their own versions and demonstrates that early influences did not disappear from Chile's political scenario of the interwar period, proving resilient both to liberal democracy and military rule and developed as minority social and political trends and movements that proved influential, especially in times of crises. These corporatist authoritarian models wanted to represent a 'legitimate alternative to both capitalist liberal democracies and communist statism'.

In Colombia, it was a proto-populist like the dictator Gustavo Rojas Pinilla that closed the chapter of Laureano Gomez' failed corporatist project. While in Argentina the failure of the interwar years did not preclude the emergence of populist forms of corporatism which were nonetheless influenced by the



previous fascist forms. As Federico Finchelstein stresses in Chapter 13 ('Corporatism, dictatorship and populism in Argentina'), in its Argentine itinerary, corporatism underwent a metamorphosis. It started as a central element of the dictatorial legitimacy of the short Uriburu regime 1930–1932 (which after 1932 the Argentine fascists conceived as a real third way of democracy) to become a key dimension of general Juan Domingo Perón's populism and his 'organized community' (1946–1955).

Thus, if, as in the case of Gomez in Colombia, corporatism had failed as an alternative to liberal democracy and socialism in the postwar years, it did not abandon the scene but rather was reformulated as a key ingredient of the newly emerging populist democracies that filled Latin America in the early Cold War years. Presented as a technocratic dimension of the new populist power regimes, corporatism continued its key present in the transatlantic history of the postwar. This, of course, represents another chapter in corporatism's longstanding transatlantic voyages but this more recent histories can be better understood with the varied contributions of the interwar years that this book presents.

## Notes

- 1 D. Nicolás Motta, *Laureano Gómez Castro y su Proyecto de Reforma Constitucional (1951–1953)*, Bogota, Universidad de Rosário, 2008.
- 2 A. C. Pinto, ed., *Corporatism and Fascism. The Corporatist Wave in Europe*, London, Routledge, 2017.
- 3 F. Finchelstein, *From Fascism to Populism in History*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2017.
- 4 For the literature on Latin America see the collection of articles of the 1970s of Howard J. Wiarda, *Corporatism and National Development in Latin America*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1981; James M. Malloy, ed., *Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America*, Pittsburg, The University of Pittsburg Press, 1976 (especially Guillermo O'Donnell's chapter); and Ruth B. Collier and David Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena. Critical Junctures. The Labor Movement and Regime Dynamics in Latin America*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1991.
- 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, Princeton University Press, 1978; and J. J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 2000, pp. 215–17.
- 6 See P. J. Williamson, *Varieties of Corporatism: A Conceptual Discussion*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- 7 M. Pasetti, *L'Europa corporativa: Una storia transnazionale tra le due guerre mondiali*, Bologna, Bononia University Press, 2016.
- 8 M. Manoilescu, *Le Parti Unique: Institution Politique des Regimes Nouveaux*, Paris, Les Oeuvres Françaises, 1936, p. viii.
- 9 M. Manoilescu, *Le Siècle du Corporatisme*, Paris, Librairie Felix Alcan, 1934.
- 10 For a typology of outcomes of diffusion in this period, see K. Weyland, *Making Waves: Democratic Contention in Europe and Latin America Since the Revolutions of 1848*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 35–77.

- 11 See D. Musiedlak, ed., *Les Experiences Corporatives dans L'Aire Latine*, Bern, Peter Lang, 2010; and A. C. Pinto and F. P. Martinho, eds, *A Onda Corporativa: Corporativismo e Ditaduras na Europa e na America Latina*, Rio de Janeiro, Editora da Fundação Getúlio Vargas, 2016.
- 12 See Zeev Sternhell, *The Anti-enlightenment Tradition*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2009.
- 13 M. Conway, 'Catholic politics or Christian democracy? The evolution of interwar political Catholicism', in W. Kaiser and H. Wahnout, eds, *Political Catholicism in Europe, 1918–45*, vol. 1, London, Routledge, 2004, pp. 235–251.
- 14 See John F. Pollard, *The Papacy in the Age of Totalitarianism, 1914–1958*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014.
- 15 For an overview of this literature on corporatism, the 'new corporatism' and neo-corporatism, see P. J. Williamson, *Varieties of Corporatism: A Conceptual Discussion*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- 16 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, Notre Dame University Press, 1974, p. 94. As Howard Wiarda suggests, even if associated to varied forms of political regimes, this definition 'was still tied to the more authoritarian versions (...)'. See Howard J. Wiarda, 'The political sociology of a concept: Corporatism and the "Distinct Tradition"', *The Americas*, 66 (1) July 2009, p. 90.
- 17 A. C. Pinto, 'Fascism, corporatism and the crafting of authoritarian institutions in inter-war European dictatorships', A. C. Pinto (ed.), *Corporatism and Fascism. The Corporatist Wave in Europe*, London, Routledge, 2017, p. 89.
- 18 P. J. Williamson, *Corporatism in Perspective: An Introductory Guide to Corporatist Theory*, London, Sage, 1989, p. 32.
- 19 Stepan, *The State and Society*, p. 47.
- 20 C. Laborde, *Pluralist Thought and the State in Britain and France, 1900–1925*, London, Macmillan, 2000, p. 165.
- 21 D. A. Chalmers, 'Corporatism and comparative politics', in H. J. Wiarda, ed., *New Directions in Comparative Politics*, Boulder, Westview, 1991, p. 63.
- 22 Williamson, *Varieties of Corporatism*, p. 63.
- 23 Ibid. p. 69.
- 24 M. Pasetti (ed.), *Progetti corporativi tra le due guerre mondiali*, Roma, Carocci, 2006.
- 25 F. Finchelstein, *Transatlantic Fascism: Ideology, Violence and The Sacred in Argentina and Italy 1919–1945*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2010; and F. Gentile, 'Il Brasile e il modello del corporativismo fascista', *Passato e Presente*, no. 91 (2013), pp. 35–58.

## 2 Corporatism and Italian Fascism

*Goffredo Adinolfi*

To discuss the organic corporatism of Italian Fascism is to discuss a new type of relationship between the state and its citizens, and thus to examine how authoritarian regimes sought to resolve the problem of representation. This was in fact the crucial issue for the dictatorships that emerged after the First World War; we should remember that many of these clearly saw themselves not just as parentheses for resolving a particular problem, as had been the case for previous such regimes, but, as Giovanni Sartori has pointed out, as real and stable alternatives to the liberal democratic model.<sup>1</sup> There were essentially two alternatives at that point to liberal democracy: on the one hand the Soviet option of socialist collectivism, based on overcoming the capitalist system, and on the other the dictatorships of the 'third way', based on a supposed reconciliation between the interests of labour and those of capital.<sup>2</sup>

Credible alternatives required new types of institution that would allow the new single-party regimes to function.<sup>3</sup> The establishment of these institutions was therefore crucial to the construction of these new regimes, including Italian Fascism.

As Jennifer Gandhi cogently explains, the establishment of institutions and the creation of specific government bodies derived from a particular way of understanding the relationship between citizens and the state and should not simply be regarded as 'window dressing', even where authoritarian regimes were concerned.<sup>4</sup> For them this was especially the case, however paradoxical it might seem, because in the absence of electoral legitimation the issue of representation and consensus was still critical. In other words, the relationship between the state and the masses was fundamental to the construction of a corporatist and organic state in which, however, these masses had to live within a system constructed and directly controlled by the state. The relationship in place under liberalism, wherein the sovereignty of the people, centred on the individual, had been the basis for legitimacy, was essentially overturned. Sabino Cassese stresses that the doctrines of corporatism have their place in the thinking on citizen involvement: thinking addressed at bridging the gap between the 'paese legale' and the 'paese reale', that is between those in government and the rest of society.<sup>5</sup>

The literature on corporatism is extensive and interpretations of it are correspondingly numerous. Here we will restrict ourselves to a reconstruction of the developmental path of the Italian Fascist political system, showing in what ways it did or did not conform to the model of the corporatist and organic state,<sup>6</sup> or rather, to use Virgilio Feroci's definition, the state 'as an authentic organism similar to physical organisms'; this differed from the liberal and social-contract state, which 'is seen as a voluntary and artificial body created by the agreement of the individuals who constitute it'.<sup>7</sup>

### **The crisis of the liberal order**

The Italian Fascist regime, as indicated above, shifted its orientation away from theories of the social contract, based on the voluntary participation of the individual, to 'organic' theories, in which the individual was seen as a simple particle within a body that pre-existed him.

That said, it should also be understood that there was in fact general agreement that in the wake of the First World War the liberal regime had entered a period of profound transformation and crisis. While it was agreed that the liberal institutional system was no longer capable of responding to the changes within a society where the masses had now entered the political arena and were making their voice heard, there were disparate responses and solutions offered to the crisis. There were essentially four currents of constitutional thinking that put forward reforms along different lines to the greater democratization of the system that Italy was going through at that time: the elitists, particularly represented by Gaetano Mosca; the nationalists (Alfredo Rocco, Giacomo Acerbo and Giovanni Gentile); the fascists, among whom Sergio Panunzio was a leading theorist; and, finally, liberals such as Santi Romano, a prominent advocate of Italian Liberal constitutionalism.

At the root of the 'crisis of the modern state', wrote Romano, were the proliferation of associations – trade unions and employer confederations – that were real centres of authority located outside state control, and in competition with the state.<sup>8</sup> The 'crumbling of the modern state' was illustrated by the weakness of political representation, which failed to reflect society in the state.<sup>9</sup> Romano concluded that at least one principle should be retained: that of a higher organization, moderating and reconciling those below it, and representing the common interest.

The stability of the state was seen as too important to be left vulnerable to social conflict, especially in an Italy that had been physically unified but was socially deeply divided.<sup>10</sup> From this perspective, even universal male suffrage was to be viewed as a mistake: too hurried, or perhaps incompatible with the tribulations of the Kingdom of Savoy. As Gaetano Mosca pointed out, within a system of disparate parties the monarchy had had an important role in choosing the ruling elite, but this room for manoeuvre was drastically reduced with the birth of the mass parties – the Socialists and the *Partito Popolare* – which then became real para-constitutional or pre-constitutional institutions.<sup>11</sup> A further

failure in representativeness, confirmed after the law on proportional representation had been introduced, could be seen in the instability of governments. Parliamentarism was seen by Mosca as the main reason for Italy's crisis; he maintained that parliamentary rule was erroneous, and was responsible not for a crisis within the system but for a crisis of the system. This could only be resolved by fundamental changes to the system itself.<sup>12</sup> The solution lay, also in this case, in a return to the text of the constitution: restoration of the king's freedom to decide on the government, which should be removed from supervision by the Chamber of Deputies.<sup>13</sup>

In the end it was the anti-democratic thinking of nationalism, inspired by Charles Maurras, that played the largest part in determining the political system of Fascism. This approach completely abandoned the liberal idea of 'checks and balances', replacing it with the principle of collaboration between the various component parts of the state.<sup>14</sup>

Alfredo Rocco, a prominent leader of the Italian Nationalist Association (ANI), promoted a real counter-revolution by questioning the very idea of popular sovereignty and the social contract. While in liberal thinking the people were fundamental to the existence of the nation, in Rocco's ideas the people could not exist unless the nation existed.

The state could not be split into parties, and the unions had to be an organic part of the state and not in opposition to it. Within the organic construction of society the individual could no longer be the basis of its development, as in the liberal tradition.<sup>15</sup> Everything had to be subordinated to the needs of a state organized in an organic way, and thus the individual, but also the economy, had to be organized for the nation.<sup>16</sup> This meant that the free market had to be constrained by the wellbeing of the nation, and national collaboration between businesses would therefore always be favoured over competition.<sup>17</sup> The individual and businesses had to be controlled and regulated in order for there to be collaboration and economic development, and also to avoid any sudden imbalances that would be difficult to accommodate in the short term.<sup>18</sup>

Conflict was simply not supposed to exist in an organic state, as all the energies of the nation, the only thinking body, were to be engaged in increasing its capacity to project itself towards the outside.<sup>19</sup> In brief, it was necessary to move from liberalism to corporatism, and from class-based organizations to national consortia that no longer defended the interests of workers but were essential for managing production.<sup>20</sup>

The nationalists were well aware that the unions could not simply be abolished. The approach to take was to establish industrial syndicates whose prime responsibility would be to develop solidarity among producers, and between the producers and their workers. The state thus had to develop an approach to the legal recognition of associations for both proprietors and workers, in order for these to exercise restraint in the field of economic competition, and not to damage the nation.<sup>21</sup>

While unions in the new corporatist state had to be tightly regulated and controlled, parties, being representatives only of parts, had to be simply abolished,

and replaced by national syndicates without any revolutionary or class features.<sup>22</sup> Parliament should no longer house the representatives of the sovereignty of the people, but should be constituted by the vital forces of the nation, the producers and union representatives. Rocco concluded that it was necessary to reduce the power of the Chamber of Deputies, and to transform the Senate into a corporatist chamber.<sup>23</sup>

### **30 October 1922: from liberalism to dictatorship**

After the march on Rome by the Fascist in October 1922, King Victor Emmanuel III asked Mussolini to form a new government. Although the history of the Fascist regime started with a coalition, as in the liberal tradition, the radically different nature of Fascism was immediately apparent. On 15 December 1922, Mussolini and some of his leaders established part of the approach that was to characterize Fascist Party (PNF) strategy in the future: institution of the Fascist Grand Council, and a reform of electoral legislation to favour the largest party.

The Fascist Grand Council, at that point still not a state body, met for the first time on 12 January 1923, and by its constitution was supposed to meet every month at noon on the twelfth day. Half way between a state institution and a party body, the Grand Council promoted itself as the engine of the Fascist revolution. Its members included the Fascist government ministers, the party's executive, the chief of police, the head of the Fascist militias, and the head of the prime minister's press office. It was thus a somewhat ambiguous entity: on the one hand it had been created to exert better control over the many and opposing factions within the PNF, but on the other it was the principal tool for the destruction of the liberal state.

This was also the point at which the nationalists decided to subsume themselves within the Fascist Party, while the latter adopted two of their fundamental principles: a declaration of loyalty to the king, and opposition to freemasonry. There were various reasons behind the decision to form one single group, including co-ordination of the process of recruiting the new elite,<sup>24</sup> there was also the need to end the recurrent clashes between nationalists and fascists, which had been manageable centrally but disruptive elsewhere.<sup>25</sup>

In reality, this union meant little change to anything of substance; it was Rocco, in a text to which Mussolini added a preface, who set out the points shared by fascist and nationalist thinking in the course of their development, and their identical position regarding the sacred nature of the state.<sup>26</sup> They were two parts of the same being: nationalism as the intellectual head,<sup>27</sup> and fascism as the body that could harness a mass structure to the elitist thinking.<sup>28</sup>

Electoral reform, developed within the Fascist Grand Council, was central to the first phase of Mussolini's government. A special commission had presented two options. The first, from Michele Bianchi, gave the handsome reward of two thirds of the seats in the Chamber to the party, or coalition of parties, that won the elections, while the remaining third was to be distributed proportionally. The Senate was to continue as non-elective. The second, put



forward by Roberto Farinacci, wanted to reintroduce the uninominal majority ('first-past-the-post') system.

The first approach prevailed, and was presented to the Chamber by Giacomo Acerbo, under-secretary to the President, who like Rocco was a nationalist. The Chamber, where there were 35 PNF deputies, approved the reform on 21 July 1923 by 223 votes to 123, and in the Senate it was approved by 165 votes to 41. The law took a step towards reducing the power of Parliament, as it had been configured after the elections of 1919 and 1921, and, in the view of Arrigo Solmi,<sup>29</sup> satisfied those who had wanted a return to those principles of Italy's constitution that placed the executive formally within the sphere of the monarchy's authority. Although not exactly constitutional reform, the new legislation adjusted the relationships between government, Parliament and the monarchy, favouring the first of these. In the next election, of 6 April 1924, the government-led list, including some liberals alongside the fascists, received more than 60 per cent of the votes and therefore the large majority of the seats in the Chamber.

### **First steps towards the corporatist state**

The years 1925 and 1926 marked the end of the PNF's collaboration with other parties, and the shift towards a more clear-cut fascist and corporatist regime.<sup>30</sup> Rocco was appointed Minister of Justice by Mussolini, and retained that role from 5 January 1925 until 20 July 1932: the central years of construction of the new regime.

After Mussolini's speech of 3 January 1925, which opened the road towards dictatorship, it was necessary to ensure the implementation in reality of the new direction the Prime Minister had decreed. A study commission (first with fifteen members, subsequently increased to eighteen) was established to look at further constitutional reform; it consisted of liberals, fascists and nationalists, and reflected the contradictions of the regime in construction. While there were no doubts about the need to strengthen the powers of the executive, nor on the critique of universal suffrage and therefore of parliamentarism, the most bitter conflict related to the corporatist institutions.

The clashes were not just between those who wanted a rapid transition towards corporatism and the anti-corporatists, who believed that it was necessary to remain within the liberal tradition, although with a more strongly authoritarian approach; even among the corporatists, there were some particularly deep divisions. The more traditionalist approach, in the school of Charles Maurras, stood in opposition to Sergio Panunzio's ideas about the syndical state.<sup>31</sup>

In October 1925 the Fascist Grand Council resolved to proceed with reform regardless of the committee's work. On 24 December 1925 the figure of the head of the government, prime minister and secretary of state was inserted into the structure, thus providing Italy with a form of constitutional government in which the head of the government was only accountable to the king; Parliament, meanwhile, had lost the ability to determine what it was to discuss, now the head of the government's exclusive privilege, and had also lost the important

role of holding him to account for his activity. Rocco, in 1927, was decidedly enthusiastic: the revolution had arrived, and after a century of Liberalism the individual had finally been subordinated to the nation.<sup>32</sup>

Definition of the attributes of the head of government was aided by Law 100 of 31 January 1926, which established the government's ability to publish decree laws. While this was intended to increase governmental power, its other objective was to control the issue of these laws, which had been frequently – and autonomously – used by ministers and bureaucrats.<sup>33</sup> Complete control over the actions of his ministers in fact now went to Mussolini, and this law introduced a complex procedure whereby every proposal, to be accepted, first had to be approved by the Cabinet. Rocco emphasized how thanks to this legislation the government acquired the ability to pass laws formally;<sup>34</sup> it took for itself the powers of Parliament, and thus seriously compromised the principle of the rule of law.

Parliament, deprived of almost all its main functions, remained formally the fundamental body for the development of legislation. In this vein Santi Romano observed that Law 100 did not necessarily withdraw the principle of the sharing of power, but modified this in order not to damage the organic unity of the state.<sup>35</sup> The veneration for the state expressed by Romano seems to have been at odds with his theory of the pluralism of judicial systems. In any case, as Norberto Bobbio shows, while this theory could have been understood in terms of a progressive liberation of individuals and groups from oppression by the state, it also betrayed anxieties regarding its potential disintegration.

With the reform of April 1926, moreover, the syndicates were awarded legal recognition and thus the capacity to stipulate collective agreements that were universally valid across all those categories represented on them. In his course on public law, Romano explained the functioning of the syndical structure: 'for each category of such people only one syndicate can be legally recognized in the district. [...] These organizations can then come together in federations, and the federations in confederations.'<sup>36</sup>

In July 1926, furthermore, both the Ministry of Corporations and the National Council of Corporations were established. The former's scope covered the exercise of the representative functions allotted to the legally recognized professional associations, while the latter's functions were initially consultative and subsequently partially legislative.<sup>37</sup> According to Virgilio Feroci, the National Council of Corporations had such wide powers and important functions as to give it the same status in the syndical and corporatist world as the Fascist Grand Council had in the world of politics.<sup>38</sup> It was chaired by the head of government and consisted of about a hundred members, including the Ministers of Corporations, the Interior, Justice, Finance, Public Works and Agriculture, and representatives nominated by the syndical confederations of employers and employees for the corresponding sectors.<sup>39</sup>

The corporatist state that Rocco was progressively constructing was, in contrast to the liberal tradition, a state that had 'not surrendered anything either to the individual or to independent associations of interests';<sup>40</sup> instead, it indicated a full 'confirmation of the principle of the state's authority for its

own best defence'.<sup>41</sup> With their legal recognition the syndicates not only became organs of public law, but all syndical life was subordinated to the principles and objectives of the fascist state,<sup>42</sup> and the fascist syndicates acquired a total and exclusive monopoly of representation. As Irene Stolzi makes clear, this was a fundamental element in the process of adjusting the relationship between the state and the citizen in a determinedly totalitarian direction. It was thus based not only on the centralization of power and repression, but also on the top-down and hierarchical organization of the masses themselves.<sup>43</sup> This state replaced representation and participation generated from below with corporatist and organic representation imposed from above. In the course of time, this structure was to bring together 12 million members and 230,000 managers.<sup>44</sup>

To complete the picture of the new legislation, the *Regio Decreto* (Royal Decree) of 6 November 1926 was issued: this gave prefects (the senior government officers at provincial level) the ability to dissolve any association that compromised national order, and introduced internal exile for crimes of a political nature. In essence, the only party allowed to survive was the PNF, which by being the unique party ceased to be just a 'part', and it was made a crime to revive associations and organizations that had been dissolved by order of the state authorities.<sup>45</sup>

### **The foundations of the corporatist state (1928–1939)**

With the conclusion of the stages of reorganization of Italy's institutions, the 1928–1929 period saw the introduction of the 'single-party' in the state, with the reform of the Fascist Grand Council and the award of the status of minister to the secretary of the PNF. As Nicola Macedonio observed, this gave legal recognition to a *de facto* situation.<sup>46</sup>

An implicit consequence of the idea of an organic and corporatist state was that the Fascist Grand Council and the PNF ceased to be private entities and became to all intents and purposes organs of constitutional significance. The Grand Council, the supreme organ of the fascist revolution, had to express a view on everything that concerned the life of the single party and, by extension, on everything relating to the life of the state, as it was the only party and the main source of political elites. Given the convergence of the roles of head of the government and president of the Grand Council, this became even more the case.

After abolition of the parties and establishment of the national syndicates, the subsequent stage of the process of 'corporatization' of the state was the radical change to the criteria for composition of the Chamber of Deputies. Acerbo's electoral reform had already seriously compromised the Chamber's representativeness, but the reform of 17 May 1928 then introduced a plebiscitary form of election with no competition between candidates.

In reality, as in 1925 the regime did not have the courage to implement fully the reform regarding corporatist representation. There were significant

differences between the radical ideas of Giuseppe Bottai, in which the institutions of the Chamber and the Senate were illogical and meaningless in a corporatist state,<sup>47</sup> and more moderate proposals whereby Parliament, and more specifically its higher chamber, the Senate, would be transformed in line with the new principles of sectoral, rather than individual, representation. In November 1927 the Grand Council discussed a plan for reform that was supposed to determine the issue of the corporatist state once and for all, but once again the outcome was the product of mediation between the corporatists and anti-corporatists.<sup>48</sup> The regime carried on as essentially a hybrid, retaining liberal principles alongside corporatist ones.

With the shift to the plebiscitary phase the primary responsibility for nominating candidates for the Chamber of Deputies lay with the national confederations of legally recognized syndicates, who were to put forward 800 names, double the number to be elected. A further 200 names were supposed to be put forward by charitable bodies with legal recognition, or by organizations of national importance. The Fascist Grand Council's task was to select the 400 who would constitute the approved list, for submission to a plebiscite; it could however add names of its own choice, as long as these were figures of 'chiara fama' (great distinction).<sup>49</sup>

While the process of the country's 'corporatization' was to culminate in the creation of the Chamber of Fasces and Corporations in 1939, these plans were a step ahead in their circularity. There were various elements to this: first of all, the body responsible for selection, the Fascist Grand Council, was already partly composed of the country's vital forces; second, in compiling the list the Grand Council members had to consider the views of the various syndicates and other corporatist bodies; and third, the right to vote was awarded to men who could demonstrate that they were paying a syndicate subscription.

The plebiscitary vote of 24 March 1929, following the reform, thus represented both a beginning and an end: the official beginning of the new corporatist regime, and the end of the process of destruction of the Liberal state. As Giovanni Giolitti had emphasized, however, 'this law, which in entrusting the Fascist Grand Council with selection of the deputies removes any opposition of a political nature from the Chamber, marks the fascist regime's decisive departure from a regime governed by the constitution'.<sup>50</sup>

The new arrangements were in effect paradoxical in that the frameworks of the Liberal state were still in existence, but with the major exception that only the single party could participate in the life of the state. The Chamber of Deputies, in Romano's view, continued to be the element linking the state and the nation, or the state and the people. The major change that came with the new constitutional reforms lay in the fact that state sovereignty replaced the sovereignty of the people. In the new system the people were never asked to express their own wishes, other than by giving their assent to the single list put forward by the Fascist Grand Council; the will of the people, after all, was supposed to be the same as the will of the state.<sup>51</sup>

A further major reform was set out in the law of 9 December 1928, and revised in the law of 14 December 1929. With this, the Fascist Grand Council became a constitutional body rather than an organ of the Party. Its members included the head of the government, the presidents of both chambers, the leading government ministers (note that the previous criterion of fascist membership no longer needed to be specified), the secretary of the PNF, the president of the special court for state security, and the presidents of the national confederations of fascist syndicates. Its responsibilities were recognized through a royal decree, as proposed by the head of the government.

The tasks allotted to the Grand Council were of two main types. First, the newly constituted body was to play a consultative role for the government on the issues of economic and political direction, and revision of unified Italy's constitution, the *Statuto Albertino*. Second, it was to keep an updated list of potential successors to the role of head of the government, draw up the list of deputies, and, finally, organize everything relating to the life of the Party.

The law of 14 December also made some profound changes in relation to the life of the PNF, whose constitution was approved by a royal decree as proposed by the head of the government and the Council of Ministers; there was a similar process for the appointment of its General Secretary. In essence, the PNF became entirely subordinate to the state, its purpose being to bring the state closer to the masses by means of its organizations.<sup>52</sup>

The constitutional incorporation of the Grand Council was thus an important stage in the process of fascistization of the state and construction of a regime that gave the legal theorists much to discuss, and many difficulties in reaching agreement. They were, as previously, divided between those stressing continuity, fascists and nationalists. Panunzio, for example, was exasperated by his colleague Romano's underestimation of the strength of the PNF as the basis of the process: in his opinion, this should have been the focus of the opening chapters of handbooks on constitutional law, being itself an 'embryonic state' or a 'state in miniature'.<sup>53</sup> In Panunzio's vision the Fascist Grand Council was the summit of this construction, as it united the hierarchies of both the state and the Party in a single body without, however, merging them into one category.

Rocco argued that six years of Mussolini's rule had given rise to a new way of organizing society and a new type of state, in opposition to Romano, who tended instead to emphasize the continuities with previous administrations.<sup>54</sup>

Aquarone is undoubtedly right in saying that the Party and the Fascist Grand Council were being neutralized by the head of the government, whose aims were to consolidate his own position in the regime and to dispose of two potentially awkward institutions,<sup>55</sup> but it is also true that in a regime in which all parties except one had been abolished, this single party became the exclusive generator of ideology, and the party, as a vehicle for taking power, necessarily lost this reason for its existence.