Bananen, Cola, Zeitgeschichte:
Oliver Rathkolb und das lange 20. Jahrhundert

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Band 1

2015
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Corporatism and Dictatorships in Portugal and Spain.
Comparative perspectives

Corporatism put an indelible mark on the first decades of the 20th century, both as a set
of institutions created by the forced integration of organized interests (mainly independent
unions) in the state, and as an "organic-statist" alternative to liberal democracy. Variants of
corporatism inspired conservative, radical-right and fascist parties, not to mention the Roman
Catholic Church and the third-way options of segments of the technocratic elites. Interwar
Austria was on the forefront of this wave, with the brief institutionalization of Engelbert
Dollfuss' dictatorship, that was the most complete expression of an attempt at the author-
itarian fusion of social and political corporatism under the hegemony of conservative Ca-
tholicism. Corporatism also inspired many other dictatorships - stretching from António
de Oliveira Salazar's Portuguese New State through Benito Mussolini's Italy, right across to
the new Baltic States to create institutions to legitimize their regimes. The European variants
spread throughout Latin America and Asia, particularly in Brazil, Argentina, and Turkey.1

When we look at 20th-century dictatorships we note some degree of institutional vari-
ation. Parties, cabinets, parliaments, corporatist assemblies, juntas and a whole set of parallel
and auxiliary structures of domination, mobilization and control were symbols of the (often
tense) diversity characterizing authoritarian regimes.2 These authoritarian institutions, cre-
ated in the political laboratory of inter-war Europe, expanded across the globe after the end of
the Second World War: particularly the personalization of leadership, the single-party and
the organic-statist legislatures. Some contemporaries of fascism had already realized some of
the institutions created by the inter-war dictatorships could be durable. As the committed

1 Like Alfred Stepan and Juan Linz, we use this expression to refer to the "vision of political commonness in which
the components parts of society harmoniously combine [...] and also because of the assumption that such harmony
requires power and the unity of civil society by "the archetypical action of public authorities" - hence "organic-
statism:" See A. Stepan (1979): The State and Society: Pers in Comparative Perspective, Princeton, NJ; J. J. Lima
2 For a comparative overview, see António Costa Pinto (2014): "Fascism, Corporatism and the Crafting of Authori-
tarian Institutions in Inter-War European Dictatorships," in: António Costa Pinto / Aristotle Kallis (Ed.): Rethink-
king Fascism and Dictatorship in Europe, London, 77-107. See also D. Mustellak (Ed.) (2019): Les Expériences
Corporatives dans l'Aire Latine, Berli; T. Pafla / A. Dawson (2004): Corporatist Ideology in Kemalist Turkey:
Progress or Order?, Syracuse, NY.
early 20th-century observer, Romanian academic and politically authoritarian Mihail Manolescu, 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.4 Manolescu 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.5

Inter-war dictatorships were personalized authoritarian regimes.6 Even those regimes that were institutionalized following military coups or military dictatorships gave rise to personalist regimes and attempts to create single or dominant regime parties. The personalization of leadership within dictatorial regimes became a dominant characteristic of the fascist era.7 However, autocrats need institutions and elites to exercise their rule, and their role has often been underestimated as it has been taken as a given that decision-making power was centralized in the dictators.8 To prevent the undermining of their legitimacy and the usurpation of their authority, dictators need to co-opt elites and to either create or adapt institutions to be the locus of the co-optation, negotiation and (sometimes) decision-making: without institutions they cannot make policy concessions.9 On the other hand, and as Amos Perlmutter has noted, no authoritarian regime can survive politically without the critical support of such modern elites as bureaucrats, managers, technocrats and the military.10

If the typical fascist regimes of Italy and Germany were based on a takeover of power by a party, many civilian and military rulers of inter-war Europe did not have a ready-made organization upon which to rely.11 In order to counteract their precarious position, dictators tended to create regime parties. Some fascist movements emerged during the inter-war period either as rivals to or unstable partners within the single or dominant government party, and often as inhibitors to their formation, making the institutionalization of the regimes more difficult for the dictatorial candidates. Inter-war dictators also established controlled parliaments, corporatist assemblies or other bureaucratic-authoritarian consulted bodies. The political institutions of the dictatorships, even those legislatures some authors have described as nominally

democratic, were not just window dressing: they did affect policy-making.12 Autocrats also need compliance and co-operation and, in some cases in order to organize policy compromises, dictators need nominally democratic institutions that can serve as forums in which factions, and even the regime and its opposition, can forge agreements.13 Nominally democratic institutions can help authoritarian rulers maintain coalitions and survive in power;14 and corporatist parliaments are legitimating institutions for dictatorships and are also sometimes the locus of that process.

In this chapter we will examine the role of corporatism as a political device against liberal democracy that permeated the political right during the first wave of democratization, and especially as a set of authoritarian institutions that spread across inter-war Europe and which was an agent for the hybridization of the institutions of fascist-era dictatorships. Powerful processes of institutional transfers were a hallmark of inter-war dictatorships, and we will argue corporatism was at the forefront of this process of cross-national diffusion, both as a new form of organized interest representation and as an authoritarian alternative to parliamentary democracy, looking in this perspective to the Iberian experiences.15

Social and political corporatism during the first wave of democratization

Corporatism as an ideology and as a type of organized interest representation was initially promoted by the Roman Catholic Church from the late-19th through to the mid-20th century as a third-way in opposition to socialism and liberal capitalism.16 Much of the model predicts the Papal encyclical, Rerum Novarum (1891), and was due to the romanticization of medieval Europe’s feudal guilds by 19th-century conservatives who had become disenchanted with liberalism and fearful of socialism and democracy. However, the Church’s explicit endorsement surely moved corporatism from seminar rooms to presidential palaces, especially after the publication of the encyclical Quadragesimo Anno (1931).17

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 democracies during its second half—not to speak of the more recent use of the word within the

7 More than half of all 20th-century authoritarian regimes ‘initiated by military parties, or a combination of the two, had been partly or fully personalized within three years of the initial seizure of power:’ See B. Geddes (2006): Stages of development in authoritarian regimes, in: V. Tismaneanu / M. M. Howard / R. Sil (Eds.): World Order after Lexism, Seattle, WA/London, 254.
10 Perlmutter (1983), in.
12 Gandhi (2008).
13 Gandhi (2008), viii.
social sciences—demands a definition of the phenomenon being studied, and for the sake of conceptual clarity, to disentangle social from political corporatism.

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 licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representative monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and support.18

Political corporatism can be defined as a system of political representation based in 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.

A central ideal of corporatist thinkers was the organic nature of society in the political and economic sphere. This was based on a critique of what Ugo Spirito called the egoistical and individualist homo economicus of liberal capitalism, which was to be replaced by a homo corporativus, which would be motivated by the national interest and common values and objectives.19

During the inter-war period corporatism permeated the main political families of the conservative and authoritarian political right: from the Catholic parties and social Catholicism to radical-right royalists and fascists, not to speak of Durkheimian solidarists and supporters of technocratic governments.20 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.21 However, there were differences between the Catholic corporatist formulations of the late-19th century and the integral corporativist proposals of some fascist and radical right-wing parties. When we look at fascist party programmes and segments of the radical right, like the Action Française-inspired movements, the portrait is

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The Rexist Party (Parti Rexist) led by Léon Degrelle emerged from a split within Catholic Action in November 1935. Independently of the complex course followed by Degrelle’s Rexist on their path to fascism, this movement’s roots were within the Catholic camp and did not escape the rule of the authoritarian radicalization of corporatist representation as a means of differentiating themselves from the conservatives. However, its increasing criticism of parliamentarianism went beyond corporatism, which was not a central theme of the Rexist’s political agenda.

Although part of the same ideological magma, social and political corporatism did not necessarily follow the same path in 20th-century politics. On the other hand, the historical experience with corporatism has not been confined to dictatorships, and in liberal democracies implicit tendencies toward corporatist structures developed both before and concurrently with the emergence of fascism. In fact, occupational representation was not limited to the world of dictatorships, with several democracies discovering complements to the typical parliamentary representation. Corporatist ideology was particularly strong in Ireland’s 1937 constitution, for example, which called for the election of groups representing interests and services, while several other inter-war bicameral democracies introduced corporatist representation to their upper chambers.

Many ideologists of social corporatism — particularly within Catholic circles — advocated a corporatist system without an omnipotent state, but the praxis of corporatist patterns of representation was mainly the result of an imposition by authoritarian political elites to civil society. Under inter-war dictatorships corporatism became synonymous with the process of forced unification of organized interests into single units of employers and employees closely controlled by the state, and which eliminated their independence especially that of trade unions. Social corporatism offered a more formalized system of interest representation to manage labour relations, legitimizing the repression of free labour unionism by the co-optation of some of its segments through state-controlled unions, often with compulsory membership. Last but not least, corporatist arrangements also sought to allow the state, labour and business to express their interests and arrive at outcomes that are, first and foremost, satisfactory to the regime.

However, during this period corporatism was also (and in some cases mainly) used to refer to the comprehensive organization of political society beyond state-social groups relations seeking to replace liberal democracy with an anti-individualist system of representation. In fact, in many cases the corporatist or economic parliaments either co-existed with and assisted parliaments or replaced them with a new legislature with consultative functions, which provided the government with technical assistance. The most influential theorist of Quadragesimo Anno, the Jesuit Heinrich Pesch, did mention the economic parliament as a ‘central clearing house’ of his organic view, but he left its structure to the future. With Quadragesimo Anno, the corporatism frame became clearer, with a corporatist reorganization of society associated with the strong anti-secular principals of parliamentary democracy held by Pope Pius XI. In 1937 Karl Loewenstein saw this ‘romantic concept of organic representation’, in new legislatures trying to be a ‘true mirror of the social forces of the nation and a genuine replica of its economic structure’. However, the role of corporatist bodies within the dictatorships was certainly much less romantic.

Georges Valois, the syndicalist ideologist of Action Française and founder of one of the first French fascist movements, encapsulated the functions of corporatist legislatures when he proposed the replacement of parliament with general estates (états généraux). This body was not to be an assembly in which decisions were made based on majority votes or where the majority would be able to overwhelm the minority; rather, it was to be an assembly in which the corporations adjusted their interests in favour of the national interest. In 1926, the Spanish general, Miguel Primo de Rivera, was not engaging in intellectual romanticism when he introduced corporatist principals in his dictatorship, proclaiming ‘the parliamentary system has failed and no-one is crazy enough to re-establish it in Spain. The government and the Patriotic Union (UP – Unión Patriótica) call for the construction of a state based on a new structure. The first cell of the nation will be the municipality, around which is the family with its old virtues and its modern concept of citizenship’. In Austria in 1934, Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss reaffirmed the words of the Spanish general, words that many dictators were either thinking privately or repeating publicly; this parliament … will never, and must never,

return again. In this perspective, corporatism was a powerful agent for the institutional hybridization of inter-war dictatorships, largely surpassing the ground from which it sprang. 

Since representation was an essential element of modern political systems, authoritarian regimes 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. Working out policy concessions requires an institutional setting: some forum to which access can be controlled, where demands can be revealed without appearing as acts of resistance, where compromises can be hammered out without undue public scrutiny and where the resulting agreements can be dressed in a legalistic form and publicized as such. The tendency of inter-war dictatorships towards the creation of organic legislatures should not be separated from the creation of regime parties—whether single or dominant—that provided legitimation for the abolition of political pluralism, forcing the authoritarian coalition to merge in a single or dominant party under personalized rule.

Another implicit goal of the adoption of corporatist representation, Max Weber noted, was to disenfranchise large sectors of society. As Juan Linz notes, corporatism encourages the basic apoliticism of the population and transforms issues into technical decisions and problems of administration. Institutionalized in the wake of polarized democracies, inter-war dictatorships tended to choose corporatism both as a process for the repression and co-optation of the labour movement, interest groups and of elites through organic legislatures. It is from this perspective we revisit the processes of the institutional crafting of inter-war European dictatorships, observing in particular the adoption of social and political corporatist institutions and regime parties.

Iberian Dictatorships and corporatist institutions

If we exclude the one year presidential dictatorships of Sidónio Pais in Portugal (1918), the dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera in Spain (1923-30) was probably the first to replace


40 The classification is based on the degree of adoption of institutions associated with social and political corporatism based on the constitutions and projects for constitutional reform, independently of their effective institutionalization, given that some regimes were very short-lived. We did exclude the Nazi dictatorship from this table because even if it had some corporatist structures, we have doubts about its classification on this scale.


43 And those chambers are only components in their regimes... no legislature in an authoritarian regime has either the formal or de facto power to question the ultimate authority of a ruler or ruling group. See J. J. Linz (1975): Legislatures in organic-statist-authoritarian regime: The case of Spain, in: J. Smith / D. Masol (Eds.): Legislatures in Development: Dynamics of Change in New and Old States, Durham, NC, 94 / 95.

parliamentarianism with a unicameral system based on corporatism and by the creation of the UP, a regime party endowed with a well-defined political doctrine. While Sidónio Pais had earlier outlined a programme for corporatist representation, the truth is that the Catalan general introduced a political formula for modern dictatorships in which corporatism was a central element of its legitimation. In September 1923, Miguel Primo de Rivera led a coup against the liberal regime, issuing a manifesto to the country in which he denounced social agitation, separatism and clientelism. His imposition of order was justification for a transitional dictatorship; however, he held a plebiscite on a plan to change the constitutional order and institutionalize a new regime. This was quickly implemented through the creation of a party, the UP, which was controlled by the government, of a corporatist parliament with limited powers and an attempt to integrate all organized interests into the state with the abolition of class-based unions.

The fact the dictactor was a soldier was no obstacle to the institutionalization of the regime, and Miguel Primo de Rivera’s dictatorship was an illustration of the idea that the existence of a single national interest contained in military thinking coincides with the vision of the common good of the organic-statist model. The UP played the role of the regime party in Primo de Rivera’s dictatorship, despite the regime’s limited pluralism allowing other parties to exist legally, indicating that within the regime there is only one party. In fact, the UP represented the attempt to create a party from the top down. As it was mainly an instrument of the dictator and of the government, the UP was a weak single-party in terms of elite recruitment and as a decision-making centre that only exercised some functions at the local administration level.

A national consultative assembly was established in 1927 which, as its name suggests, collaborated rather than legislated. This assembly, the first corporatist chamber in inter-war Europe, consisted of 400 representatives of the state, local authorities, the party, municipalities and professional groups, in a process controlled by the interior ministry. Even while participating in this corporatist assembly, some conservatives remained suspicious of its rubber-stamp functions. On the eve of the dictatorship’s collapse in 1939, the project for the new constitution that would result in a dramatic increase in the executive’s powers and the establishment of a single chamber, the members of which were to be nominated by the UP and elected by direct and corporatist suffrage in equal measure, was presented to the public.

Some of the institutional traces of this early dictatorial experiment in the Iberian Peninsula were also present in Portugal, which experienced one of the longest dictatorships of the
20th century, and which until the end claimed a corporatist legitimacy. On May 28, 1926, a military coup put an end to Portugal's parliamentary republic. Between the end of the republic and the institutionalization of Salazar's New State there were seven unstable years of military dictatorship; however, it is worth citing the project for a new constitution that the leader of the military uprising, General Manuel de Oliveira Gomes da Costa, presented to the first government of the dictatorship just one month after the coup: A new constitution based on the following principles: national representation by direct delegation from the municipalities, the economic unions and the educational and spiritual bodies, with the absolute exclusion of individual suffrage and the consequent party representation.

Other projects were discussed during the years that followed, but this example demonstrates the importance of corporatist alternatives in Portuguese anti-democratic elite political culture. In fact in 1918, during the brief dictatorship of Sidónio Pais, a parliament controlled by a dominant party formed by the government co-existed with a senate with corporatist representation; however, it lasted only briefly.

The first political institution to be created by the dictatorship was the single-party, the National Union (UN - União Nacional). Created by Oliveira Salazar in 1910, this accompanied the dissolution of political parties, including the Portuguese Catholic Centre (CCP - Centro Católico Português), of which Salazar had been a member. The impetus for its formation came from Salazar and the government, with decisive aid from the state apparatus, especially the interior ministry and its local dependencies. Both in the UN's manifesto and in Salazar's inaugural speech to the UN in 1910, the future dictator's intention was already clear as he announced the creation of the social and corporatist state that would closely follow the natural constitution of society.

The foundation stone of social corporatism in Portugal was contained in the 1931 National Labour Statute (ETN - Estatuto Nacional do Trabalho). As a declaration of corporatist principals the ETN owed a great deal to Italian Fascism's labour charter, although tempered by the ideals of social Catholicism. With the ETN approved unions were the first sector to be affected, and subsequent legislation forewore a long series of intermediate bodies that would lead to the constitution of the corporations. Social corporatism was strongly institutionalized in the Portuguese case, with agencies to encompass virtually all social groups and professions, but, until the 1950s, when the corporations were finally created, a sizeable part of the

representation of the organic elements of the nation was chosen by the corporatist council, made up by Salazar and ministers connected with the sector.

The development of Salazar's constitutional project at the beginning of the 1930s and the institutions defined by him were symptomatic of the role of the various conservative currents supporting the dictatorship and the role of the military. The first project called for a corporatist system for the election of both the president and parliament; however, between this and the project presented to the public in 1932, many changes were introduced by Salazar and his council of notables. In the 1932 project there was a legislature of 90 deputies, half elected by direct suffrage and half by corporatist suffrage. This project was strongly criticized by some republican military officials as well as by the followers of Lusitanian Internationalism (IL - Integralismo Lusitano) and Francisco Rolão Peçanha's fascist National Syndicalist Movement (MNS - Movimento Nacional-Sindicalista), while the church was more concerned with the absence of God in the constitution. Republican military officials criticized the corporatization of representation, while the MNS and the IL believed the constitution had given up too much ground to republican liberalism.

The final version approved by Salazar and submitted to a plebiscite was a compromise. Portugal became its unitary and corporatist republic, but the president and the national assembly were elected through direct and not corporatist suffrage. In fact, the constitution opted for a single chamber, with a national assembly occupied exclusively by deputies selected by the single-party and elected by direct suffrage; however, it also created a consultative corporatist chamber composed of functional representatives. The national assembly had few powers before an executive free of parliamentary ties; however, the corporatist chamber was to be an auxiliary and consultative body. The Portuguese corporatist chamber, which consisted of 109 procurators and whose meetings were held in private, remained a consultative body for both the government and the national assembly.

The longevity of the Portuguese regime and some research into Salazar's corporatist chamber allows us to reach some conclusions (which, unfortunately, cannot be generalized given the absence of comparative data) about functional representation. Despite the great majority of procurators in the chamber representing functional interests, a small group of administrative interests were nominated by the corporatist council that was led by the dictator and which constituted the chamber's elite. In practice, these political procurators, making up an average of 15 per cent of all procurators, controlled the chamber.

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Social corporatism was an essential component of Francoism and its institutions, which began to be sketched out in nationalist-controlled areas during the civil war, where tensions existed between the Falange's national syndicalist model and those of groups closer to conservative Catholics. Not all of these conflicts were doctrinal in nature; some were expressions of the fears within the Falange that its role in the creation of the new corporatist structure would be reduced. However, these fears were not confirmed, as both the 1938 labour charter and the definition of the institutional structure of the Falange labour organization gave the Falange a central role. In 1940, when the syndical union law required most workers, technicians and employers to join one of the 27 multi-function, vertical and sectoral syndicates, the process was controlled both at the state and party level by the Falangists. Despite the fascist rhetoric accompanying the creation of the corporatist system being powerful, with the removal in 1945 of Salvador Mierzo, the Falangist director of syndicates, the party’s influence was to diminish and, more significantly, the original concept of vertical syndicates was to be replaced with employers and workers being represented in separate sections.

Under Ramón Serrano Suñer’s leadership, in 1940 FET-JONS political committee outlined the first project of constitutional laws, which also anticipated the establishment of a corporatist parliament. A total of 20 of the draft's 37 articles were devoted to it. As Stanley Payne notes, Serrano Suñer backed a ‘more fully fascist political system than Franco was willing to permit.’ The most controversial proposal contained in this project was the institutionalization of FET-JONS’s political committee as a collegiate co-ordination body between the state and the movement: a kind of Falangist version of Mussolini’s Fascist Grand Council. Conservatives viewed this body as the intersection of the party in the state, and Franco dismissed it.

Franco’s decision to create a corporatist parliament in 1942 was an important step in the consolidation of his regime – particularly given the tide of the Second World War was turning against fascism – and the chief institutional innovation of this phase of redeffinition of legitimacy. Religion and organic-statist views of state-society relations did play a central role. The Spanish Christian roots, the exceptional historical position of the Caudillo and representation of the people through a system of organic democracy, were to be the main elements of legitimacy of consolidated Francoism after the era of fascism.

56 Cardoso (2000).
63 Payne (1987), 156.
64 Payne (1987), 200.
65 Lint (1979).
The Spanish corporatist parliament, the Cortes, was established as an instrument of collaboration with Franco. According to the law governing the Cortes, this new legislature was to serve for the expression of contrasting opinions within the unity of the regime. Franco, the head of state, would continue as the supreme power and as the ultimate legislative authority, but Cortes would represent a valuable instrument of collaboration in that task. The first Cortes consisted of around 423 procurators, made up of 126 members of the single-party national council, 141 from the syndical organization, 50 designated by the Casildo and the remainder representatives of the municipalities, families and associations of liberal professions, etc. Cabinet ministers and the head of the judiciary were also members. The large majority of procurators were public servants; consequently, the weight of the bureaucracy within it was very significant. The only change in the composition of the Cortes was the introduction in 1967 of 108 family representatives, formally elected through a restricted electoral system. Needless to say the cabinet was responsible to the head of state and Cortes was designed to advise and to deliberate upon proposed laws coming from the government. To avoid the creation of informal factions within Cortes, its president was nominated by Franco and the heads of commissions were nominated by the president of Cortes. Few institutional changes took place during the dictatorship's long durée.

Concluding remarks

Corporatism has frequently, and legitimately, been associated with the Catholic political culture of the beginning of the 20th century, even though fascism had also codified it as an authoritarian alternative to liberal democracy. Although it had a presence in the institutions of some democratic regimes, it is only in dictatorships that a serious effort was made to organize political regimes according to corporatist ideology. The success of this hybridization effect in European authoritarian political institutions during the first half of the 20th century is a good illustration of how the codification of corporatist institutions became generalized. These experiences illustrated the pragmatic adoption of authoritarian institutions in inter-war Europe, which suggests it was in fact the outcome of a process of diffusion during the inter-war period. While there was some variation, the ideology of a single national interest, typical of the apoliticism of military thinking and of anti-democratic conservative elites was very common.

72 Llén (1993), 214.

73 See (1972); Weyland (2010), 167.
interaction between the dictator and his allies results in greater transparency among them, and by virtue of their formal structure, institutions provide a publicly observable signal of the dictator's commitment to power-sharing. Nonetheless, however appealing the principle of corporatist representation may be for authoritarian rulers, the creation of corporatist legislatures was much more difficult to implement in several dictatorships, even when it had been part of the dictators' programme. In Portugal, it was the initial compromise with segments of conservative liberal parties that led to the institutionalization of bicameral systems with a corporatist chamber and a parliament controlled by the dominant or single-party. In Spain there was a much more coherent corporatist representation since the latter was a common denominator of the winning coalition on the base of his regime.

Finally, let us not forget the importance of regime parties. Very few inter-war European dictatorships existed without a single or dominant party, and the relationship between dictators and their parties—particularly in those that existed prior to the seizure of power—is certainly more complex than the rigid versions of the fascism versus-authoritarian dichotomy suggest. The inherent dilemma in the transformation of the single-party as the dictatorship's ruling institution into the leader's instrument for rule also challenges rigid dichotomies. Regardless of their origins (whether pre-dating the dictatorship or being created from above following the breakdown of the previous regime) or their nature (whether they are mass or elite parties) they perform similar roles in the new political system, both as single or dominant parties in the legislatures, providing an institutionalized interaction between the dictator and his allies, and the political control of corporatist institutions in the majority of inter-war dictatorships.

To conclude: the diffusion of political and social corporatism, which with the single-party are hallmarks of the institutional transfers among European dictatorships, challenges some rigid dichotomous interpretations of inter-war fascism and the Iberian experiences are there to illustrate them.76