In May 1951, Francisco Franco attended an international social security congress in Madrid. In the audience were experts and officials from across Spain, Latin America, and western Europe, including ministers from various foreign governments and representatives from international bodies such as the International Labour Organization (ILO). Addressing the conference, Franco told delegates that two factors had come to dominate modern politics. ‘One is the social factor,’ he declared, ‘which has imprinted its character on our entire era.’ Despite the devastation caused by the civil war, Franco argued, Spain had come to define itself as a ‘social state’, one in which ‘all of the nation’s resources’ were dedicated to improving social conditions. The ‘New State’ established after the Spanish Civil War was underpinned by the labour laws, sickness insurance, infant health provision, and housing programmes the regime had introduced. In this regard Spain was at the forefront of developments which defined the modern world. Whereas in the past many states, particularly liberal democracies, had ignored the social needs of the people, today ‘all politics is becoming social’.¹

The second, related factor was ‘the relations between peoples, which, breaching the walls of the old borders, unite us in our fears, in our sorrows, or in our wellbeing’.² In an age of increasing global integration and interdependence, Franco argued, poor social conditions in one country could prevent the pursuit of social progress in another. And many of the challenges facing the modern world stemmed from the vast differences in living standards between rich and poor states. Countries now needed to work together to ensure all of humankind enjoyed basic levels of social security. Spain, Franco stressed, was committed to international cooperation. Its own pursuit of social justice meant it was ready to show the rest of the world the way forward. For Franco and his regime, social development and international cooperation were two sides of the same coin.

The regime had come to power during the civil war of 1936–9, sparked by an army-led coup d’état against the democratic institutions of the Second Republic which had been formed just five years earlier. Franco had consolidated his personal rule over the course of the civil war, and by the time of his speech in

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² Ibid.
1951 had ruled unopposed as Spain’s Caudillo and head of state for over a decade. Although the speech extolled the ‘titanic efforts made over the last ten years to achieve social development and social security in our country’, Francoist rule had in reality been characterized by repression, violence, hunger, and social hardship. But social policy and the idea of the Francoist ‘social state’ were central to the regime’s attempts to ‘capture the masses’, as the historian Carme Molinero has argued, both a political reference point and a vital propaganda tool.³ The language of the social state had emerged from the civil war as a response to the democratic and social reforms of the Republican government. Health and welfare services were presented as symbols of the regime’s commitment to social justice, an attempt to gain the support, or at least the acquiescence, of the Spanish working classes. This vision had been promoted by specific elements within the Francoist coalition. Franco had forced the various factions of the rebel coalition to unite during the civil war, carefully managing their competing interests and influence thereafter. Of those factions, Spanish monarchists and army officers had traditionally been little interested in, and in many cases actively opposed to, social reform. Sections of the Church and certain Catholic political groups had for their part flirted with the doctrines of social Catholicism prior to the war, while others had remained indifferent or hostile. But it was the Spanish fascist party, the Falange, which initially led the way in promoting the language of social justice, influenced in part by the social model of interwar European fascism, particularly in Mussolini’s Italy. Despite the shared terminology, theirs was a vision of social justice developed in opposition to socialist and liberal reform movements of the era, emphasizing hierarchy, traditionalist religious and moral values, and the biological strength of the nation, and eschewing all liberalizing social reforms or independent working-class organization. After the civil war, the language, if not the practice, of social justice was adopted by all factions within the regime and became institutionalized within the Francoist state.

If the idea of the social state was aimed at capturing the support of the masses, this study argues that it was also used to capture the support of the world. As Franco’s speech at the 1951 conference suggested, the regime placed the language of the social state at the heart of its ongoing quest for international status and legitimacy. Rebel victory during the civil war had been due in large part to the non-intervention of the democratic western powers and to the military support of fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, which had dwarfed the aid for the Republic coming from the Soviet Union and the International Brigades. Just months after the end of the Spanish conflict, the Second World War had broken out. During the geopolitical instability of the 1940s and 1950s, the Francoist state confronted a shifting ideological environment and an often hostile international system.

³ Carme Molinero, La captación de las masas: política social y propaganda en el régimen franquista (Madrid: Cátedra, 2005).
It constantly struggled to assert itself on the international stage over the course of Second World War, the defeat of the Axis powers, the construction of the post-war international system, and the arrival of the Cold War. In the face of those who denounced the regime as a hostile and backwards remnant of interwar fascism after 1945, Francoist diplomats and elites sought to project an image of a country committed to social progress on the one hand, and to international cooperation on the other.

Spanish social experts were at the forefront of efforts to promote the regime to the outside world, particularly those working in the fields of public health, medicine, and social insurance like those at the Madrid conference in 1951. A wide range of experts holding academic and government positions under the Franco regime worked actively on the international stage throughout the 1940s and 1950s. They travelled the world attending international conferences and events, collaborated with colleagues abroad, and both contributed to and drew on the work of international organizations. In part, they were driven by a professional commitment to international science, medicine, and social policy. But they were also, in the words of the leading Spanish medical researcher Carlos Jiménez Díaz, ‘Spaniards and patriots’, eager to re-establish Spain’s international reputation by representing the country to the outside world.⁴ By working with international organizations and transnational networks, they sought to sell the idea of Franco’s Spain as a respectable, modern, and socially just state.

This book tells the story of the experts who sold Franco’s social state; their motivations, their strategies, and their successes and failures. They pursued their goal in two ways. The first was to adapt to the world as it presented itself, to the shifting reality of the international order. In the immediate aftermath of Franco’s victory in 1939 this meant the Axis powers and the Nazi-fascist ‘New Order’. This was in many ways a comfortable fit for a regime which owed its victory in the civil war to the support of Nazi Germany and fascist Italy, and whose political and ideological origins lay in the authoritarian European right of the 1930s. But after 1945 Spanish experts were forced to adapt to the post-war international system built around the United Nations (UN).

The second approach was to forge new international networks, affiliations, and imagined communities more closely aligned with Spanish history, politics, and culture, structures in which Spain would be at the centre rather than the periphery. Many of these structures were built around Spain’s imperial status, both its limited colonial territories in Africa and its imperial history in Latin America which was so central to the identity and self-perception of the Franco regime. It was for this reason that the 1940s and 1950s witnessed a sustained interest in Spanish Africa and Spain’s status as one of the remaining European imperial

powers, and in the idea of an Ibero-American region united under Spanish tutelage by the historical, cultural, and linguistic ties of hispanidad. But it also saw increasing interest in new forms of international Catholic cooperation in which Spain, as the most Catholic of nations led by the most Catholic of regimes, could play a prominent role. In some cases, these experts had a clear impact on Spain’s international standing; in others, their efforts met with opposition or ended in failure. But they were all central to the ongoing pursuit of international legitimacy which characterized the first two decades of the Franco regime.

Exploring the activities of these experts helps to shed new light on the relationship between Franco’s Spain and the outside world. It also, however, provides a new perspective on the wider history of twentieth-century internationalism. The social and scientific projects these experts were involved with, and the international organizations and networks they worked within, form a familiar part of historical accounts of modern internationalism. Spanish experts worked with international organizations in Geneva, Paris, and New York, travelled the world to attend international conferences, and were involved in intensive exchange and cooperation with colleagues across the globe. Events such as the 1951 social security conference in Madrid, with their cast of international experts and officials, their discussion of social policy, and their familiar paraphernalia of flags, exhibitions, and social events, were characteristic of this kind of mid-twentieth-century internationalism. The system in which they operated had been shaped by the increasing transnational ties between experts, officials, and humanitarians which emerged from the mid-nineteenth century, and by the twentieth-century formation of international organizations such as the League of Nations and the UN. They formed part of a history which we generally associate with progressive causes, social and scientific development, and liberal internationalist principles.

But Spanish experts were not solely driven by a commitment to international science and humanitarianism. In a context in which many supporters of the defeated Republic had been purged from the Francoist social and scientific system, or had fled into exile after the civil war, those experts who rose to senior positions had to demonstrate their adherence to the principles of the Francoist New State.⁵ On the international stage, these experts acted in the interests of Spain’s authoritarian government, helping to strengthen ties with its fascist allies, buttressing its imperial and post-imperial pretensions, and whitewashing its record of domestic repression. They were internationalists, but they were Franco’s internationalists.

By examining the way elites within an authoritarian nationalist regime thought and acted internationally, this book highlights the contested and heterogeneous nature of mid-twentieth-century internationalism. The Franco regime provides a

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unique perspective from which to examine this history, not least because of its longevity. Emerging from the milieu of European authoritarian movements in the 1930s, it built close ties with the Axis powers during the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War, survived the transition to a liberal world order after 1945, continued to promote itself as an imperial power, and exploited the divisions of the Cold War to re-establish itself as a semi-integrated member of the international community. As such it allows us to examine not just individual international organizations or movements, or particular moments of international cooperation, but the interaction and relationship between the multiple and competing internationalisms which transcended the period. In particular, the case of Spain brings into focus the overlooked continuities between international structures and projects before and after 1945.

Franco’s Spain

Spain’s international relations in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War were both uncertain and unstable, and the early decades of the regime have often been depicted as a period of isolation. During the early stages of the Second World War, Spain was broadly aligned with the Axis powers, officially declaring itself ‘non-belligerent’ (rather than neutral) in 1940. But Franco’s offer to formally join the Axis military coalition was rejected by Hitler, who was unwilling to meet Spain’s economic and territorial demands. As the tide of war turned the regime increasingly distanced itself from the Axis, without ever fully being accepted by the Allied powers. This distrust lingered into the post-war period. The Franco regime’s ties to the defeated Axis powers meant that it was excluded from the UN in 1945 and faced a widespread diplomatic boycott. On the economic front, the regime’s pursuit of autarky and import substitution cut Spain off from

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7 General works on the international history of Franco’s Spain include Christian Leitz and David J. Dunthorn (eds), Spain in an International Context, 1936–1959 (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1999); Javier Tussell, Juan Avilés, and Rosa Pardo (eds), La política exterior de España en el siglo XX (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2000); Lorenzo Delgado Gómez-Escalonilla, Ricardo Martín de la Guardia, and Rosa Pardo Sanz (eds), La apertura internacional de España: entre el franquismo y la democracia, 1953–1986 (Madrid: Silex, 2016).


international capital flows and, combined with its post-war exclusion from the Marshall Plan, meant that it did not share in the rapid economic recovery experienced by most of its European neighbours from the late 1940s.¹ Michael Richards has argued that the pursuit of autarky was part of a wider attempt to impose a form of self-sufficiency and violent social quarantine on Spanish society, and that this isolation formed a vital part of the regime’s post-war repression.¹¹

Over the course of the 1950s, Spain began to be partially integrated into the post-war international system. The emergence of the Cold War allowed Franco to shift attention away from the regime’s fascist past towards its anti-communist credentials, and the opposition of the western democracies quickly began to weaken. Spain initially sought access to the UN system through membership of its specialized agencies, joining the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1951 and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1952. In 1953, it signed a concordat with the Vatican and the Pact of Madrid with the United States (US), through which the US agreed to provide military and economic aid in return for permission to build air and naval bases on Spanish territory.¹² Thanks to its improved diplomatic fortunes, Spain was granted full membership of the UN in 1955. This was followed later in the decade by membership of the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank.¹³ Despite some liberalization of the economy, the regime remained formally committed to autarky during the first half of the 1950s. It was not until the promotion of a new generation of technocrats linked to the Catholic group Opus Dei from 1957 that large-scale reforms were implemented. These culminated in the Stabilization Plan of 1959 which liberalized foreign trade and opened up the Spanish economy to foreign investment.¹⁴ Closer integration into the world economy followed, alongside improved diplomatic relations. But opposition from its western European neighbours meant that Spain remained outside of the European Economic Community (EEC) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) until after the transition to democracy which took place following Franco’s death in 1975.

Various studies have claimed that the ‘internationalization’ or ‘transnationalization’ of Spain began either with the transition to democracy or at the earliest

¹³ Manuel Varela Parache (ed.), *El Fondo Monetario Internacional, el Banco Mundial y la economía española* (Madrid: Ediciones Pirámide, 1994).
with the economic and foreign policy reforms of the late 1950s. But rather than turning its back on the outside world during the 1940s and 1950s, this book argues that the Franco regime and its supporters were engaged in a constant struggle to establish Spain’s international legitimacy and status. Although the mass of the Spanish population were indeed subject to a degree of social and cultural isolation, many among the Francoist elites actively sought to strengthen the country’s international influence. They did so in a context in which Spain continued to build strong diplomatic ties with key partners such as Perón’s Argentina and the Arab states, maintained a significant degree of economic exchange with its European neighbours, and was increasingly influenced by the early stages of mass emigration and tourism. Social experts were at the forefront of this exchange with the outside world, and their extensive international activities highlight the limits of the idea of Spanish isolation.

On the domestic front, social justice was far from the priority the regime claimed it to be. At the end of the civil war in 1939, Franco had rejected all possibility of social or political reconciliation. Over the following decade, hundreds of thousands of former Republicans were imprisoned and up to 20,000 executed, in addition to the more than 100,000 estimated to have been killed outside of the field of battle during the war itself. The vast majority were convicted by arbitrary, partisan, and unaccountable military tribunals, with little or no recourse to regular juridical safeguards. Others who could not prove their loyalty to the new regime were purged from their jobs, persecuted by the police and local authorities, and denied access to social services. The Spanish economy was crippled by the regime’s pursuit of autarky, combined with the economic and physical dislocation caused by both the civil war and the Second World War. Scarce supplies of food and basic resources were funnelled towards the regime’s supporters or were siphoned off into the black market by corrupt officials. The ‘hunger years’ of 1939–45 saw an estimated 200,000 deaths from starvation and malnutrition. Thousands of landless rural workers fled the hunger of the

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countryside by migrating to urban areas, settling in unsanitary and unplanned shanty towns on the outskirts of the major cities. The Franco regime did little to improve general living standards and social spending remained far below, for example, resources dedicated to the military.

Nevertheless, the idea of the ‘social state’ played a key role in the domestic and international history of the regime. The Francoist emphasis on social justice had first been institutionalized in the 1938 labour code, the *Fuero del Trabajo*, which was promoted by the Falange and which echoed many of the features of Italy’s fascist labour laws. The Falange was Spain’s native fascist party, originally a relatively small group which had grown exponentially at the beginning of the civil war, before being incorporated into the new single party established by Franco in 1937. The language of social justice was key to its workerist message and its claim to offer the Spanish working classes an alternative to socialism, communism, and anarchism. The *Fuero* established a system of vertical syndicates which abolished trade unions, and which integrated workers into syndical structures dominated by employers and the single party. In return for complying with their duty to work and contribute to the national interest, workers were promised a system of social security protecting their families from the effects of illness, old age, and unemployment. New subsidies for large families were introduced after 1939, alongside an old-age insurance system, a major new compulsory sickness insurance system, and a series of new initiatives covering housing, unemployment insurance, and infant and maternal health.¹⁹

The regime’s social services, however, were plagued by underfunding, inefficiency, and political infighting. Most social programmes were funded by workers’ and employers’ contributions, with little or no direct subsidy from the state. This meant that services were underfunded and the real value of benefits was quickly undermined by inflation. Workers resented being forced to contribute a fixed proportion of their already meagre wages to programmes which provided them with poor coverage. The new social programmes were also implemented in a rushed manner and hampered by poor collaboration between the multiple providers involved. Political infighting helped create a social system plagued by duplication and fragmentation, with the Falange fighting for control of social services against conservative and Catholic factions within the regime.

The term ‘Catholics’ in this context is not primarily a reference to religious identity. All of the various groups and factions within the Francoist coalition were Catholic, in the sense that their adherents were generally practising Catholics and their political views were firmly embedded in their religious faith and identity. The term denotes those figures, often associated with lay Catholic organizations, who aimed to establish an autonomous and hegemonic role for the Church within

¹⁹ Carme Molinero, *La captación de las masas*. 
Spanish politics and society, in contrast to those Falangists who saw the single party and the syndicalist organizations as the foundations of the Francoist state. The Falange dominated Francoist politics during the early years of the Second World War when European fascism was in its ascendancy. It was then marginalized after 1945 as part of Franco’s attempts to distance the regime from its fascist origins. But despite its diminished political status, it continued to play a significant role in social and labour provision throughout the dictatorship. In the fields of health and welfare, Falangist organizations such as the Women’s Section and Auxilio Social vied for dominance with their rivals from Catholic groups and the Red Cross.²⁰

The regime treated social policy not just as a means to improve living standards, but as a tool of political and ideological control. Its efforts to confine women to the domestic sphere were reflected in the provisions of the Fuero del Trabajo ‘liberating’ women from the burden of paid employment, and in the promotion of family welfare channelled through a male breadwinner. As in fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, the Franco regime aimed to improve the size and condition of the Spanish race through pro-natalist welfare policies, and by promoting a health system which prioritized infant health and controlled the behaviour of mothers.²¹

The system of health visitors organized by the Falange’s Women’s Section aimed to reduce infant and maternal mortality rates. But it was also used to promote the españolización of patients and mothers based on Catholic and nationalist doctrine, as well as gathering information about their moral, political, and religious views. The spread of infectious diseases was blamed on moral failings within Republican zones during the war. And disease-control programmes, particularly the post-war campaigns against typhus, were used as a tool of social control through coercive systems of monitoring and isolation.²²

But this inefficiency, fragmentation, and coercion did nothing to prevent the Franco regime from placing social justice at the heart of its domestic propaganda efforts. Nor did it affect the centrality of social experts to the regime’s attempts to establish its international legitimacy. Spain’s absence from formal international

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²⁰ Kathleen Richmond, Women and Spanish Fascism: The Women’s Section of the Falange, 1934–1959 (London: Routledge, 2003); Ángela Cenarro Lagunas, La sonrisa de Falange: Auxilio Social en la Guerra Civil y en la posguerra (Barcelona: Crítica, 2006).


institutions, whether temporarily in the case of the UN or permanently in the case of NATO and the EEC, increased the emphasis which the Franco regime placed on cultural diplomacy to bolster its international standing and to cement its place within the international community.²³ Its cultural relations apparatus used social experts as a diplomatic vanguard. Experts were particularly useful because they could gain acceptance in international arenas from which Francoist ministers and officials were excluded, and could project an image of Spain as a modern, scientifically advanced state.

In this sense, health and welfare formed part of a wider set of ‘technical’ fields which could be exploited to enhance the international standing of the regime, such as aviation, telecommunications, and agriculture. But in other ways the fields of health and welfare were unique. Many of the Franco regime’s international opponents saw it as a backwards-looking, traditionalist coalition of reactionary elites, which had emerged in response to the modernizing and socially progressive reforms of the Second Republic. The fact that many of the country’s most internationally renowned scientific and cultural figures had fled into exile after the civil war reinforced the idea of Franco’s Spain as a reactionary remnant of the interwar era. Health, medicine, and welfare served to counteract these negative images in ways that other ‘technical’ fields could not. Social experts could be used to demonstrate the continued vitality of Spanish science. But they could also promote the regime’s apparent commitment to social justice and its efforts to establish a modern welfare system. In an era in which western states were attempting to refashion a liberal social model to overcome the inadequacies of pre-war systems and to counter the appeal of communism, social experts helped to normalize Franco’s Spain and to situate it with, rather than against, the grain of post-war history. Their work showcased a distinct model of conservative-Catholic modernity which the regime sought to promote to the outside world.

**Internationalism**

By examining the international activities of Francoist experts, this book systematically brings together the history of the Franco regime with the history of internationalism and international health for the first time. In addition to its analysis of the early Franco era, it also provides a new perspective on the history of twentieth-century internationalism. In particular, it challenges dominant narratives of internationalism as a liberal, progressive movement by foregrounding

the history of fascist, nationalist, imperialist, and religious forms of international cooperation.

Scholarship on the history of internationalism and transnationalism has expanded rapidly over the past two decades. But it has often been characterized by a focus on liberal models of international cooperation, on Anglo-American actors, or on international organizations such as the League of Nations and the UN. On occasions this has led to a teleological approach to the growth of international society. By reading backwards from contemporary concepts of globalization, such accounts have presented the history of internationalism as a form of linear progress towards the ‘global’, in which the growth of international organizations and transnational society gradually served to overcome political and cultural divisions between nations and peoples. These narratives have been reinforced by research into the history of humanitarian and philanthropic organizations, scientific exchange, social movements, and liberal activists from Europe and North America, topics which have foregrounded the internationalist ambitions of actors driven by the desire to overcome national divisions and build new forms of global community.²⁴

These progressive movements undeniably constitute an important strand of the history of internationalism. But they were not the only ways of thinking and acting internationally which emerged during the twentieth century. In recent years historians have begun to highlight the alternative forms of internationalism which developed during the same period, broadening the field out from its traditional focus on liberal international organizations and movements.²⁵ These included the forms of socialist and communist internationalism which also emerged in the late nineteenth century, and which existed alongside and in opposition to liberal international organizations.²⁶ The case of Franco’s Spain, however, demonstrates that diverse models of international cooperation existed across the political spectrum, based on a variety of ideological, geographical, historical, and religious affiliations. In response to socialist and liberal forms of internationalism, for example, fascists and nationalists began to pursue international cooperation from the end of the nineteenth century, the ‘dark side of internationalism’ which culminated in the Nazi’s European New Order during the Second World War.²⁷ Europe’s imperial powers built international structures

²⁴ This is particularly evident in histories of international and global health.
which protected and strengthened their empires. After these empires had collapsed, they attempted to construct new quasi-imperial networks to maintain their power and influence.² Jewish, Protestant, Catholic, and other religious international organizations were also established to pursue humanitarian work, advocate for the rights of particular communities, and promote religious values on the world stage. These forms of internationalism combined traditional notions of religious universality with modern models of international association.²⁹

The case of Spain sheds new light on two of these ‘alternative’ forms of internationalism in particular: the fascist internationalism which dominated Europe during the early years of the Second World War; and the revitalized forms of Catholic internationalism which emerged after it. Although the European authoritarian right denounced both socialist and liberal forms of internationalism, the Second World War represented the culmination of the kind of international cooperation which had been developing on the radical right since the end of the First World War.³⁰ Mussolini’s Italy had worked hard to establish Rome as the capital of international fascism, creating organizations and networks which brought together fascists from around the world during the 1920s and early 1930s. Italian dominance of international fascism was challenged by Nazi Germany after 1933, but the corresponding rise of the radical right across the continent helped to intensify transnational connections. The Anti-Comintern Pact formalized patterns of international cooperation between fascist and authoritarian states. The wartime Nazi New Order, although based on German imperial expansion, borrowed from the language and practices of interwar internationalism to promote a vision of a new, more effective form of European cooperation.³¹ By tracing the international activities of Francoist experts, this study identifies the important role that health and welfare played in these forms of fascist internationalism, and the extent of their appeal during the early years of the Second World War.

When the promise of the Nazi New Order collapsed in 1945, Spanish experts attempted to construct new networks and organizations through which they could engage with the outside world. In many cases these revolved around Spain’s small imperial territories in Africa or its former empire in Latin America. Perhaps more significant, however, was Spanish involvement in post-war Catholic

internationalism. Building on concepts of Christian universalism, modern forms of Catholic internationalism had begun to emerge in western Europe following the Napoleonic wars and the revolutions of 1830 and 1848. They were driven by the rise of political Catholicism from the 1830s, the emergence of ultramontane transnational networks, and, crucially, by international Catholic mobilization in defence of the pope following Italian reunification.³²

In the fields of health and welfare, international Catholic networks emerged during the nineteenth century around religious orders, lay charity networks, and the overseas missions which helped to ‘globalize’ Catholic social action beyond the confines of western Europe. Catholic internationalism overlapped with and confronted secular forms of internationalism, as well as rival religious internationalisms, and was thus boosted by the growth of secular international society during the early twentieth century. Groups such as Catholic Action helped to foster transnational connections, and an increasing number of international Catholic conferences, organizations, and events coalesced around themes such as refugees, peace, and the slave trade. The historical literature on post-Second World War Catholic internationalism has focussed on the influence of Christian democracy on the process of European integration, and on the Catholic ‘turn to the world’ following the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s.³³ This study, however, explores the period before the Second Vatican Council, when Catholics were trying to come to terms with the new international system that had developed after 1945.³⁴ By focussing on the international activities of Spanish Catholics, it shows how Catholic internationalism outside of the liberal Christian democratic mainstream flourished in the post-war era, particularly in the context of the early Cold War.

The work of Spanish social experts provides an in-depth case study of the relationship between nationalism and internationalism in the twentieth century, allowing us to examine what the ‘international’ meant for nationalists and nationalist regimes, and what the ‘national’ meant for international experts and institutions.³⁵ It serves to highlight the existence of various forms of internationalism embraced by fascist, conservative, and religious groups during the mid-twentieth century. But it also reveals the overlaps and continuities between them, and between liberal and illiberal forms of internationalism. It shows how individuals

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moved seamlessly from the League of Nations, to the Nazi New Order, and back again to the UN system. It also shows how these competing forms of internationalism developed both alongside and in opposition to each other. The Catholic internationalism which was so important to Franco’s Spain, for example, represented both an intense engagement with the post-war international system, and an attempt to prevent secular organizations such as the UN from forging a new world order based on ‘material’ values anathema to the Catholic faith.

The case of Spain also reveals overlooked continuities between the international structures of the pre- and post-1945 world. 1945 is traditionally taken as a, if not the key turning point in the history of twentieth-century internationalism and international relations. It is the point at which the projects associated with interwar fascism and authoritarianism were finally defeated, and the discredited League of Nations system was reinvented within what is now often referred to as the post-war ‘liberal world order’. In certain ways the history of Franco’s internationalists reinforces this chronology. The Spanish embrace of the Nazi New Order as an alternative international system in which Spain could regain some of its former glories was finally buried in the rubble of Berlin in 1945. But the discordant chronology for the Franco regime, the continued existence of a fascist-inspired system into the apparently post-fascist era, also brings into focus the persistence of pre-1945 individuals and ideas in the post-war world. As this story shows, many of the international plans and projects developed in the early years of Francoist rule continued to function to some degree after 1945.

The partial success of Spain’s international projects required collaborators willing to engage, at least to a certain extent, with Francoist ideas and rhetoric. Despite its fascist origins, after the Second World War the Francoist ‘social state’ was increasingly presented as a model of conservative-Catholic third-way modernity, defined by a commitment to ‘spiritual’ over ‘material’ social values, but designed to buttress a hierarchical political and social system capable of facing the challenges of the modern world. Although most of Spain’s post-war international interlocutors were formally committed to the principles of democracy, at least outside of the colonial realm, there were many who retained a degree of sympathy for such ideas. Latin American nationalists and conservatives were happy to embrace a ‘spiritual’ counterweight to US materialism. Western European advocates of the idea of a European Abendland may have been post-war democrats, but they shared the Francoist devotion to historical notions of the ‘Christian west’ and to the maintenance of conservative social relations and political structures.³⁶ As the Cold War emerged, increasing numbers of western politicians, particularly conservative

Catholics, began to openly echo Francoist language about the Soviet Union’s materialist threat to the spiritual values of the west. The extent of the international engagement with Franco’s Spain and its projects after 1945 brings into focus some of these profoundly anti-liberal features of the post-war world order.

This study also shows how ‘technical’ experts and expertise came to play a key political role in the history of mid-twentieth-century internationalism, shaping crucial debates about universality, international hierarchies, and the status of international outsiders. The fields in which international cooperation began to flourish during the nineteenth century, from public health to communications and social reform, required individuals with a high degree of technical understanding to deal with the demands of formulating policy across borders. By coming together in conferences, committees, and organizations to discuss these issues, the experts involved developed ‘epistemic communities’, transnational networks of expertise composed of professionals apparently working beyond the interests of their individual states, whose authority lay in their provision of dispassionate, scientifically based advice.³⁷ The international organizations that developed both before and after the First World War often institutionalized these networks by structuring their work around committees of experts, particularly in the field of health. The identity of the modern expert thus came to be defined by the idea of belonging to a transnational community united by scientific expertise and transcending national borders. Experts, in turn, became constitutive of the ‘transnational sphere’, of international society and the institutions which encompassed it.³⁸

But as the case of Spain demonstrates, these transnational networks of experts and the idea of ‘technical’ cooperation could be exploited by outsiders such as the Franco regime to overcome political obstacles to their international integration. The regime saw international specialized agencies and technical organizations as stepping stones towards acceptance into political bodies such as the UN. This was not simply a case of political exploitation of technical expertise. Most of those experts who chose to remain in Spain after the civil war and who continued to hold senior positions shared elements of the regime’s political and ideological outlook, although the degree of political engagement varied between individuals. Many Spanish social experts had been active in right-wing politics before the war, and those who had not were shaped by their experiences serving with rebel forces during the conflict. These experts enjoyed material advantages and freedoms unavailable to the vast majority of the Spanish population, including access to the scarce foreign currency reserves which were necessary for international travel.

³⁸ Davide Rodogno, Bernhard Struck, and Jakob Vogel (eds), *Shaping the Transnational Sphere: Experts, Networks and Issues from the 1840s to the 1930s* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2014); Christophe Charle, Jürgen Schriewer, and Peter Wagner (eds), *Transnational Intellectual Networks: Forms of Academic Knowledge and the Search for Cultural Identities* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2004).
Their professional standing, political beliefs, and social and material privileges meant that many were willing, even enthusiastic participants in efforts to promote the image of Franco’s Spain to the outside world. It was not until the emergence of an internal opposition to the regime in the late 1950s that the link between professional advancement and political loyalty began to fray.

Francoist experts thus undeniably belonged to transnational ‘epistemic communities’, but their identities were not solely defined by membership of those communities. This study argues that transnational networks of experts need to be viewed as both situated and instrumental; they existed within a wider political context and could be used for a variety of political, national, personal, or professional ends. As well as being leaders of their respective fields, cooperating with international colleagues on the basis of a shared set of beliefs and practices, the actions and attitudes of experts were also shaped by their national, political, historical, cultural, or religious circumstances. Arriving at an international conference or sitting down at an expert committee, they did not shift seamlessly from national to international affiliations, from political beings to apolitical experts. On the one hand, Francoist experts were acting as independent scientific figures, members of a community united across borders by a shared commitment to science and the technical demands of their field. On the other, they were representing Spain before the world, either directly as government officials and delegates at international organizations, or indirectly as informal ambassadors of Spanish science, the Spanish nation, and, by extension, the Spanish state.

**Structure, Sources, and Chronology**

The book is divided into five thematic chapters, arranged in broadly chronological order. Each chapter explores a particular form of international cooperation—a network, organization, or community—within which Spanish experts worked. Each examines the international network’s political and cultural context, Spain’s position within it, the constraints or barriers to international cooperation which Spanish experts faced, and their relationship with counterparts from other countries. These diverse networks, organizations, and communities represent the different ways in which Spanish experts conceived of the ‘international’, and show how these ideas developed in response to the shifting political climate of the period. Their story is reconstructed using a range of sources drawn from research across six different countries, including the archives of national governments and international organizations, records of philanthropic groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and professional journals and publications. The ‘experts’ it follows are broadly defined, ranging from leading national officials and researchers to ordinary health and welfare professionals who were sufficiently well respected to participate in international conferences and events.
The first chapter explores the relationship between Spain and the Axis powers during the Second World War. Spanish experts worked closely with Nazi Germany throughout the war. They formed part of a wider pattern of cooperation between Axis, Axis-aligned, and neutral states under the auspices of the Nazi-fascist New Order. This chapter argues that the scientific networks, conferences, and organizations promoted by Nazi Germany represented a form of ‘Axis internationalism’, which appropriated the language and practices of pre-war internationalism to promote the idea of a collaborative continental order under Nazi leadership. There were considerable differences between Spanish experts and their German counterparts. But a shared rejection of the pre-war liberal system and a common commitment to new social models meant that Spanish experts, like many of their European counterparts, were willing to embrace Axis internationalism as a new, and in many ways improved, form of international cooperation.

The second chapter focusses on Spain’s relationship with liberal international health organizations such as the WHO. These organizations played an important role in Spain’s search for legitimacy, and social experts served as a vanguard for Spain’s post-war integration into the UN system. The idea of international health as a technical, apolitical field was particularly important in enabling the Franco regime to overcome its outsider status. Philanthropic groups such as the Rockefeller Foundation were willing to work with Franco’s Spain even in the immediate aftermath of the civil war, claiming that the humanitarian needs of the Spanish people overrode any political objections to the Franco regime. Even at the height of Spain’s diplomatic isolation after 1945 a fierce battle raged at the WHO over the question of Spanish membership. Although Spain was excluded in 1946, the WHO was one of the first international organizations Spain was admitted to in the early 1950s, helping to pave the way to full UN membership.

The third chapter turns to the colonial dimension of Franco’s social state. Spain’s African colonies were geographically tiny but were of extraordinary symbolic value for the Franco regime. Despite the brutality and neglect which characterized Spanish colonial rule, the regime sought to promote Spain as a responsible European colonial power committed to African development. Social experts were at the heart of this process, particularly during the early years of the regime. Spain’s status as an ‘imperial power’ promised to grant Spanish experts a role within the regional structures set up to promote African health and welfare after 1945, but the reality fell far short of these grand visions. This chapter explores the international and inter-imperial dimensions of Spanish colonial health, charting both its ambitions and its failures. In doing so, it sheds new light on the entangled histories of mid-twentieth-century international and colonial health, and of imperialism and internationalism more generally.

Chapter 4 reveals the important but contested role which social experts played in Francoist attempts to promote Spanish influence in Latin America during the 1940s and 1950s. The concept of hispanidad, which included the idea that Spain
stood at the head of a community of Ibero-American nations united by ties of history, culture, religion, and language, was central to Francoist domestic discourse and foreign policy. The regime sought to integrate the traditionalist vision of *hispanidad* into a new model of socially advanced, conservative-Catholic modernity. By encouraging Spanish experts to form ties with their Latin American colleagues, it aimed to promote an image of the Francoist state as modern, scientific, and socially advanced. Despite the significant resources dedicated to this task, the Francoist narrative was strongly resisted both by Latin American leftists and by the many exiled Spanish Republicans who promoted a more collaborative model of Ibero-American identity. Nevertheless, Latin America did offer a route through which Francoist experts were able to engage with wider forms of international health and welfare, particularly in fields such as social insurance.

The fifth chapter examines Spanish involvement with post-war Catholic internationalism. It argues that international Catholic organizations and networks provided a crucial conduit for Franco’s Spain to engage with the outside world after 1945. Health and humanitarian organizations were vital to Spain’s post-war engagement with international Catholicism, including the nursing group Salus Infirorum and the Catholic charity Caritas. The work of these organizations serves to highlight the prominent involvement of Spanish women in these international activities. At the same time, they illustrate the limits to Spain’s involvement with post-war Catholic internationalism, during a period when Spain’s Catholic elites remained isolated from mainstream European Christian democracy by their inability to reconcile Francoist National Catholicism with post-war liberal democracy.

This study focusses on the first two decades of the Franco regime, starting from the end of the civil war in 1939. The cut-off point is taken as the publication of the Stabilization Plan in 1959, which marked the end of the period of autarky by liberalizing foreign trade and opening up the Spanish economy to foreign investment. The plan did not cause a decisive shift in Spain’s relationship with the outside world in and of itself. Rather, it was the culmination of a process of gradual reintegration into the international community which had been taking place over the course of the 1950s. It accelerated the economic growth which had begun over the previous few years, laying the groundwork for the rapid economic expansion of the 1960s and the social, cultural, and political changes which came with it. By the start of the 1960s Spain’s international position had stabilized; a semi-integrated member of the Cold War west, accepted into some international organizations but excluded from others, valued as an enemy of communism but ignored as a military power, admired as a tourist destination but largely dismissed as a political relic of a bygone age.

During the 1940s and 1950s, however, Spain’s relationship with the outside world had been in flux, lending political significance to the international work of social experts, and encouraging the exploration of new ways for Franco’s Spain to
establish its legitimacy on the world stage. The generation of experts who led Spain’s engagement with the outside world were products of the interwar era and the civil war, both professionally and politically. They saw the Franco regime, and the authoritarian right of interwar Europe from which it emerged, as modern, dynamic alternatives to sclerotic and ineffective forms of liberal democracy. During the early years of the Second World War, this belief underpinned their willingness to see Nazi Germany as the harbinger of a new international system. After 1945 they found it difficult to embrace the new political and ideological realities of the post-war global order, prompting them to search for alternative ways to imagine and interact with the world. It was only with the rise of a new generation, who had not necessarily fought in the civil war or been so profoundly shaped by the interwar period, that Spanish experts abandoned these dreams and began to accept the immutability of the post-war international system, seeking to adapt Spain to the world rather than adapting the world to Spain. The emergence of this new generation and the changes after 1959 are discussed in the Epilogue. Ultimately this study aims to disrupt and centre our understanding of twentieth-century internationalism. Moving beyond liberal international organizations and movements reveals the range of illiberal, fascist, religious, and imperial internationalisms which competed for influence both before and after 1945. Turning away from the major powers and Anglo-American elites which have dominated much of the historiography shows what the ‘international’ meant from the perspective of a political outlier on the periphery of Europe. Questioning the distinction between political organizations and the technical work of specialized agencies, humanitarian organizations, and expert networks reveals social experts as political actors, promoting national agendas, pursuing ideological goals, and attempting to shape international organizations and networks in their own interests. The book thus sets out a history of the mid-twentieth century characterized by the tumultuous interplay of overlapping global, regional, and imperial projects, in which social experts played a central role in attempts to imagine and construct new visions of world order and national prestige.