The Limits of Corporatism: Continued Challenges for Economic Democracy in US, Chinese and Brazilian Unions
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ABSTRACT
With quite different historical trajectories, unions in the US, China and Brazil today confront common challenges with the continued transnational hostility to the norms of economic democracy with which they are rhetorically associated. Comparing their responses to these challenges is revealing as each country represents a point along the private-public and enterprise-federal spectrums of union structures, with the US and China as relative global endpoints and Brazil at the more common corporatist mid-point.

This project aims to look at the ways in which these pressures have highlighted how modern unions, regardless of structural divergences, have intensified their reliance on corporatist forms of social bargaining within existing political arrangements. As such, they have been limited in their ability to pro-actively engage with the global and local forces operating on modern workplaces. This raises the question of whether any of these different union traditions can actively promote economic democracy, or whether they will in fact undermine new organizational innovations based on their own self-interest. The result of this inquiry then necessary raises the further question of what, if any, forms of local or transnational labor politics can move beyond reactive corporatist bargaining that justify sidelining economic democracy on the pragmatic grounds of institutional preservation.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER
Jedidiah Kroncke is a Professor of Law at Fundação Getulio Vargas, Brazil. His research interests include labor law, law and development and comparative law with a particular focus on Brazil and China. He received his J.D. from Yale Law School and Ph.D. from University of California, Berkeley.