1

Introduction

The Politics of Representation in the Global Age

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This is a book about how processes of political representation work, whom they represent, and how they develop over time. We think of these as processes in which interests are formed, given a voice within organizations and polities, and influence the decisions of governments. As such, these processes are at the heart of how democracies are organized and governed. As Suzanne Berger has observed, "political representation involves both the organizations that link citizens to government and the political ideas and programs that structure how the world works." Few processes are more important to the operation of democracy. Democratic governance is a system in which choices are made and compromises forged among competing interests, and the quality of a democracy is determined, in large measure, by how well the views of the people are represented by its governing institutions.

Appropriately, therefore, the study of representation has always been central to political science. How best to accomplish it has been a core question for theorists of democracy since the eighteenth-century debates of Edmund Burke and the authors of *The Federalist Papers* up to those that join contemporary analysts, such as Robert Dahl (1972), Bernard Manin (1977), and Pierre Rosanvallon (2011). This has never been an easy question to resolve because even the most democratic governments are imperfect mirrors for the views of the people (Pitkin 1984). Of more concern to us, however, are debates among empirical analysts of politics about how existing processes of representation work. How are interests formed? How do they acquire influence, and how are conflicts among them resolved?

For comments on earlier versions of this chapter, we thank Lucio Baccaro, Suzanne Berger, Peter Gourevitch, Frances Hagopian, Kirk Hawkins, Gary Marks, and Kendall Stiles, as well as our contributors and participants in panels at the 2010 Conference of Europeanists and the 2010 APSA meeting.

In this book, we undertake two analytical tasks, each with important empirical implications. First, we call into question popular but relatively mechanistic conceptions of representation that assume the interests of social groups are given by determinants prior to politics, whether rooted in socioeconomic position, institutional rules, or deep cultural perspectives, and provided voice in a relatively automatic way by organizational vehicles, such as political parties and interest groups. Instead, we advance an alternative perspective that ascribes to actors a multiplicity of possible interests, investigates how they come to perceive themselves as having particular interests, and views the dynamics of politics as intrinsic to that process. Our central point is that interests, although influenced by material, institutional, and cultural conditions, cannot be read off directly from these conditions, but must be understood as actively constituted through political processes. We develop this point by exploring three key processes associated with representation that we label *identification*, *mobilization*, and *adjudication*, a triptych that shapes much of the discussion in subsequent chapters.

The second concern motivating this volume is our sense that political science has yet to come to terms fully with the ways in which the forces associated with globalization have challenged the systems of interest representation in place until the 1970s, in some cases initiating profound changes in those systems. We use the term "globalization" to refer to increases in the flows of people, goods, and capital across national borders, to the neoliberal ideas that have promoted those flows, and to the growth in transnational communication made possible by a revolution in information technology (Held 1995; Berger and Dore 1996; Keohane and Milner 1996; Scholte 2000; Berger 2005; Drezner 2007). On the one hand, by calling into question the supremacy of states and transforming the operation of many economies, globalization has posed new *challenges* to the groups and institutions long prominent in national systems of representation. On the other hand, by promoting the development of new organizational forms, ranging from the supranational European Union to transnational social networks, globalization has provided new institutional *settings* for the representation of interests.

These developments raise a number of questions. How are the organizations traditionally central to interest representation responding to the challenges of globalization? Are new institutions playing new roles in the process of political representation? Are some interests being privileged relative to others? In short, how has the set of organizations purpose-built for interest representation in earlier eras – ranging from pluralist interest groups to corporatist "social partners" and from political parties to social movements – adapted to these changes? We do not attempt an exhaustive canvass, but the chapters that follow provide intriguing answers to many of these questions and point the field in new research directions.

The next section of this chapter explores the ways in which scholarship has traditionally analyzed the representation of interests in democratic contexts.

We then sketch the contours of an alternative perspective that is further elaborated in the chapters of this volume. A third section considers some of the most prominent changes that have taken place in systems of representation during the era of globalization, and we conclude with a brief preview of the chapters that follow.

ANALYZING THE REPRESENTATION OF INTERESTS

While the issues associated with representation are broadly similar across multiple fields of policy making, we put particular emphasis in this volume on the representation of interests linked to the political economy, partly because they have received much attention in recent decades and partly because they raise the relevant issues in the most direct terms. Three perspectives dominate current understandings of how interests are formed and represented in the political economy. Each makes important contributions to knowledge, but one of the objectives of this book is to probe the limits of what these perspectives offer.

The first of these approaches privileges what might be described as "socioeconomic determination." With a pedigree going back at least to the work of Karl Marx, this perspective treats the political interests of social groups as matters largely given by the socioeconomic position of those groups, understood in terms of the social or economic theories of the day. The great virtue of this approach is the recognition it accords the proposition that, when all is said and done, politics is fundamentally about important conflicts among competing economic interests. In Harold Lasswell's (1935) famous phrase, it is about "who gets what, when and how." To forget this is to miss a good deal of what is significant about politics in all times and places.

Much can be learned from this perspective. Olson (1965) uses it to show why it is so difficult for groups to organize, even when potential members share the same objectives. Bates (1981) deploys it to explain why governments in the developing world often pursue policies that seem inimical to economic development. Rogowski (1989) explains support for free trade and democracy. Richter, Samphantharak, and Timmons (2009) take a similar approach to explain variation in the effective taxes paid by companies, and a massive literature discusses the proclivity of firms that benefit from government contracts to engage in lobbying (e.g., Godwin and Seldon 2002; Brady et al. 2007; Hart 2009).

A second approach accepts the proposition that socioeconomic position structures an actor's interests but adds what might be described as a layer of "institutional determination." According to this view, institutions are important intermediaries between the interests that groups acquire from their social or economic situation and the positions they advance in political contestation or the force of those positions. Analysts posit actors with a set of "fundamental" preferences, usually defined as the desire for more material resources or the power to secure those resources, whose "strategic" preferences are

conditioned by the institutional setting for interaction. A great deal of valuable work elucidates how features of the institutional setting affect strategic preferences. Among these institutional features are: the rules that set the agenda, forcing actors to choose among a limited set of options; decision rules specifying how issues will be decided; institutions that convey information or allow actors to monitor the behavior of others; and a range of similar institutions that allow actors to make credible commitments to one another, thereby facilitating cooperation in pursuit of common objectives (Weingast and Marshall 1988). On such views, institutions make possible the coalitions that have real force in politics.

In less formal terms, a variety of analysts have made use of analogous arguments. Lindblom (1977) contends, for instance, that the institutions of a democratic polity within a capitalist economy privilege the interests of business, because of the centrality of business confidence to the prosperity on which governments depend for reelection. Offe and Wiesenthal (1980) argue that business will have more influence in democratic politics because it faces fewer collective action problems than labor. Swenson (2002) suggests that the positions employers take toward reforms in one sphere, such as that of social policy, are dependent on institutional arrangements in other spheres, such as that of industrial relations (see also Goyer 2003). De Figueiredo and Kim (2004) show that firms decide how and whether to lobby based, in part, on whether that would oblige them to reveal proprietary information to competitors. Iversen and Soskice (2006) argue that electoral rules condition the types of electoral coalitions that can be formed over issues of redistribution, thereby inducing more redistribution under proportional representation than in majoritarian democracies. Such examples could be multiplied.

A third approach that might be described as one based on "cultural determination" suggests that actors construe their interests in terms emanating from deep cultural categories and worldviews. Although such analyses often reject the contention that economic position drives political preferences, in favor of the cultural construction of preferences, many see those preferences as the product of a relatively fixed cultural context. The ideas and norms that are legacies of old struggles are so strong that they largely determine how subsequent generations construe their interests and institutions are often said to be structured to reinforce specific conceptions of legitimate interest, rooted in a kind of historically informed collective cognition.

Just as institutionalists have borrowed from microeconomics, so this third perspective has often borrowed tools from anthropological scholars such as Clifford Geertz, who notably posited "a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which people communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life" (1973: 89). Behind the industrial policies of western democracies, for instance, Dobbin (1997) sees a set of templates for action, familiar in each society and tantamount to national strategies for action. Martin (2000) shows how different

corporate cultures can shape how those companies interact with governments and civil society.

There are echoes of this approach in the constructivist theories developed by scholars of international relations and international political economy. Although there is lively debate among constructivist theorists about the role of structure and agency in such processes, many emphasize the ways in which the behavior of governments depends on long-standing categories through which their identities and interests are conceived (Wendt 1992). In some cases, constructivists investigate how new "ideational" categories arise in terms highly consonant with our own perspective (Blyth 1997; Berman 1998; Blyth 2002; Campbell 2004; Schmidt 2008). Finnemore (2003) draws on constructivist approaches to explain the changing rationales developed by states to justify military intervention in other states; and McNamara (1999) shows how the move to European Monetary Union was driven, not only by economic developments, but by the rise of concomitant neoliberal ideas. Although critical of tendencies to take the concepts of the state system as universal or "natural," some constructivists treat these categories as relatively fixed determinants of interest that are at least as powerful as the economic factors central to other approaches.

All of these perspectives have indubitable value. Socioeconomic position has a fundamental bearing on actors' interests. Political outcomes are often the product of coalitions, and institutional analysis tells us much about the conditions under which coalitions can be formed. Constructivists have rightly drawn our attention to the ways in which collective interpretations of historically important events leave a conceptual legacy that conditions how governments will respond to new problems. The explanatory power of each approach varies across contexts, and there is room for debate among their proponents, but each can tell us a good deal about how interests are likely to be construed and which ones will be represented most forcefully in any given context. In one form or another, these are the dominant perspectives in the field.

In our view, however, these perspectives miss key elements of the processes whereby interests are formed and effectively represented in politics. As utilized in many studies, they suffer from two kinds of limitations. First, those who use these approaches often presume that an actor's interests are self-evident, both to the actor and to the analyst, thereby assuming away the processes through which actors reach a determination about what course of action would be in their interest. Yet as Berger (1981) observed three decades ago, interests do not generally arise unambiguously from the world, because most actors have multiple, cross-cutting interests. An owner of a pig farm in Brittany, for example, may identify as a farmer, an employer, a Catholic, a French citizen, a European, or a Breton.

No doubt, there are occasions in which well-informed actors have straightforward interests in a particular outcome. Presidential candidates usually want to be elected. But there are many more cases where what may seem obvious to

the analyst is not self-evident to the actor. For decades, economists and policy experts have contended that very high unemployment rates among European youths could be diminished by relaxing labor market restrictions on hiring, firing, and part-time and temporary contracts (Lindbeck and Snower 1988; OECD 1994). Yet in many instances, notably in France, when governments have put forward such reforms, young people, the purported beneficiaries of these reforms, have protested *en masse* against them. The reason is that the young protestors see themselves, not as disenfranchised labor market "outsiders," but rather as future, well-protected labor market "insiders" (Levy, Cole, and Le Galès 2008).

Even when identity and goals are clear, it can be difficult for an actor to decide just what the effects of a particular proposal might be. This is true of even the most privileged and informed actors. For example, although Benjamin Disraeli believed that extending the suffrage to working-class Britons in 1867 would ultimately benefit the Conservative Party, many of his colleagues disagreed on perfectly reasonable grounds.

The core point here is that interests invariably emerge from processes of interpretation, whereby the relevant political actors make determinations among their priorities and weigh the costs and benefits of particular courses of action, often in light of limited information about the effects of those courses of action (Jacobs 2009). However, political science has yet to turn its full attention to the problem of interpretation. Analysts of the political economy, in particular, often specify the interests of the actors by deduction from current economic theories and the institutional context for action, without considering the impact of intervening processes of interpretation. As a result, between the fundamental preferences that many analyses posit and the strategic preferences induced by institutional setting lies a vast realm of uncertainty that is largely *terra incognita* but often crucial to explaining why political actors and the organizations representing them do what they do (Katznelson and Weingast 2007).

Faced with the prospect of having to negotiate an austerity plan, for example, trade union leaders may know that their members' interests lie in minimizing the pain, but precisely how to do so is typically an open issue. Should some be laid off so others can retain their existing wages, or should all take a wage cut so that none will be unemployed? Which course of action will secure the well-being of members in the long run, and to what extent should the long run be discounted in favor of immediate returns? And what about the union's organizational interests, as opposed to the interests of its members? How should the union respond to propositions that may bolster the organization, but at the price of some economic loss for its members? None of these calculations are simple. All involve a complex weighing of risks – even if seen entirely in rationalist terms – and such decisions are not always made entirely on a rationalist calculus. Many matters have distributive consequences with moral dimensions that evoke issues of social justice. Those who want to know which

interests will gain voice in such cases need to be more attentive to processes of interpretation than are the current dominant approaches.

The second limitation of the dominant approaches to political analysis is closely related to the first. Each focuses on the ways in which politics is structured by overarching conditions, variously construed as socioeconomic developments, institutional settings, or cultural categories. By focusing so intently on them, however, conventional analyses often miss the contribution to the outcome made by active political processes of organization, communication, contestation, and deliberation. These processes embody the creative possibilities of politics.

To see politics as an adjunct of economics, in which actors, having calculated what is in their economic interest, get together only to put their demands on the table, is to misconstrue how preferences are identified and acted upon. Adding institutions as mechanisms that aggregate interests in particular ways is a step forward, but the political process is far from mechanical. At its core are political struggles in which actors try to persuade others about the validity of their views of the world and to mobilize them, while those who might stay on the sidelines are persuaded to weigh in (Culpepper 2003). There is creativity in this process and often an element of moral debate, as those who study framing observe (Kahneman and Tversky 2000; Bleich 2003).

For this reason, the dominant views are sometimes said to miss the "politics" involved in decision making, but, of course, the issue is really how that politics should be construed. Analysts focusing on the clash of economic interests, the import of cultural categories, or the institutional framework for decision making simply see the core elements of politics in different terms. The problem is not that those elements are unimportant but that explanations for political outcomes that turn exclusively on them are often radically incomplete. It would be a mistake to embrace a mechanistic conception of interests as determined by any of a series of two-step processes in which some kind of fundamental "raw" interests – whether determined by economic position, institutional location, or cultural inheritance – are then given voice by strategic actors. Politics should be seen as more primordial, as entering the picture from the very beginning. Fleshing out the role of politics is the challenge the contributors to this volume take on, and in the next section of this introduction we provide a general characterization of the place of politics in interest representation. Our goal is to develop an expansive conception of politics seen as more than the aggregation of interests given by a superordinate socioeconomic, cultural, or institutional order.

THE POLITICS OF INTEREST REPRESENTATION

What are the principal features of the politics of interest representation? We begin by acknowledging that it takes place on a terrain that is structured – by the modalities of a particular economy, which condition the relevant interests

(Pontusson 1995), by institutions that specify a particular political opportunity structure and distribute power among the actors (Kitschelt 1986; Kriesi 1995), and by a cultural context that provides repertoires, imaginaries, and moral solidarities on which the relevant actors can draw to accomplish their purposes (cf. Swidler 1986). In these respects, the contributors to this volume all rely on important existing literatures.

However, we want to emphasize that the structural features of the setting in which political representation takes place are not fully determinative. Rather, the representation of interests emerges from collective processes of deliberation and decision making, typically involving the projection of organized power. Thus, the means by which some interests are advanced and others set aside is not a mechanical aggregation, but a highly active political process. This process is marked by creative efforts, which can be more or less efficient, to deploy existing resources and to generate new ones, as actors identify their interests, find their voices, and attempt to make them heard.

The political character of the representative process can be better understood by looking more closely at three interlinked components of it that we describe as identification, mobilization, and adjudication. Interests are not simply given by deep structural forces, but are *identified* – that is, interpreted or narrated – by political actors choosing among a variety of plausible understandings. These narratives are often multiple and contested, leading rival groups to *mobilize* in support of their respective positions. Through political struggles, organizations then *adjudicate* among the competing narratives.

In some cases, there is a rough temporal ordering to these processes, as actors identify their interests, mobilize around them, and then take decisions that reflect those interests. While analytically separable, however, these processes need not occur consecutively. They are more likely to be intertwined. As the chapter for this book by Lucio Baccaro shows, for instance, the efforts of Italian trade unions to identify the preferences of their members through internal referenda were simultaneously efforts to mobilize them in support of proposed reforms, while the competing views were adjudicated through majority rule. In a similar vein, Karen Alter's chapter on international legal regimes suggests that, even in classic judicial settings, adjudication often depends on wider processes of mobilization, as supportive coalitions are built to legitimate and relay international court rulings. For these reasons, representation should be seen as a political process in which the outcomes are dependent on interlinked political struggles surrounding identification, mobilization, and adjudication that play out over time.

We use the term "identification" to refer to the process whereby the relevant actors, whether individuals or groups, arrive at judgments about the course of action that will best serve their interests. That entails judgments about both goals and means. When actors establish their principal goals regarding any prospective course of action, they are simultaneously thinking about the means that are most likely to serve these goals, because, by specifying what is feasible, the means carry major implications for what goals should be pursued in the

first place. While simplifying assumptions to the effect that the actors seek more income or power can be useful, they read out of the analysis the more complex set of calculations that identifying one's interests typically entail. Faced with a proposal to open markets, for instance, a firm may have an interest in maintaining the barriers that offer it protection from competition, but it may also have an interest in securing the new markets that freer trade might offer. Even a well-informed firm may have difficulty deciding how much priority to attach to the multiple effects of a policy. Voters are typically in a similar situation. Choosing which party to support typically entails attaching weights to each of the variables in a multivariate preference function (Hall 2009). For example, the Democratic Party in the United States has been frustrated repeatedly by the inclination of low-income Christians to privilege their religious identity over their economic identity (Frank 2004).

As the U.S. example indicates, perceptions of interest and identity are often intertwined. What I want from the world is a function of what I think I am in the world, and, because the identities of most actors are multidimensional, the decision to give priority to one set of interests over another in any decision situation is often simultaneously a decision to privilege one of those identities over others – in this case, the religious identity as a conservative Christian over the economic identity as a low-income worker. By implication, even distributive politics is sometimes identity politics (cf. Fraser and Honneth 2003).

Moreover, because the preference functions of actors are multidimensional and preferences are tied to identities, there are many ways in which political contestation can play upon them. In his chapter for this book, Gunnar Trumbull describes how the proponents of a policy often seek a legitimating coalition by framing it in terms that speak to diffuse interests; and Marcos Ancelovici traces the process whereby the leaders of two French unions, facing similar challenges, developed quite different conceptions of their union's interests. Nationalist appeals have also been deployed in conflicts over economic issues (Gerschenkron 1948; Abdelal 2001; Herrera 2004).

Even when they have an established set of goals, actors must form judgments about the effectiveness of the means proposed to secure them. An extensive literature shows how institutional settings can condition the feasibility of attaining certain ends, often by making some coalitions more viable than others (Weingast and Marshall 1988; Mares 2003). The availability and credibility of "causal beliefs" specifying the likely effect of certain actions also condition actors' views about what will be in their interest, often in powerful ways (Goldstein and Keohane 1993; Jacobs 2010).

The core point here is that actors operate, not from their interests but from *perceptions* of their interests, whether material or ideal, and those perceptions are not simply given by structural factors. They emerge via processes of interpretation through which actors form judgments about themselves and the world. The perception of interests, in turn, provides scope for a politics of identification in which proponents for competing courses of action contest with one another about the most appropriate ways in which to interpret the

situation and the most feasible ways to address it. Anyone who has watched a political campaign has seen this process in motion. It is fundamental to political representation.

The second process intrinsic to the politics of representation is the process of mobilization, which we understand as one in which the proponents of a measure try to build active support for it among the relevant voters, legislators, interest organizations, or members. Here, the objective is to assemble a wide coalition for the measure and to invoke the active engagement of those in this coalition in the relevant political process. Within this category, we would also include efforts to demobilize those most likely to oppose a measure.

To some extent, mobilization is an organizational task, and this aspect of it has been well-studied. There are illuminating literatures on the factors that inspire or inhibit voting and other forms of political participation (Brady et al. 2004; Rosenstone and Hansen 2004) and on the ways in which social movements mobilize followers (Tarrow 1994; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 2004; McAdam and Tarrow 2006). In this volume, Frances Hagopian examines the strategies used by parties in four Latin American countries to mobilize support in the wake of neoliberal policy innovations that disorganized electoral strategies; and Gerald McDermott explores how new forms of organization were used to mobilize vintners in Argentina. In each case, the striking point is that the outcome could not have been predicted by an inspection of existing institutional structures, because the politics involved the construction of new organizational forms.

However, the process of mobilization is also a struggle for hearts and minds, conducted in the realm of political discourse, where the proponents of a new policy seek to influence the importance people attach to the issue and to shape the ways in which it is seen to impinge on their interests. In this struggle for salience and advantage, new narratives are often devised and old narratives evoked to link the matter at hand to values and social solidarities about which people care deeply (Poletta 1998; Poletta and Jasper 2001). Because the object is frequently to define the issue in terms that will appeal to existing biases, mobilization often feeds into the process of identification (Schattschneider 1960).

The two processes are most obviously joined when collective deliberation is involved. Encouraging deliberation is a way of mobilizing the relevant actors and a means for reshaping their perceptions of interest. There is lively debate, of course, about the power of deliberation to reshape interests (Elster 1998; Mansbridge 2003; cf. Guttman and Thompson 2004). In some contexts, it may be a sham, designed to legitimate an outcome largely ordained in advance or serving only to confirm the participants in their original views (cf. Barnabas 2004; Carpini, Cook, and Laurence 2004). But we think the impact of deliberation should not be discounted. Lucio Baccaro shows, for instance, that the collective deliberations organized by Italian trade unions had a significant impact on members' preferences over pension reform. Of course, this was also