1

Introduction

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On January 6, 2021, angry supporters of the outgoing president, Donald Trump, stormed the US Capitol building, harassed members of Congress and staff, and mocked democratic symbols. The protestors violently expressed a widespread sentiment among Republican voters that the election was rigged, and that Joe Biden should not be sworn in as the new president of the United States. If democracy depends on the support of those who voted for the losing party to accept the result of the election as legitimate, the events on Capitol Hill showed that this "losers' consent" (Anderson et al., 2005) is crumbling. Although the degree of polarization in the United States is severe, other advanced democracies face similar challenges. A substantial number of citizens feel that the political system has deep flaws, that politicians have lost touch, and that political decisions do not reflect the preferences of the majority anymore. The chapters in this book highlight the pervasiveness of these problems across a variety of institutional and political settings well beyond the United States.

Politicians, in contrast, are caught between a rock and a hard place. In the words of Mair (2013), they are expected to behave responsibly and responsively at the same time, while these aims increasingly contradict each other. "Responsive" government demands a link between citizens' preferences and political decisions, whereas "responsible" government considers the variegated constraints that follow from international obligations, past decisions, and market forces. In an interdependent world, governments often frustrate citizens' legitimate demands because the room for autonomous action is limited. In this situation, citizens who disagree with decisions are no longer satisfied with the way democracy works, and politicians grow weary of those who are seemingly ignorant of the trade-offs they face.

Although these trade-offs are not new in themselves, this book departs from the observation that the conditions for democratic representation and governance in advanced liberal democracies have changed dramatically over the past

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decades. Societal transformations such as globalization, digitalization, and pluralization have created new challenges for effective government and changed the conditions for political participation and organization. The rapid integration of markets and enhanced flow of capital, people, and information across borders has resulted in a degree of interdependence that casts doubt on the ability of nation states to address major problems and take far-reaching political decisions unilaterally.

At the same time, trust in political information and scientific expertise is decreasing in many democratic societies, while concerns about uncertainty, complexity, and contradictory information are on the increase. Under these conditions, the processes of pluralization, secularization, and individualization referred to here have eroded political authority in most Western societies and produced an increasingly multidimensional political sphere. Citizens' norms, values, and interests diverge across a number of different dimensions. In Europe, traditional cleavages such as religion or the conflict between capital and labor seem to have lost their structuring force in political alignments. For most citizens in advanced liberal democracies, no single party fully represents their range of interests and opinions as part of a coherent ideology. Consequently, mobilization and political activism have become increasingly issue-based and, since the late 1960s, have more frequently taken place outside established institutions and political parties. Moreover, these developments have been consequential for political cooperation and conflict within those established institutions as well. Above all, the formation of winning coalitions and the forging of political compromises have become more challenging tasks.

Recent years have witnessed many studies arguing that the developments sketched here constitute a serious threat to liberal democracy. While diagnoses of a crisis of democracy are as old as liberal democracy itself (Runciman, 2017), there are reasons to take its contemporary challenges seriously. Not only have many new democracies that formed during Huntington's (1993) "third wave" of democratization experienced a process of democratic backsliding (Bermeo, 2016; Waldner and Lust, 2018), but established liberal democracies are faced with new problems as well: The first of these relates to a widespread perception of declining state capacity and performance in the face of long-term and global policy and governance problems. This perception has strengthened calls for technocratic governance: If representative government is slow and ineffective in taking important decisions, why not delegate them to more knowledgeable experts and professionals? There are strong indications for this development to have occurred in past decades: For example, nonmajoritarian decision-making bodies have grown in importance at the national and the international levels. A second problem consists in the increasing frustration and alienation of significant parts of the citizenry from the institutions and processes of liberal democracy that leads to either political apathy or nonelectoral mobilization and protests. Disenchantment with representative liberal democracy has also provoked demand for more direct participation, "strong leaders" or seemingly

easy solutions to policy problems offered by populist parties or political entrepreneurs. In consequence, we are witnessing an increased polarization of the political sphere, the rise of parties and candidates challenging fundamental principles of representative democracy, a resort to hardball tactics among political adversaries and, in consequence, a further deterioration in decision-making capacity.

The contributions to this volume critically assess the performance of representative institutions and, in particular, the extent to which they (still) are capable of producing decisions that are responsive to citizens' needs and interests and responsible at the same time. Where a lack of responsiveness and gaps in representation produce niches for populist mobilization, authors seek to understand how the emerging new conflicts and resulting polarization of politics affect the stability and functioning of representative institutions. Against this background, the larger normative questions are how democratic institutions can be adapted to new conditions and challenges: Can societal transformations, external shocks, and contestation also induce learning processes that result in reforms to make institutions more capable of meeting the demands of government performance and effective participation?

DILEMMAS OF DEMOCRATIC REPRESENTATION

Democratic representation is the key concern of this book. Following Hanna Pitkin, the fundamental idea of political representation can be defined by referring to the etymological origin of the word, according to which representation means "making present again" something that is absent (Pitkin, 1967: 8). In the division of labor between citizens and elected politicians, representation is to ensure that the multitudinous interests and concerns of citizens who are absent in decision-making are made present in public and parliamentary deliberation and effective in resulting collective decisions. However, the notion of representation has changed over time. In his seminal book on the principles of representative government, Bernard Manin argues that the transformation of social and political elites changes political representation as well, with democracy transitioning from parliamentary democracy in the nineteenth century to party democracy in the early twentieth and, at the end of the twentieth century, to a new form of "audience democracy" (Manin, 1997).

Manin's notion of audience democracy is particularly pertinent for the concerns underpinning this volume. In his argument it is associated with a rise in demand for discretionary power: Where "it is increasingly difficult to foresee all the events to which governments have to respond . . . the personal *trust* that the candidate inspires is a more adequate basis of election than the evaluation of plans for future actions" (Manin, 1997: 221). At the same time, frustration with the existing institutions' response to perceived problems and legislative output as well as the perception of representative gaps undermine trust in representation. Political parties and representatives thus struggle to justify

and redefine their roles in political decision-making processes and to rebuff contentions that they have become dispensable.

Although many theorists still regard representation as an "intrinsic part of what makes democracy possible" (Urbinati and Warren, 2008: 395), many of the cases studied here reflect the need to move beyond the traditional "promissory" understanding of it with its sole focus on authorization and accountability (Mansbridge, 2003). In particular, forms of political representation that are primarily territorial – with each member of a legislative assembly representing a territorial constituency – no longer seem sufficient. On the one hand, the traditional divergence in the interests of territorial constituencies has been politicized more strongly in many established democracies (e.g., through the rise of regionalist or separatist parties and ideological polarization) and resulted in growing costs of decision-making. Given the complexity and urgency of many policy problems, this trend has made more functional representation and technocratic decision-making appealing. On the other hand, there has been increasing criticism of existing representative bodies that do not adequately mirror the plurality of different groups and interests, leaving women, minorities, and citizens with lower incomes and education numerically underrepresented. These deficits hoist appeals for better descriptive representation and a "politics of presence" (Phillips, 1995). A number of studies in this volume illustrate and analyze these problems.

Moreover, several contributions to this volume show that even in systems of proportional representation, which tend to facilitate the representation of different groups and advocation of different policies, parties' claims to represent specific constituencies no longer go uncontested. The "constructivist turn" some theoretical accounts of representation have taken since Michael Saward introduced the concept of "representative claims" to the debate (Saward, 2006) highlights the importance of understanding representation as a reciprocal relationship in which claims to representation are accepted or rejected and in which representatives and constituencies are mutually constitutive (Disch, 2015). Beyond theoretical accounts, this constructivist perspective on representation might also enable a better empirical understanding of the role and function of protest and activism in democracy outside elected bodies and of the ways in which these shape constituencies and decision-making dynamics and affect electoral behavior.

THE PROBLEM OF RESPONSIVENESS

Ensuring adequate forms of representation is important to ensure a degree of responsiveness of collective decisions to individual and group desires and interests in modern mass democracies. Responsiveness is the second major focus of this book. While perfect responsiveness to every single citizen is impossible in collective decision-making and a world of scarcity, democracy's fundamental principle of equality requires citizens to have equal chances of

getting their voices heard and considered in the decision-making process (Dahl 1989). At the very least, representation demands that politicians explain their decisions to their constituents. Where their opinions and behavior deviate from those of citizens, legitimacy depends on policy-makers detailing the reasons for being unresponsive (Pitkin, 1967: 233).

As a number of chapters to this book will address, the necessary dialogue between representatives and represented has become more difficult for two reasons. The first argument deals with socioeconomic representativeness. While with the expansion of the franchise, representative bodies such as parliaments had become socioeconomically more representative (Cotta and Best, 2007), recent decades have seen the social distance between representatives and represented grow again. Parliamentarians have never been a mirror image of society, but the rise of the modern career politician across all parties (Allen et al., 2020) has done much to turn elected officials into a professional group. The overwhelming majority of legislators in modern democracies are university graduates and many do not come from social backgrounds representative of the entire population (Bovens and Wille, 2017) – and this selection has consequences for the topics legislatures discuss and the decisions they take (Carnes, 2012; Schakel and Hakhverdian, 2018; O'Grady, 2019). A growing literature shows that political decisions are still systematically more aligned with middle- and upper-class preferences than with those of socioeconomically disadvantaged groups (Gilens, 2005; Bartels, 2008; Elsässer et al., 2021). If political elites think, speak, and decide like the groups they come from (would) do, it becomes harder to relate to those groups who are different and absent in legislatures.

Second, empirical work has shown that citizens also choose to withdraw from the dialogue with their representatives. As societal polarization increases, citizens no longer draw on the same set of sources to seek information about politics. Where citizens select into echo chambers of like-minded groups, they are less likely to be confronted with counterarguments. In a highly polarized context, citizens will either not listen to other groups or dismiss their perspectives out of hand (Hetherington and Rudolph, 2015; Abramowitz, 2018). If trust is low under such conditions, representation becomes difficult. The growing social distance between representatives and represented and the fragmentation of political communication may reinforce one another. There is evidence that a perceived lack of responsiveness reinforces perceptions of gaps in representation and provides a breeding ground for populist mobilization: Populist parties claim to rally against the corrupt elite and maintain to speak for ordinary citizens.

NEW CLEAVAGES, POLARIZATION, AND INSTITUTIONAL RESILIENCE

Where populist forces succeed in exploiting gaps in representation, polarization tends to get exacerbated. New cleavages emerge and hitherto dormant conflicts

gain in salience. Several contributions to this volume deal with the implications of polarization for the functioning of representative assemblies and the system of government. Where ideologically extreme populist parties are successful in elections, their representation leads to more polarized legislatures in ideological terms. A significant presence of populist parties may affect the working of such institutions in at least two ways: First, relevant parties may use them as a highly visible and legitimate arena to articulate their views. Second, institutions may allocate (veto) powers to such parties and thus affect outcomes. As a result, polarization may threaten the ability of governments and legislatures to respond to major policy challenges. Even more seriously, Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt have argued that the polarization of American politics that has accelerated since the 1980s has severely damaged the formal and informal "guardrails" of American democracy and undermined its stability (Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018). Others have debated whether the country is effectively ungovernable (Binder, 2017; Lee and McCarty, 2019).

Governing under conditions of polarization has become an important issue in liberal democracies now that ideologically extreme actors are becoming significant players. An influential body of scholarship has associated growing polarization in representative institutions with "gridlock" in the decision-making bodies of representative democracies, or the inability of elected representatives to change the policy status quo even if that is preferred by a majority of voters or representatives. Tsebelis (2002), for example, argues that a growing number, cohesiveness and – above all – ideological distance of veto players reduces the scope for changing the policy status quo. This problem has been studied extensively for the United States presidential system, where the separation of powers may lead to gridlock due to "the combination of fixed terms and the interdependency of the separately elected legislative and executive branches" (Bäck and Carroll, 2018: 1). It has been argued that the growing ideological distance and increasing cohesion of political parties in Congress have reduced the scope for cross-party (or cross-factional) cooperation in Congress and increased the scope for indecision (McCarty, 2019).

In the parliamentary and semipresidential systems that dominate Europe, the scope for gridlock in legislative assemblies is contained by a confidence relationship between the government and the parliamentary majority. However, most European parliaments have witnessed a growing fragmentation as well as an increasing ideological polarization of party systems, which has led to similar results as frequently more parties (hence more partisan veto players) are needed to form majority-supported cabinets. The polarization of parliaments may increase the complexity and duration of government formation. Where populist or ideologically extreme parties are numerically significant but not considered "coalitionable" by the other players, the latter often need to resolve substantial policy differences to form a viable government coalition among the mainstream parties (Sartori, 1976). In such situations, the formation of a government may be a lengthy process often stretching over several months (Chapter 12).

The result may be a great deal of delay in the implementation of government policy, even if there is significant support for it at the levels of experts, political elites, or the electorate.

By the same token, the need for ideologically diverse mainstream parties to collaborate in supporting a government in a more polarized environment may lead to gridlock within government coalitions in parliamentary systems and ultimately reduce government survival. Frequent government turnover may, in turn, result in paralysis when short-lived governments do not have enough time to implement their policy agenda (Bäck and Carroll, 2018: 1). In short, whatever the institutional design, growing fragmentation, and polarization increase the risk of policy gridlock and reduce the ability of governments and parliaments to produce outputs that citizens recognize as being effective and legitimate. One consequence may be the removal of decision-making to non-majoritarian expert bodies or, in parliamentary systems, the appointment of governments made up of technocratic experts such as the Conte or Draghi cabinets in Italy.

In the most serious case from the perspective of liberal democracy, ideologically extreme populist parties may be strong enough to seize control over institutions and undermine the constitutional fabric of liberal democracies themselves. In a few cases like Poland and Hungary populist parties have controlled governments and eroded the quality of democracy according to many observers. While this book does not deal with such cases of democratic backsliding in detail, these cases should suffice to illustrate the vulnerability of seemingly consolidated liberal democracies in the face of a populist or political extreme challenge.

TOWARD NEW FORMS OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE?

Experiences of democratic backsliding in countries ruled by populists are indicative of the ways in which populist government is at odds with representative democracy's core principles. Populist majoritarianism and anti-pluralism, coupled with an implicit or explicit contempt for all forms of interest intermediation, compromise and tolerance of minority positions and deliberation undermines the very idea of democratic representation. Assuming that in a liberal democracy, decisions derive legitimacy from the merits of the mostly representative procedures that produce them, populists thus challenge a fundamental procedural consensus. Yet at the same time, existing institutions obviously have biases and deficits, and in many respects fail to adequately represent all citizens equally and to be equally responsive to their concerns. Their contestation thus seems legitimate and important, and a rigorous assessment of their deficits required. Democratic theorists and practitioners alike thus have to defend representative institutions against populist assaults, but at the same time take citizens' grievances seriously and explore strategies to correct shortcomings and biases. The answer to real deficits is probably not unmediated, direct

democracy but institutional reforms that promote inclusion and a closer link between representatives and represented.

One crucial challenge for representative democracies, therefore, is institutional reform. Can institutions be reformed in the light of deficits and adapted to new expectations and challenges? A number of chapters in this book draw on the vast literature on democratic innovations that suggests they can. With proposals ranging from direct democracy over variants of virtual participation to deliberative mini-publics, numerous ways of complementing or partly even replacing representative institutions have been suggested. A comprehensive assessment of the promises and pitfalls of democratic innovations, however, will require taking on a systemic perspective that considers dynamics of representation and decision-making in different institutional configurations and the degree to which it can meet demands of both democratic performance and effective participation and inclusion.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

The first part of the book (Part I) shows how recent developments have changed the ways in which we think about political representation. The chapters (2–6) ask what role distinct conceptions of representation play in theories of democracy and in political practice, how the relationship between citizens and representatives is conceptualized and whether existing understandings of representation fit into a world of deep divisions, persistent inequalities, and high complexity. This part is first and foremost diagnostic and demonstrates the challenges facing representative democracy from a number of angles and in different institutional contexts, including the European Union as a transnational organization.

Chapter 2 by Claudia Landwehr discusses changing conditions for democratic representation and assesses populist challenges to the idea and institutions of representation. Exploring the pluralism of understandings of representation and democracy among citizens and mapping the scope of procedural consensus in modern democracies, Landwehr argues that the contestation of existing institutions and practices is required to enable democratic metadeliberation and necessary institutional adaptations and reforms.

Christina Lafont's chapter (3) assesses one of the most-discussed reforms to representative democracy: the insertion of deliberative mini-publics into political decision-making processes. Lafont shows that proposals for empowering mini-publics tend to be driven by a notion of "representation as embodiment" that is also characteristic of populism. Arguing that the exclusionary majoritarianism and assumption of a homogeneous citizenry that is entailed in this notion are inimical to democracy, she calls for participatory rather than "trust-based" uses of mini-publics, which could genuinely empower the citizenry.

Daniel Q. Gillion (Chapter 4) points out that the study of representation has so far largely neglected the role of activism and political protest. Adopting an

understanding of ideological protest, he shows that voting and protest behavior are not separate, but closely linked phenomena, arguing that protest shapes representative democracy at each stage of the electoral process. Political protest, and its increasing social relevance, makes representative democracy more inclusive of the broader public. Consequently, Gillion argues, representative democracy is stronger today than it used to be because more of society's preferences and concerns are being represented.

Guri Rosén reflects on the increased focus on democratic representation in the study of the European Union polity. Adopting a constructivist perspective on political representation, she assesses representative claims made by members of the European parliament. By looking at representation beyond the nation state, Chapter 5 addresses the consequences of the structural challenges to electoral democracy. It explores whether and how MEPs attempt to create a political community in the EU. The findings suggest that while members of the European Parliament seem eager to create a European constituency, they are equally preoccupied with national party politics and interinstitutional turf wars.

Melody Crowder-Meyer's chapter (6) addresses a long-standing embarrassment to representative democracy: the persistent underrepresentation of women in political offices. Pointing out that the lack of descriptive representation for women is likely to compromise democratic responsiveness to their concerns and thus to entrench social inequalities, Crowder-Meyer studies dynamics that prevent women from running for and winning offices. She shows that in particularly in the United States, but also around the globe, such dynamics tend to differ for left-leaning and right-leaning political parties. Male overrepresentation is a notorious problem for right-leaning parties in particular and constitutes a threat to women's political trust and civic engagement.

Part II of the book focuses on the problems of representation with a focus on responsiveness in socioeconomically deeply unequal societies. All four chapters in this part start from the assumption that equality of opportunities to participate and affect outcomes are defining criteria of liberal democracy. The authors explore how unequal participation and responsiveness exacerbate social and economic inequalities and open representational "gaps," which populist antisystem parties may attempt to fill. The authors ask questions about the consequences of unequal participation and representation, focusing on the unequal responsiveness of decision makers to groups that are systematically underrepresented, and about the implications these problems have for policy making.

Peter K. Enns' chapter (7) critically assesses the debate and literature on unequal responsiveness. Distinguishing four different normative models of political representation and responsiveness, he reviews four of the most prominent studies on the topic to show that results and implications change dramatically depending on which of the models serves as a standard. Enns discusses the consequences of these findings for our understanding of political inequality

and for explanations of populist voting, reflecting on why so many people feel that politicians simply don't listen to citizens.

Marius R. Busemeyer's chapter (8) asks in how far the transition from traditional transfer-based welfare state programs to social investment strategies is the result of unequal representation and responsiveness. Given that many social investment programs such as early childhood education and care disproportionately benefit high-education and high-income households, their expansion could indicate a higher political responsiveness to the needs and preferences of this privileged group. Busemeyer finds evidence for a broad coalition in favor of social investment policies: Less advantaged groups are as supportive of education spending as socioeconomically privileged groups are. However, he also shows that an expansion of social investment at the cost of transfer-based programs is likely to reflect unequal responsiveness, as the poor tend to be more strongly opposed to cutbacks in traditional welfare state programs.

Svenja Hense and Armin Schäfer explore why populists' claims that they are the "true representatives" of the people resonate with a significant share of voters (Chapter 9). They argue that populist parties can capitalize on the fact that decisions are biased in favor of better-off citizens. Showing that a perceived lack of responsiveness is associated with populist voting, they provide empirical evidence from Germany that lower-class citizens' perception that politics is working against their interests may be empirically justified. They conclude that unequal responsiveness is a breeding ground for populism and helps to explain the rise of right-wing populism in many European countries.

Nicholas Carnes and Noam Lupu (Chapter 10) take the observation that in most democracies, elected representatives tend to be vastly better off than those they represent as a starting point to find answers to a striking puzzle: Why do voters around the world continue to elect the affluent rather than voting for representatives who are more like them? Drawing on data from Argentina, Britain and the United States, Carnes and Lupu show that voters tend to overestimate the descriptive representation of the working class in legislatures. But even if they do perceive a lack of representation, they hardly seem to be worried by it. Carnes and Lupu conclude that reformers will either have to find a way to get the public to care more about working-class underrepresentation or find ways to enact reforms that do not depend on vigorous support from those expected to benefit from them.

Chapters in the third part of the book (III) look at some important cleavages arising from societal and political shifts and ways in which representative institutions have responded to, or processed, these. The authors discuss changing cleavages and their reflection in legislatures and party systems, as well as implications of polarization for decision-making processes.

Chapter 11 is based on a comparative analysis covering fifteen member states of the European Union, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States. In this contribution, Ben Ansell and Jane Gingrich start from

the voters' perspective and investigate new cleavages that emerge in an aging society under conditions of secular stagnation. Their chapter contributes to a political economy of aging, showing that policy preferences and voting behaviors differ significantly between regions with an aging from those with a younger population. In particular, the elderly tend to be less supportive of the very policies that might help to overcome secular stagnation. The new opposition between older and more rural communities and younger communities in major cities can also go a long way in explaining increased polarization along the libertarian/authoritarian dimension.

Henning Bergmann and Thomas Saalfeld study the effects of polarization along traditional cleavages and cleavages that have gained in salience in recent years (Chapter 12). The dependent variables in their comparative analysis are bargaining delay in cabinet formation and the survival of cabinets in twenty-eight European parliamentary and semipresidential democracies between 1945 and 2019. Using a number of indicators to track the aggregate ideological polarization in the national parliaments of these democracies over time, they show that polarization across Europe has generally been characterized by a cyclical pattern, and that there has been a repolarization since the 2000s. In their multivariate analyses, they contribute to the literature on coalition bargaining and cabinet survival. They show that parliamentary and semipresidential systems have faced significant challenges arising from polarization but have so far constituted relatively resilient constitutional structures that largely prevented polarization to gridlock the system of government as far as the "making and breaking" of governments is concerned.

Michael Zürn (Chapter 13) explores the effects of the rise of authoritarian populism on democracy, asking whether populism is primarily a threat to representative democracy or whether it could also be a source of democratization by lending voice to previously unnoticed concerns and anxieties. His assessment of populism's direct and indirect effects on the development of democracy in numerous countries leads him to the conclusion that while the rise of populism can be viewed as an indicator of deficits of existing institutions, its effects on democracy are in various dimensions only negative.

The two chapters in Part IV explore the potential of democratic innovations and reforms to contribute to a renewal of representative democracy. Can innovations make democracy more inclusive and improve its responsiveness and performance? Or do they threaten to undermine core principles of representative government instead? With a particular focus on deliberative innovations, the authors explore alternative and hybrid forms of democratic government.

André Bächtiger and Vanessa Schwaiger (Chapter 14) study the potential of deliberative democratic innovations to correct the underrepresentation of disadvantaged groups in legacy institutions of representative democracy. Using data from Europolis, a pan-European deliberative poll, they assess whether mini-publics can ensure both internal and external inclusion of citizens. They

conclude that deliberative forums are not immune to social distortions and that other forms of political action and institutional innovations beyond mini-publics are required to bring the voices of underrepresented groups back into the democratic chorus.

Finally, Mark E. Warren presents an agenda for the renewal of representative electoral democracies that involves an assessment of their deficits and enables the identification of innovations that strengthen democracy to withstand the forces that threaten to undermine it (Chapter 15). He shows that by adopting a systemic perspective, it becomes possible to scale participatory and deliberative innovations from the local to the global level, to rethink the political division of labor and to understand better elite incentives for implementing necessary innovations.