

The Strategic Choice Approach to International Relations

1. International relations is the study of strategic **interaction** among actors in the international environment.
2. **ACTORS** are defined by their **preferences** and their **beliefs**;
 - preferences: the actor can rank order different outcomes in a logically; coherent way (i.e. it cannot prefer outcome *A* to *B*, *B* to *C*, and *C* to *A*);
 - beliefs: what it thinks about the preferences of other actors.
3. **THE ENVIRONMENT** is the set of **actions** and **information** available to actors:
 - actions: physically describe what options are open to the actors;
 - information: what they actors know and what they can infer about others.
4. **RATIONALITY** refers to the assumption that the behavior of actors is purposive: they make choices that advance their goals to the best of their abilities.
5. **STRATEGIC CHOICE** refers to the actors taking into account the expected behavior of others when they make their choices:
 - actors are interested in outcomes resulting from the interaction and their preferences are over these outcomes;
 - outcomes are produced by the joint actions of several (or many) different actors;
 - actors take into account what they expect others might do;
 - actors choose actions for their best direct effect for the outcome and their indirect effect on the actions of others.
6. **GAME THEORY** is a mathematical tool for the study of complex strategic interaction.
7. **SOCIAL CHOICE THEORY** is a mathematical tool for the study of how individual preferences are aggregated into group (social) preferences.