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.