

Concept	Definition	Points
Rational Choice	Rational choice theory is an ‘-ism’ according to which outcomes are explained by the goal-oriented and strategic behaviour of individuals (who are often assumed to be selfish and materialistic)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>‘Goal-oriented’</u>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each individual has preferences over possible outcomes and acts so as bring about the best within that individual’s power (i.e. they ‘maximize’ or ‘optimize’) • This outcome may only be better on balance (greater costs are just outweighed by still greater benefits) • (Cost-benefit analysis: individuals respond to both incentives and disincentives) 2. <u>‘Strategic’ (important!)</u>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals recognize that the outcomes they are in a position to bring about depend not merely on their choices (within physical constraints) but also on how others will react (which defines social constraints). • (To that extent, RCT is synonymous with game theory: i.e. mathematical modeling of behavior given ‘anticipated reactions’) • ‘Selfish’/‘egoism’: individuals rank possibilities according to their wellbeing • ‘Materialistic’: only money and (coercive) power increases wellbeing of individuals’: if you want to explain the behaviour of corporate agents or other groups, look to incentives and disincentives facing (all) particular persons • <u>What does RCT exclude?</u> • People can and do care about:- non-material benefits and costs (e.g. prestige; honor; integrity of identity; morality, social norms, and law • benefits and costs to others or no one (e.g. others’ money and power; the environment; morality, social norms, and law • People are not always strategic and/goal-oriented: Cognitive limitations, Habit, Psychological tendencies (e.g. sunk cost fallacy; disposition to punish) - People don’t always promote goals. They also respect constraints (Sen 1977) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Actors are strategic -Emphasise functional dimensions -However, some RC scholars are also interested in context
Historical institutionalism		<p>Problems</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Incremental change 2. Too deterministic 3. Struggles to account for political conflict 4. Struggles to explain political and/or policy change <p>Focusses on how institutions structure and shape political behaviour and outcomes</p> <p>Emphasis on historical processes and time</p>
Conceptual	When an <i>increase</i> in	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. defining concepts is difficult

<p>Stretching 86, 103, 326</p>	<p>the things a word refers to isn't matched by a <i>decrease</i> in the characteristics associated with the concept</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given their central role in the process of research, precision is important, as well as understanding how they work and what makes some better than others <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Conceptual stretching is an oft-discussed potential problem, especially for comparative cross-case designs 3. Refers to the muddling of a concepts definition to accommodate more and more empirical cases 4. Important as it is an easy mistake - especially when concepts such as the welfare state, is developed in one historical and institutional context and transferred to a completely different setting 5. Therefore its application inappropriate 6. However to enable comparisons concepts need to be reconsidered in light of experiences at different times or places
<p>Experimental Method</p>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. aim at scientific explanation, which consists of two basic elements: (1) the establishment of general empirical relationships among two or more variables,'3 while (2) all other variables are controlled, that is, held constant - ceteris paribus 2. The experimental method, in its simplest form, uses two equivalent groups, one of which (the experimental group) is exposed to a stim- ulus while the other (the control group) is not. 3. The two groups are then compared, and any difference can be attributed to the stimulus. 4. Thus one knows the relationship between two variables-with the important assurance that no other variables were involved, because in all respects but one the two groups were alike. 5. The experimental method is the most nearly ideal method for scientific explanation, but unfortunately it can only rarely be used in political science be- cause of practical and ethical impediments. 6. The bigger sample and the more random the selection, the more control for all variable. <p>Pros</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Experiments are best method for isolating the influence of particular independent variables on the dependent variable by controlling for everything else -So long as we have the resources, we can usually apply as many treatments as wish, given we can increase our samples indefinitely <p>Cons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -In political science randomization extremely difficult -number of cases limited and number of variables controlled large -Ethics and resources drastically limit ability to manipulate society in order to increase the n -Have to mimic experimental method, adjusting to the limitations bestowed to us by our subject matter

