

Theoretical Basics

01. It is possible to talk about politics - within and without of Political Science. Hence there are generally understandable terms and ideas on political affairs. Contrary to what one might suppose looking at the organization of Political Science in separate sections and working areas (with individual newspapers and networks), good prospects might be to develop a - steadily innovative - theory of political affairs that can reach broad acceptance and can be a theoretical key for affiliating diverse approaches.

02. For developing such a theory we may start from the - widely accepted - assumption that there are **actors** in political affairs.¹ A political actor is a unit to act in a political process (however it may be structured). This definition includes not only individuals such as politicians and publicly noticed experts; furtherly there are also governments and administrative bodies, parties, associations, interest-groups, and political movements that develop goals of actions and act politically. Also juridical bodies such as public courts and journalists/media often proceed in politically relevant ways. Eventually groups of the electorate influence political calculations - leading to considering the electorate a disputed aggregate of actors.

Rational Choice?

03. Whenever actors prefer to act in a certain way in order to realize their value orientations, interests and/or goals of actions in the best possible way, they behave rationally - the fundamental assumption of the so-called **Rational Choice** approach. Since in doing so actor decisions only serve as instruments for realizing individual motives, we talk of **instrumental rationality**.²

04. Instrumental rationality may be guided by certain values; since individual motives usually correspond with the individual value-system of the actor. In any case, instrumental rationality presupposes a leading motive of action.

¹ System concepts do not upset that thesis; indeed, it may be sensible to combine system with actor concepts.

² For gaining a general view of the approach: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rational_choice_theory

Max Horkheimer's system and technology critical associations with the term of *Instrumental reason* (Horkheimer, Max: *Eclipse of Reason*, Oxford University Press 1947) did not have played any role in coining and using the term.

05. That's why actor behavior can be analyzed in **individual constellations of motivation** - see game theoretical models like Prisoners Dilemma, *Battle of the Sexes*, or *Chicken*. Those constellations are usually modeled in very abstract ways, for instance referring to two matching interactive actors. In non-cooperative game theory, actors are not able to make a firm deal with each other; instead they are entitled to act only one shot with two different options. Starting from those basic assumptions, indeed substantial conclusions can be drawn. Thus in Prisoner's Dilemma, a dilemma of trust, exploitive strategies are assessed to be particularly attractive and safe; hence in collective terms sub-optimal results dominate in that types of constellation (*Tragedy of the Commons*). In *Battle of Sexes*, where coordinated ways of behavior are assessed best, cooperative as well as non-cooperative options can be individually rational - triggering diverse speculations about how to stimulate the production of solutions fostering common goods.³

06. Game theoretical models can be varied under diverse aspects, such as the numbers of involved actors, constellations of influence (symmetrical - asymmetrical relations), preconditions of information, options of iteration, and the opportunity of making firm deals - whereby a wide spectrum of game-theoretical variations comes into existence. Resulting from those variations, characteristic features of models can fundamentally change - leading to a game-theoretic research opening up a broad spectrum of simulation and empirical research. That approach of research has mainly developed related to the Prisoner's Dilemma. See Robert Axelrod's studies on *The Evolution of Cooperation* that show how cooperation can come up by multi-shot strategies of *Tit-for-Tat*.⁴ Since the 2000s, a growing community of research deals with agent-based simulation where decisions of many small units (agents) are simulated. A crucial aspect of that research has been the question how a system can adapt to changed context conditions by changed micro patterns of behavior.⁵

³ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_sexes_\(game_theory\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_sexes_(game_theory))

⁴ Axelrod, Robert; Hamilton, William D. (27 March 1981), "*The Evolution of Cooperation*" (PDF), *Science* **211**: 1390–96; Axelrod, Robert (1984), *The Evolution of Cooperation*, Basic Books, ISBN 0-465-02122-0; Axelrod, Robert (2006), *The Evolution of Cooperation (Revised ed.)*, Perseus Books Group, ISBN 0-465-00564-0

⁵ Siehe u.a.: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_agent-based_modeling_software;
<http://www.agent-based-models.com/blog/resources/simulators/>

07. Game theoretic approaches and following forms of simulation can stimulate political analysis. Thus political patterns of threatening and self-threatening according to *chicken* game can be observed quite frequently. Also challenges of coordination, abstractly understandable based on *Battle of Sexes*, or challenges of trust and trust making, abstractly understandable by reference to *Prisoner's Dilemma*, constitute regular subjects of political affairs.

08. Nevertheless rational choice studies alone cannot make politics understandable. Since, apart from mistakes, instrumental rationality - in principal - does not vary: Even islamistic suicide-assassins behave rationally insofar as they pursue certain (subjectively) leading motives with certain perceptions of reality. That's why there is no rational choice theory that could explain the insanity of that kind of behavior: it is the upcoming and spreading of certain motives and cognitive maps. That's why in order to understand precarious and non-precarious ways of behavior we have to study **three basic subjects**:

- ways of communication and decision-making under given preconditions
- actor constellations with constellations of motives and influence (power)
- ways of how actor motives and power develop and spread

Rational Framing

09. Actors perceive situations and options of action in specific manners, they *frame* them individually. Conscious analysis of that subject proceeds in constructivist terms - an approach that has reached significance not just since research on framing effects has risen.⁶ It rather has been dealt with in many areas and disciplines of Social Science for decades; under certain aspects it can even be traced back until ancient times.⁷

10. By combining instrumental rationality and framing, we come to the concept of **rational framing**. Actors tend to perceive situations and options of action in ways that enhance them to realize their leading motives as far as possible. At it, motives of action are only pursued to the degree it corresponds with perceived

⁶ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Framing>

⁷ See for instance the study of interrelations between good behavior (virtus) and real behavior in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicomachean_Ethics

capacities to cope with; since otherwise the own psychological, may be even the own physical existence would be endangered. Hence subjectively perceived capacities of action (including perceived capacities of learning and innovation) constitute an absolute barrier of perception and issuing for rational actors. Vice versa, well manageable challenges are often perceived and politically issued over-proportionally - the main subject of the so-called disaster paradox in capacity-theoretic terms.⁸

11. Individual processes of framing usually proceed in - more or less intensive - interaction with according processes of other actors. At it, constellations of influence up to one-sided power can play a significant role.

12. Rational framing determines also self-organization of actors - a subject of governance analysis if self-organization proceeds collectively: Actors organize themselves as well as possible in correspondence with perceived incentives and capabilities. At it, in general internal and external aspects at the one hand, aspects of performance and management at the other hand are of significance. By combining those aspects the following structure of governance criterions results:

Table 1: ***Governance criterions***

	<i>External</i>	<i>Internal</i>
<i>Performance</i>	Goal functions such as peace keeping, caring of infrastructure, sustainability	Internal functions such as recruitment, socialization, communication
<i>Management</i>	Demarcation, separation versus passage, advertisement, expansion	Internal management/rules such as, one after the other, majoritarian elections, distribution, formation of government

Every corporative or collective actor, for instance a firm or a country, tries to realize goal functions. For this purpose it has to render certain internal functions by internal management/rules as well as external functions by external (border) management.

⁸ Prittowitz, Volker von 1990: Das Katastrophenparadox. Elemente einer Theorie der Umweltpolitik, Opladen (Leske+Budrich); idem 2011: <http://www.volkervonprittwitz.de/katastrophenparadox.htm>; idem: http://www.volkervonprittwitz.de/katastrophenparadox_12052011.pdf

Logics of Interaction

13. Dominating ways of how people perceive political affairs and how collective actors organize themselves are determined through dominating logics of interaction. Suchlike logics are patterns of thinking and feeling towards other actors wherein conclusions are drawn such as the logics of war, power, interest, law, and integrative problem-solving.

Table 2: ***Logics of Interaction***

Desintegration				Integration
War	Power	Interest	Law	Integrative problem-solving

14. These logics, that come up situationally, but also constitute general worldviews, can be sorted as more or less integrative. Thus the logic of war is determined through dominant patterns of friend or foe - just the contrary to integration. Also the pure logic of power - the point is only to win, to exceed, or to stabilize power - is opposed to integration and easily passes into the logic of war as soon as any resistance has been perceived. The logic of law or *bound governance* - there are accepted rules of equality and freedom of all involved units - corresponds with the logic of integrated problem-solving (cohesion through respect and common linkages, active fostering of weak members). Finally, interest-based thinking can combine both with the logics of law and integration as well as with the logics of power and war.⁹

15. By reference to the political dimensions of power-oriented interaction (politics), independent institutionalization (polity), and substantial policies (policy), distinct variations appear:

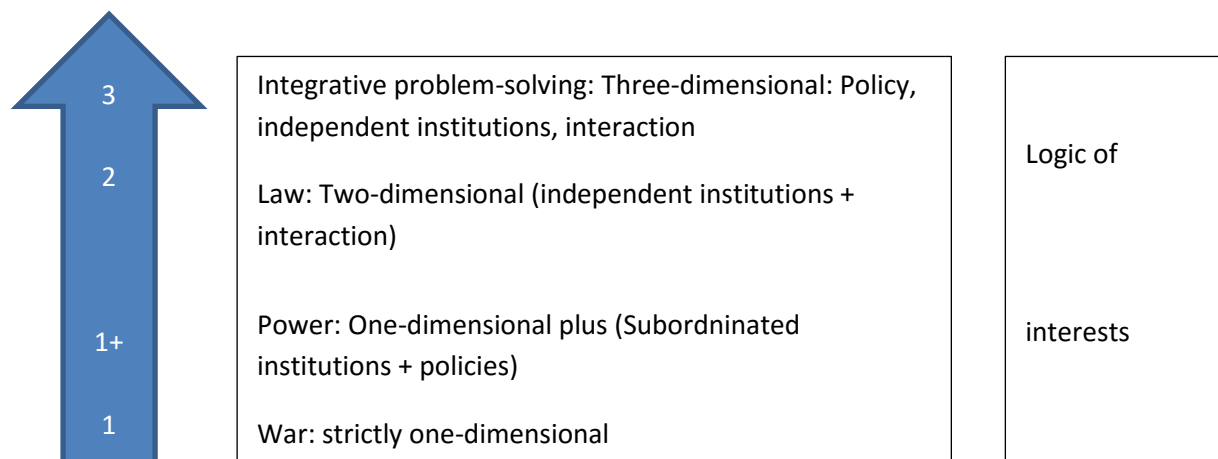
- The logic of war is apparently structured only in one dimension, relations of friend or foe.

⁹ Prittwitz, Volker von 2014: Politik-Logiken im Ukraine-Konflikt, in Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte, 11.11.2014 : <http://www.bpb.de/apuz/194822/politik-logiken-im-ukraine-konflikt?p=al>; idem: Governance+. A contribution to advanced political analysis: <http://diberlin.info/governance%20plus.htm> I owe significant impulses for developing the concept to Fritz Scharpf (Scharpf, Fritz 1992: *Horizontale Politikverflechtung: Zur Theorie von Verhandlungssystemen* (with Arthur Benz and Reinhard Zintl). Schriften des Max-Planck-Instituts für Gesellschaftsforschung Köln, Bd. 10. Frankfurt a.M./New York: Campus.; idem: Interaktionsformen Akteurzentrierter Institutionalismus in der Politikforschung (2000): Opladen (Leske+Budrich)/UTB 2136).

- The logic of power (that can easily merge into the logic of war) is, in principal, a one-dimensional logic since only advantages and disadvantages under the aspect of power, a relational criterion, do matter. Indeed, power can be gained, stabilized, and lost also through diverse ways, for instance rhetorical means or substantial arguments. Hence also institutions and substantial discourses can play roles here - indeed only subordinated to aspects of power. That's why this logic is to be sorted as one-dimensional plus (1+).

Figure 1: **Logics of interaction according to political dimensions**

Political Dimensions

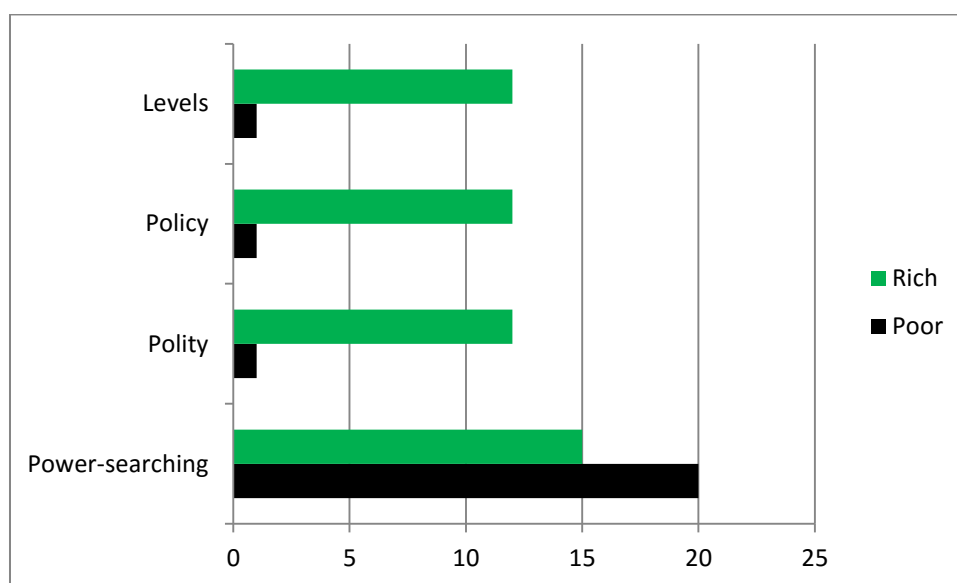


- The logic of law (*bound governance*) is structured in two dimensions: an independent dimension of rules (institutions) and a dimension of operating within.¹⁰
- The logic of integrative problem-solving is, in principal, structured in three dimensions: a) in the dimension of independent policy discourses and policy-making, b) the dimension of independent law, c) the dimension of interaction.
- The logic of interest may be considered one-dimensional, too (as being oriented at nothing but realizing the won interests); indeed, since interests can be adapted to other dominating logics, it constitutes a combined type. Actors who operate mainly in this logic are often confronted with the reproach of being opportunists.

¹⁰ Prittwitz, Volker von 2012: Bound Governance:
http://www.volkervonprittwitz.de/bound_governance_031212.pdf

16. One-dimensional thinking in terms of power and war (poor politics) usually corresponds with **rigid external (border) management or even in forms of unilateral expansion**. Transboundary norms of independent law (human rights) and substantial policy demands then are disregarded - an additional moment of hostility and potential decline. **Rich politics**, in contrast, **is more likely to issue political demands of diverse independent levels** and to combine them optimally. Also that's why rich politics usually implies peace and welfare policies.

Figure 2: *Poor and rich politics* (Schematic presentation)



17. Altogether, rational framing and governance oscillates between poor and rich politics (see figure 2): If politics is conceived of only in terms of power and war, **poor politics** is given - usually resulting in rigid one-level (nationalistic) policies towards foreigners or even in unilateral expansion. With completely merging into the logic of war, interaction loses any specifically political substance. In contrast, the logics of law and integrative problem-solving enable forms of **rich politics**. That ways of how political affairs are dealt with operate in several dimensions and combine demands of diverse policy levels - implying specific capacities to keep peace und to increase public wealth.

18. Poor and rich politics find expressions in diverse **types of political systems**:

- **Anomy**, particularly as civil war, implies the loss of any politics in particular. Accordingly it constitutes just the contrast to peace-keeping and public welfare.

- **Autocracies** are determined through the logic of power, hence expressions of (more or less) poor politics - even if they have access to big natural resources such as oil. Indeed, there can be distinct variations, particularly between totalitarian systems at the one hand and authoritarian systems at the other hand: While totalitarian systems strictly and completely exclude any independent dimensions of decision-making and forming of political will, authoritarian systems may enhance certain lee-ways for independent institutional and substantial policy-making processes.
- Ideal-typical **democracies** operate with the competition about governmental power - leading to a strong dimension of power-related interaction. Indeed, they are systematically based on independent institutions and policy-related substantial discourses. Hence they operate distinctly multi-dimensionally and represent rich politics with safe peace and much better chances of increasing public wealth.

19. Whether forms of poor or rich politics dominate, can depend on diverse reasons. Looking at it in terms of capacity theory, however, it is to be assumed that capacity-rich preconditions, for instance economic and technological development together with well as developed systems of education, are likely to correspond with rich politics. Low economic, technical, and socio-cultural capacities, in contrast, are likely to imply the dominance of poor politics. Functionally differentiated societies usually operate with a functionally differentiated (multi-dimensional) political system; in contrast, politics without institutional independencies and independent policy discourses (low politics) is likely to be found in societies with a low degree of functional differentiation such as societies under the pressure of religious rule.¹¹

20. As significant structural and situational preconditions may be - political affairs retain an element of **free decision**. Hence every political actor and even the public can influence the ways political affairs are conceived of and decisions are made. Valid not only in vital democracies: At any time evolutionary developments towards rich politics as well as regressive developments towards poor politics are possible - influenced by everybody's behavior.

¹¹ See some empirical hints in The People Index: <http://diberlin.info/tpi%20comparative%20results.htm>