Theory

Doing Political Research

What is Theory in Political Research?

- Normative vs explanatory
- Pure vs applied
- General vs specific
- Theory in empirical research: a set of logically-consistent propositions that attempt to explain, predict, and understand relationships between concepts

The Purpose of Theory

Map-making: simplifying the world and directing us towards certain phenomena and not others

Helps us to find general explanations for phenomena which can be applied beyond the specific instances studied

Enable progress in political research: testing, rejecting, refining, adapting

Generating Theories

- Induction
  - Data -> Theory
- Deduction
  - Theory -> Data
- Drawing on related theories
- Level of analysis: macro, meso, micro
- Hypotheses or propositions: testable implications of the theory

Remittances and Democratisation: A Theory

- Remittances provide recipients with additional resources and security, which allows them to
  - to take part in political action
  - to resist vote-buying by authoritarian single or dominant parties
- Migration to democratic countries leads to the transmission of pro-democratic norms through
  - the demonstration of relative economic success in democracies
  - greater appreciation for political freedom that migrants transmit home
- Therefore, remittances from democratic countries make countries more likely to democratise

Remittances and Democratisation: Implications

- Macro-level: democratisation more likely in a country where there are high or increasing levels of remittances from migrants in democratic countries
- Meso-level: authoritarian parties find it harder to buy votes when remittances increase
- Micro-level
  - remittance recipients are more likely to engage in political actions than non-recipients
  - remittance recipients are more likely to support democratic values than non-recipients, when they receive remittances from migrants in democratic countries

Evaluating Theories

- Are the assumptions clear and reasonable?
- Are the hypotheses or propositions testable?
- Parsimony: as simple as possible, but not simpler (Einstein)
- Clear scope: how generalisable is the theory?