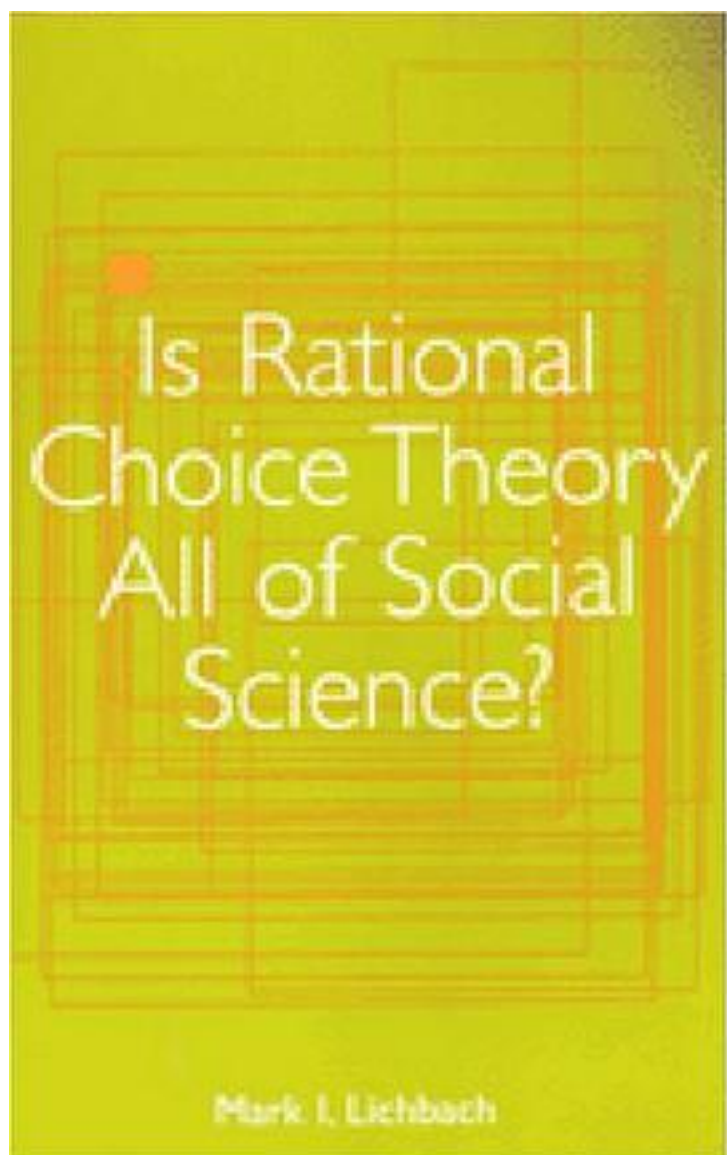


# Is Rational Choice Theory All of Social Science?



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Advocates of rational choice theory in political science have been perceived by their critics as attempting to establish an intellectual hegemony in contemporary social science, to the detriment of alternative methods of research. The debate has gained a nonacademic audience, hitting the pages of the New York Times and the New Republic. In the academy, the antagonists have expressed their views in books, journal articles, and at professional conferences. Mark I. Lichbach addresses the question of the place of rational choice theory in the social sciences in general and in political science in particular. He presents a typology of the antagonists as either rationalist, culturalist, or structuralist and offers an insightful examination of the debate. He reveals that the rationalist bid for hegemony and synthesis is rooted in the weaknesses, not the strengths, of rationalist thought. He concludes that the various theoretical camps are unlikely to accept the claimed superiority of the rationalist approach but that this opposition is of value in itself to the social sciences, which requires multiple perspectives to remain healthy. With its penetrating examination of the assumptions and basic arguments of each of the sides to this debate, this book cuts through the partisan rhetoric and provides an essential roadmap for the future of the discipline. Mark I. Lichbach is Professor of Government and Politics, University of Maryland.

作者介绍:

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