ON RATIONALITIES OF TERRORISM FROM AN EASTERN PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This paper will investigate to what extent dominant conceptions of rationality can contribute to the understanding of extreme violent human behavior like terrorism. Second, it will explore rationalities outside of the Western tradition. Finally the paper explores the application of these ideas to understanding terrorism in the context of Nepal. It will demonstrates that rationalities are culturally relativistic. As the cultures are often in a process of development, so are the rationalities. From this point of view, understanding terrorist rationalities demands a contextual analysis of the complex cultural components and their constant change and development.

Rationalities: Traveling across Conceptions

Rationality is one of the chief characters of terrorism. Contrary to the popular belief, Robert F. Trager and Dessislava P. Zagorcheva, assert that terrorists are not irrational in such a way that they cannot be deterred; rather they are rational "to choose strategies that best advance them. The resort to terror tactics is itself a strategic choice of weaker actors with no other means of furthering their cause."[1] After a serious survey on the contemporary incidences of terrorism, Martha Crenshaw reports, "There is an emerging consensus that suicide attacks are instrumental in

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or strategic from the perspective of a sponsoring organization . . . They serve the political interests of identifiable actors, most of whom are non-states opposing well-armed states. This method is mechanically simple and tactically efficient."[2] There are many supporting arguments in favor of the rationality of terrorism. But the question is what these rationalities are. Is there any theory of rationality which could be utilized to understand terrorism? How about the empirical understanding of rationalities to be employed in terrorism studies? In this regard, one end of the discussion simply rejects the presence of any rationality in terrorism, branding them just "crazy" or emotional agents. Whereas, many others agree that terrorists have rationalities of their own which could be understood scientifically under specific condition in which terrorism breeds. To demystify the complexities of terrorism decision making, various notions of rationalities need to be considered.

The following aims to chart basically three prominent approaches to rationality from the perspective of terrorism studies. First, Weberian concepts of instrumental rationality and its implications for terrorism decision making will be critically discussed. Thenceforth, two other prominent concepts of rationality--bounded rationality and communicative rationality--will be examined in the context of terrorism.

Instrumental Rationality

Rationality is one of the major themes in Max Weber's oeuvre. Out of his topologies of rationality the instrumental and the value rationalities are highly employed to understand terrorist rationalities. Instrumental rationality adheres to the notion of cost benefit aspect of human action. According to this notion, a rational human agent is informed of the practical realities of life and determines the most cost efficient means to achieve desired ends. From this perspective, terrorism is rational if it helps the actor efficiently achieve his goal which is more valuable than the means employed. That is to say, terrorism can be a means for a rational actor to achieve a desired end if it is instrumentally efficient.

But, the ends of terrorism are different at different levels of operation. At the organizational level, the goals are often tangible like achieving political power, inciting provocation, encouraging recruitment drives, consolidation of the organization, strengthening the position of the group at the bargain table or even derailing the ongoing peace process. At the individual level, however, the goals are not necessarily the same as they are at the organizational level. An individual might be motivated by different goals than the goals of the terrorist organization. Individual goals may include desire for martyrdom, redemptive violence, dignity, personal gain in rank of the terrorist organization, self-esteem, personal revenge, love, among others. Hence, the goal is often determined by the psychological factors of the actor concerned, which does not necessarily respect the tradeoff situation, particularly in terrorist actions that involve factors other than economics.

Other situational factors also influence terrorist rationalities in instrumental sense of understanding. For example, if the targets are vulnerable and symbolic in nature, terrorist actions are commissioned "rationally" in order to yield propaganda which could be further utilized to strengthen their position in the political struggle against the government. Terrorist attacks on such symbolic targets send a message to the public that the government is not strong enough to protect the public and its honorable institutions, therefore such attacks are sanctioned expecting public support and recruitment drives. But the situation may change if such targets are hard and are not of symbolic significance. Together with this, the symbolic value of the target and the cost of the attack depending upon its severity are also perceived by different people in different ways. What a terrorist values symbolically may not be valuable to the government, and cost involved in terrorism is also influenced by the understanding of the parties concerned. For example, the cost of a human life would be substantial for a democratic government, but very little for a terrorist organization relative to the outcome that it would generate.

The availability of incentives and opportunities, to a great extent, determines terrorist action. Within this framework, a terrorist's decision

making involves the availability of the opportunity to attack a certain target and the incentives associated with such attacks. In some cases, from rational perspective, terrorist organizations can employ abstract notions of symbolic value like religion, ethnicity, nationalism, caste, regionalism, instrumentally for the sake of power and propaganda. In many other cases, they may employ a calculative approach from economic point of view. Frey and Luechinger attempted to explain the likelihood of terrorism incidences on the basis of demand, marginal benefit to terrorist, and supply, and marginal cost.[3]

Nonetheless, instrumental rationality can be manipulated within the framework of means-ends dynamics. It does not explain terrorist actions under various conditions. For example, if means required to achieve certain ends are not available, then the terrorists have to redefine their ends that can be achieved by the available means. Or they have to look for appropriate means that could help them achieve the preconceived ends. In another case, they need to change the whole operational endeavor to accommodate the prevailing socio-political situation. Hence, efforts to understand and predict terrorist actions from an instrumentally rational point of view do not offer a comprehensive cue. Terrorists can act according to their own evaluation and understanding of the situation in question. Additionally, such econometric speculation has little space particularly when the actors of terror are ready to kill, and if necessary, die for their political ideals. Joseph Raz (2005) argues this type of tendency in terrorist organization in the framework of the "facilitative principle", which states: if one has a sufficient reason to pursue an end, one also has a reason to take any course of action that facilitates that end.[4] Hence, ends determine the means offering rationalizations to take a certain course of action.

The Weberian concept of rationality has been interpreted by different actors for different purposes. Many of them understood rationality as the "disenchantment of the world," bureaucratization, or an increasing lack of freedom, that is in opposition to the emotive impulses of human beings. Many others understood Weberian rationality as

an increasing pervasiveness of the means-end (*zweckrational*) type of social action.[5] Some of them even tried to understand Weberian rationality within a specific sphere of life like religion. Additionally, Weber's own inconsistent use of the term "rationality" throughout his prominent works such as *Economy and Society* and the *Collected Essays in the Sociology of Religion*" is more likely to "mystify than to illuminate", notes Stephen Kalberg.[6]

Various decision-making models based on instrumental rationality have only focused on the economic aspect of rationality. One of them is *rational choice theory* which is considered "the most powerful paradigm in the political science discipline."[7] Instrumental models have been widely used in predicting and deterring terrorist actions. However, they have not been able to address terrorism in an efficient manner. It is primarily because they have failed to emphasize its multivalent embodiment, to explain how individuals can be motivated by the instrumental principle or utility maximization. Though they provide a scientific basis for explaining political decision-making by providing casual explanation of political phenomenon, they do not explain *how* decisions are made. Normally decisions are made on the basis of a real or perceived value of the terrorists, which are not understood by others. The instrumental model assumes that choice can be predicted, but it does not say anything about the choices terrorists have. While the model recognizes that human actions are guided by the desire, preference or beliefs that are consistent, it does not explain the causes of those desires, preferences and beliefs. For these reasons, the instrumental rational model is inadequate to explain such a decision-making process. Additionally, it also does not differentiate between political decisions and economic decisions. In terrorism studies, motivational factors are of great importance in making decision which cannot be predicted by mathematical or economic model.[8] Weber argues:

> To apply the result of this analysis [means-ends analysis] in the making of a decision, however, is not a task that science can undertake; it is rather the task of the acting, willing person; he weighs and chooses from among the values involved according to his own conscience and his personal view of the world.[9]

Bounded Rationality

Employing the idea of rationality to predict human decision making (which was promoted by mainstream economic theory) portrayed human agents as fully rational Bayesian maximizers of subjective utility. This notion was further utilized in game theory, statistics and other disciplines to predict human action including terrorism. But Herbert Simon has argued that the action of the individual is not necessarily based on fully rational choices. Rather, decision making is a search process guided by aspiration levels that satisfy the subject. Since aspiration levels are not fixed, but dynamically adjusted to the situation, decisions are also made to achieve a satisfaction level which is not constant. Therefore, decision making process is not fixed; rather it is guided by bounded rationality.

Rationality in the instrumental sense requires unlimited cognitive capabilities, which is not available to human beings. They do not know everything all the time and are not capable to utilize the available information to construct optimal decision making. It is because the individual in question may not be sufficiently focused, adequately informed or capable to know and utilize the available information in the maximal pursuit of rationality. Therefore, human actions can better be explained through bounded rationality than purely instrumental rationality.[10]

According to this notion, people act not to maximize their self-interest (as accepted by conventional decision-making models). Rather, in real life situations, human action is dependent upon a contexts that demand a typical response which could even be irrational. It is a sort of non-optimizing adaptive behavior of real people. Out of the limited resources, computational skills, time limitations, effective emotional

strengths and cognitive limitations, a subject makes decision which, according to his/her own belief system, satisfies his/her contextual needs. Therefore, bounded rationality assumes that human action is not instrumentally rational in economic terms; rather it is bounded by other factors that influence decision making process. Sometimes human beings act out of the "weakness of will" knowing that specific action leads to harmful consequences. It is *bani*- that is habit or addiction in English, or *lachari* that dictates human actions in many circumstances. For example, an individual may know that heavy alcohol drinking invites serious health complications. Knowing the bad consequences of drinking alcohol he may not be able to resist the temptation of drinking more and more. This typical action of the individual does not maximize his self-interest but he keeps on repeating this action – drinking alcohol in his everyday life.

In terrorism studies, understanding the notion of bonded rationality can offer an important cue to understand terrorist violence. For example, a terrorist may know that killing people in a bus terminal might not serve his interest. Rather, it would attract the attention of the authorities towards him or his family. And his life would be more miserable and uncertain than before. But, he commits violence in response to his subjective understanding of the situation and his compulsive impulse which prefers acting against better judgement – a term known as *akrasia* in the ancient Greek lexicon.

In the same way, contemporary terrorist leaders are more aspirational than operational. The organizational structure of terrorism often lacks a unity of command and operation. In this situation, contemporary actors of terrorism are often autonomous. They are likely to take action according to their own perception of the situation and what they believe that enhances their goal. Under such cases, terrorist actions are aspirational-adaptive than utility maximizers, where beliefs have secondary role in decision making. For example, in suicide terrorism in the Islamic world, many believe that they would gain rewards in the afterlife for sacrificing their life for Islam. But very few put their lives at risk. Similar cases are also found in revolutionary terrorism in developing world. For example,

to die for a higher human cause or justice or for the nation is considered to be morally acceptable in revolutionary terrorism. Those who sacrifice their lives for such causes are revered as martyrs who are considered to be immortal. Many people believe this line of thinking, but most refrain from engaging in terrorism at the cost of their lives. Additionally, terrorist leaders often encourage others to die for causes, but they hardly put their own lives at risk. In such situations, the context, in guiding human action, is more important than what one believes. The notion of bounded rationality tends to involve all these ingredients in understanding decision making; however, it is not of much practical use. It tends to be a catch-all category explaining deviations from maximizing rationality;[11] it does not help predict terrorist action that involves various culturally constrained habits, beliefs, and resources.

Under the rubric of bounded rationality, a rational agent is goal-oriented but bounded, who decides on an action in the light of the contextual variables. But, how a subject decides is a complex phenomenon. For example, a subject can decide what to think about, but not what to think. In the same way, the result of thinking is a conscious, while the process of thinking is, to a great extent, unconscious. This unconscious is not even accessible to introspection. To understand the process of thinking, which subsequently leads to decision making, understanding the underlying psychic structure of the subject becomes an imperative. The psychological structure of a subject is, to a great extent, influenced by various socio-cultural as well as economic factors having both historical as well as future oriented dimensions. The idea of bounded rationality hereby does not offer practical solutions to understand the making of decision-making process so that terrorist actions could be predicted in advance. However, it sets a stage to explore further into the terrorist's mindset focusing cultural ingredients that create terrorists.

Communicational Rationality

The two dominant aforementioned types of rationalities seem to have been entirely dependent on the philosophy of the subject. In the case

of *instrumental rationality* the subject evaluates tradeoffs that maximize utility; whereas *bounded rationality* argues to involve contextual variables that *bound* the subject. Hence, subject-centered notion of rationality not only obscures but also blocks the way to understand the intrinsic inter-subjective and dialogical character of communicative action, which, as Rasmussen points, "is victimized by its own instrumental formulation".[12]

Jürgen Habermas, a second generation scholar of Frankfurt School, building upon the works of Horkheimer and Adorno's critical theory, offers an alternative approach to understand rationality free from the domination of subjectivity. He argues that there is no "pure" rationality; rather it is embedded in the complexities of communicative action and in the structure of the lived-in world. This explanation leaves behind the conventional understanding of rationality from Marxist paradigm consisting of means of production, the base structure in Marxist lexicon, as the key for reconstructing history. It also negates the evolutionary aspect of human rationality in Weberian term. Alternatively, it offers a new paradigm, a paradigm of communication, the super-structure as the basis of social reproduction.

Habermas classifies human action into four forms: *teleological action*, *norm-regulated action*, *dramaturgical action*, and *communicative action*. Each form of human action is guided by specific interest of the person or the community. Each form employs its own set of rationalities which adheres to the prevailing degree of knowledge, moral justification and legal norms of a particular society. Hence, rationality of an action depends upon the reliability of knowledge embodied in it. In the same manner, the moral codes and normative legal frameworks of the community dictate human rationality.

Additionally, Habermas offers a notion of three worlds: the *objective world*, the *social world*, and the *subjective world*. He argues that individual or collective human action is guided on the basis of the quality of relationship of the actors to these three worlds. If the actor is interested primarily in the objective world, then he/she chooses appropriate instrumental means to achieve desired ends in the real-life situation.

But those interested in subjective and social world can have their own ways of achieving ends. Hence, rationality in a human action depends upon the perception or relative importance of the worlds from the actor's perspective.

In the same way, human actions are dependent upon the nature of the actors as well. If the actor seeks "success" then he/she tends to be more objective and instrumental without regarding the interests of the others. In general sense, teleological human actions are motivated by a "success" drive. In terrorism, the duty of a man in one's lifetime, rewards in the afterlife, moral imperatives, liberation, and *moksa* are interpreted as teleological functions, therefore they demands strict objective commitment. But an understanding seeking actor, a social actor, however, in communicative action acts to solve a certain problems on the basis of learning, both at individual and collective levels, to develop common understanding by arguments, consensus, and cooperation rather than strategic action to realize their specific goal.[13] In another word, a social actor aims to seek consensus in communication which constructs his/her rationality for a particular action.

When a subject engages in a communicative act, he/she claims something – validity claims – that are understandable to all those in the system of communication, which could be approved or denied by others with whom the subject communicates. The conflicts in communication may arise as long as there are disagreements in respect of the validity claims which are resolved by "the force of the better argument" in the communication process. Reason in communicative action deals with the validity claims, which are of three types: (1) *cognitive-instrumental reason*, (2) *moral-practical reason*, and (3) *aesthetic-expressive reason*. The first type predicts and controls the realm of science through the interplay of practices and theories; the second type applies to moral and political deliberations; and the third type governs arts and literature.[14] In terrorism studies, the second type is important. It offers rationality for a certain action that is considered to be moral. In a broader sense, it offers rationalities even for a violent action, including terrorism, within

the framework of moral or ethical justification.

However, the point to focus is that the process of justification is not universal. Rather, it varies from culture to culture and philosophy to philosophy. Many processes are unique in nature which cannot be employed to justify various types of validity claims. For example, if one claims that it is raining; this claim can be justified by looking outside through the window. But a claim like federalism is counterproductive for a land-locked country like Nepal and cannot be justified in the same manner. In the same way, making consensus through communicative action demands similarities of the agents and situational constraints. Some people from a particular culture are likely to reach at an acceptable agreement through discussion, but many others prefer no discussion.[15] Likewise, communication does not necessarily promote understanding through discussion. It is culturally relativistic. Many actors are likely to misunderstand each other than to understand while communicating.[16] It follows that the notion of communicative rationality does not say much about the power inherent in communicating agents. A powerful agent can manipulate meanings and arguments to its favor. Thus, understanding reality through rationalities inherent in communication could be one of the many ways to understand reality, but not the only way. There may be multiple agents with a variety of cultural backgrounds resulting in complex situations offering various types of constraints. In such situations, exploring rationality as communicative action reflects only a part of the entire picture which cannot be theorized for diverse human actions.

Problematizing Rationalities of Terrorism

What is the utility of the contemporary theories of rationality in understanding terrorism decision making? The answer is not simple. It depends upon the type of terrorism, the type of terrorist agent, and many other things that terrorism involves in its development. Hence, counter questions could be: which terrorism? Which terrorist? For example, urban revolutionary terrorists tend to attack soft targets due to their vulnerability and easy access. Hence, counterterrorism tactics to secure the target may

drive the terrorists to decide or rationalize another course of action. But a Jihadist would not care much about his or her life if there is a chance of success to strike at the head of the enemy, or even to attempt an attack is valuable in itself. In the same way, tightening security measures at airports with the establishment of metal detectors and screening devices may influence terrorist decision making. In such cases, terrorists may change tactics, not motives. Recent terrorist attacks in shopping malls and passenger buses suggest that terrorists act out of motivation derived from different sources. Some motives are inherent in socio-cultural factors, whereas many others are derived from historical as well as personality factors of the individuals involved in terrorism. Commonly, an ardent motive to strike against an enemy--real or perceived--derives its rationality from the socio-psychological factors upon which terrorism grows. These socio-psychological factors are culturally relativistic, therefore, they vary culture-wise. A comprehensive approach to understanding terrorist rationality is, therefore, not feasible from this perspective, because every culture has a unique set of rationalities for terrorism which resist generalization.

Practitioners and academics often employ Weberian model of rationality in understanding terrorism, and it is sometimes helpful. However, it ceases to function when there is value conflict. Instrumental rationality does seem to function as long as it is shielded from value conflict. In economics, where consumers are considered informed human beings, their actions are usually instrumentally rational. But, in cases involving struggles for liberation, dignity, love or similar goals involving passion and memories, such an approach does not work. People value things differently. Values may conflict with others, or remain irreconcilable. And when there is an irreconcilable value conflict, choice tends not to be rational but seemingly arbitrary.

The mainstream literary canon does not shed enough light to the conceptions of rationality that are applicable in terrorist decision making. However, Weber's notion of *irreconcilability of values* can lead scholars and practitioners to see rationalities outside of the Weberian model,

particularly the instrumental model.

Thomas Kuhn offered an alternative theory of rationality through his influential work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* in 1962.[17] According to this theory, the *rational* must conform to the *actual*. The structure upon which rationality is based can accommodate minor theoretical changes in this situation. However, there still exists a chance of revision and wholesale rejection the total structure, called the "paradigm" in Kuhn's word, whenever the scientific community faces problems in solving certain questions.

As the scientific community faces more problems in solving the outstanding questions by employing the existent paradigm, it passes the community into a state of *crisis*. Thenceforth, the community debate actively both offering a new paradigm and justifying the old one. The debate will continue until a new paradigm is established or the old one retains its dominance to solve the problem in question.

In many cases, the proponents of different paradigms are unable to communicate with each other because of their different set of exemplars and world views. Even if they communicate, the point is, in justifying their respective paradigms; both the communities try to reassert their own paradigm. Thus, according to Kuhn, there is incommensurability between paradigms, making it irrational to choose between paradigms.

But, the theory of revolutionary science does not strictly prove that the proponents of two paradigms do not understand each other at all. Since rationality is a rule-governed process and scientific process itself, therefore, is a cumulative one, it would be inappropriate to assume that a new paradigm evolves independently only because of the accumulation of anomalies in the old paradigm. Rather, a transition from one paradigm to another involves an inclusive transformation that enhances the problem solving ability of the scientific community. However, there exists incommensurability about values between paradigms, which is particularly important in understanding social phenomena because of the availability of multiplicities of the values sprouted out of the pluralities of the cultures.

Various other thinkers of the Western tradition agree with the multiplicity of rationalities in cultures. Rationality derived from the absolute notion of truth has been critically scrutinized by thinkers like Richard Rorty. According to this point of view, there are various notions of truth depending upon the community. Whenever two or more communities come together consensually, they do agree to recognize something as "true," which would be "untrue" in other communities and at another time and space. Therefore, in complex social situations, Rorty asks to "redescribe" the situation which means speaking differently, rather than arguing well. For, arguing in the same tradition does not offer a chance to unearth entrenched rationalities that have been silenced by the dominant discourse. In the same line of thinking, Alasdair MacIntyre insists scholars to see rationality in traditions which vary greatly across cultures. Thus, an emerging belief in the Western tradition is that, there is no rationality as such. Rather, there are rationalities in cultures which can be understood in their own respective contexts.

Understanding Terrorism in Nepal

Notable Eastern approaches to rationality are not much different than the Western. For Example, *Manusmriti* understand rationality not as a universal entity, rather a particular entity which depends upon the actor, assigned profession, the time or stage of life and the space. Rationality of a male agent of a higher caste would be different than that of a female of the same caste. It further depends upon their stage of life. If a person is at student stage (*bramhacharya*), his action must be directed to attain education, whereas house holder (*grihasta*) strives to earn wealth. Actions that enable individuals to attain their respective goals at their respective stages are considered to be rational.

Another important point to note in understanding the rationality of terrorism is the role of motivators. Most of the agents of a terrorist organization are not autonomous and well informed. Rather, they just follow their leaders. It is a belief that involves a sense of belonging, justice, dignity, solidarity, truth, and above all ultimate purpose of life.

Whenever they receive orders from authority, they act without considering its rationality or its consequences. They derive rationality from the authoritative figure. In an ancient text *Mahabharata*, the most skillful archer, Ekalabya even cuts his thumb off when he was asked to do so by his Guru, Dronacharya. This phenomenon from *Mahabharata* can be equated with the modern suicide bombers in terrorism studies. From this perspective, terrorists believe something or someone as ideal and just, and this justifies their following of orders.

In the same line of thinking, the position of Guru in the Eastern society is venerable, one no less than a god. The Guru-Sysya (master–disciple) tradition is as old as Vedic tradition, called *parampara* in Nepalese lexicon. An established *parampara* is called a *sampradaya*, sect or cult. In the Vedic tradition, a Guru often hands down knowledge and wisdom to his disciples orally, *shruti*, through sutras, or formulas. This tradition reached its height during the *upanishadic* period, when a disciple is supposed to receive wisdom only at the presence of the Guru. The term Upanishad means "to sit down near" a Guru.[18] This tradition is dominant in the Eastern religions like Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism, and it has transcended the religious boundaries to influence human behavior in economics, politics and other institutions. In terrorism studies, the presence of various *parampara* and *sampradaya* in Eastern society offers a way of constructing a rationality for violence according to the goals and interests of the Guru concerned. Since there are many *parampara* and *sampradaya*, there are many gurus of each *parampara* and *sampradaya*. Each Guru may have his own perception of reality and goals, which may rationalize terrorism in their own way.

A Guru is often a male who is blindly trusted to lead the disciples towards perfection or happiness or *moksa*. In general, there is a single Guru with many disciples in a certain sect or cult. The disciples have to be unquestionably faithful to the Guru; however, they do not necessarily need to be faithful to their fellow comrades. Therefore, any command from the Guru is executed without question, because there is no space for discussion of the command issued by the Guru at the level of the disciples.

Hence, disciples are exempt from the fruit of their actions, for the Guru is supposed to bear the responsibility on his own. Acts of terrorism to execute the command of the Guru is a considered a rational act in such communities or sects.

There are many gods and goddesses in Hindu cosmology together with personal gods known as *iswara*. So are there many Gurus in the Hindu tradition in a certain structured hierarchy. Many personal gods are stationed around the Supreme God. In the same way, gurus are also organized in a fixed hierarchical structure. The position of a certain Guru depends upon his distance from the main power center. If a Guru is nearer to the power center, he is considered more powerful. Whenever there is a dispute about the decision of a guru in a certain society, people opt to consult another guru of higher order to resolve the conflict. To execute an act of violence against a real or perceived enemy, the command from the guru of higher order is effective. Hence, terrorists often derive their rationalities for violence from the hierarchy of the Gurus.

Each Guru may have his own world view which may contradict the others. Whenever there is a confrontation between gurus in their understanding of the world and beyond, a certain Guru may declare another Guru an enemy, and commands his followers to fight against the declared enemy to save their religion, and sometimes to purify the tradition. In such a situation, followers of a certain Guru employ whatever means possible to "punish" the followers of another Guru. In some cases, a Guru interprets a certain event or a natural phenomenon in such a way that draws a clear demarcation line between communities or classes. The Guru may demand a certain act in favor of his sect from the other communities or classes. And if the target community does not comply, then the Guru declares that community as "evil".[19] In this situation, an extreme act of violence, terrorism, is a rational act in defending one's own Guru.

A Guru is influential within a certain social and geographical territory. But a Guru as a human being is a mobile entity as well. They move from place to place to preach or to explore better living opportunites commonly known as *sukha* and *santi* (happiness and peace) in this life.

Whenever a Guru travels, it happens to invade another Guru's territory. Hence, the territory includes not only geographical or sociological, rather it also involves cultural and spiritual territory. At this point, sects of two or more Gurus collide. In some cases, they are able to negotiate peacefully, but in many cases, they employ means of extreme violence to exterminate the influence of the other declaring them as the enemy of their gods. Act of terrorism to defend one's own territory or to invade other's territory is a rational act from this perspective, because both the terrorists are doing their god's work.

Hierarchical caste-based society of the Eastern tradition categorizes human beings on the basis of their birth.[20] Accordingly, it assigns duties and responsibilities together with an ultimate aim of life to an individual suited for a particular stage of life and inheritance (see Table 3.1). If there is a goal of life, there must be a method to realize that goal. An individual ought to do something to meet his/her desired ends. Hence, rationality is useful for an individual to achieve the goals prescribed by the tradition in order to enhance his position in the society.

However, such goals are dynamic depending upon the acts of an individual in question. Additionally, there exists a chance for inter caste/class mobility, or to move upward in the archeology of the society by opting for a better goal which is not prescribed to the individual on the basis of his birth or genealogy. It means an individual of lower order can improve his situation in the society if he successfully achieves the goals of higher order prescribed by the tradition to an individual of higher order. Hence, the most powerful indicator of success is wealth. Wealth makes everything possible, both *kama* and *moksa*. This drive for wealth to upgrade one's own status and dignity in the society offers rationalities for individuals to embrace even extreme acts of violence that constitutes terrorism.

For example, a poor person of higher caste may descend the social ladder if he is unable to attain the goals of his life. Likewise, a rich man of lower caste may move towards higher order if he has sufficient *purusastra*, particularly wealth. And the rule of the game is: the higher the order, the

nobler the man. So, individuals strive to attain the goals of life to maintain their position in society. This notion of becoming a better man by doing something extraordinary or valuable in society motivates individual to pursue certain acts deemed to be instrumental. Popular culture and media often reinforce this world view, particularly in Nepal where Bollywood movies are influential in constructing such world views in the public. In this process, any means, irrespective of its ethical or moral consequences, is acceptable as long as it helps individuals attain the desired ends. But this social order frequently encourages the lower tiers of the society to employ violent means to attain social status that enables the individual to pursue happiness, which is otherwise impossible for the individuals of the lowers class.

Caste (Verna)	Assigned profession	Stages (Ashram)	Aim of life (purusastra)
Brahmins	Education	Bramhacharya (Student)	Dharma (knowledge)
Kshatriya	Administrator/ military	Grihasta (householder)	Artha (wealth)
Vaisya	Commerce	Vanaprastha (retired)	Kama(pleasure)
Sudra	Service	Sannyas (renunciation)	Moksa(liberation)
No caste			

To create and defend one's class or caste territory is another aspect that offers rationalities for terrorism in the Eastern tradition. Hierarchical society constitutes different layers and tiers. At the core of this structure lies the state power that dictates all other forms of power. Individuals of different tiers strive to move towards the core power center both to uplift their situation in society and to achieve spiritual bliss. Spiritual bliss is reserved for those who have sufficient *artha*, or wealth. In this situation, a certain individual from the marginalized class employs selective verses of religious and philosophical texts to prove the existing state of affairs

is unjust and oppressive. Then, he motivates others outside the group to fight against the existing structure that oppresses them. Those convinced by his arguments form a group to wage war against the "unjust" discriminating social order. This group, launches attacks at various tiers of the social structure to weaken the boundaries that separate the different tiers. Once the structure is weak enough to allow these individuals to be included in a higher order, then a new group is formed at each tier involving the old members and the newcomers. This new group again launches attacks both within the group and outside of the group to consolidate their "achievements." Hence, they reinforce the boundaries to "safeguard" the new tier and also to exclude the others as well. In so doing, they employ all measures, including terrorism.

Buddhist notions of impermanence, *annica*, offer an alternative way to understand multiplicity of rationalities in the Eastern tradition. According to this notion, the world is changing every moment, so are its content, including human beings and their attitudes. Rationality cannot be understood in isolation; therefore, rationality of a man for violence is constantly changing with the changing world. A local Nepalese dialect reflects this notion:

> *Kunda kunda pani; Munda munda buddhi*
> (Water differs by ponds whereas the idea or intellect differs by heads)

As water of a certain pond cannot be the same as that of another, in the same way, the mind of a certain man cannot be the same as that of the other. In this light, the rationality applicable to a certain person cannot be applicable in the same way to another. So, every person has his/her own rationality to act in a certain way. This notion can be useful in understanding terrorism: Every terrorist has his/her own way to rationalize violence under his/her own specific context.

Fatalism is another notion that dictates rationality in the Eastern tradition. According to this world view, every living being has its own

fate composed of two components: *bhagya* and *karma*. *Bhagya* is fortune, whereas *karma* is destiny. Everything happens to a man in this world is attributable to the dictates of *bhagya* or *karma*. If something happens well, then it is because of his fortune, or *bhagya*, otherwise it is because of his *karma*. Therefore, an individual is not responsible for his act, because he is simply observing his *bhagya* or *karma*. The idea of *bhagya* or *karma* is also related to the position of different celestial bodies during the time of the birth of the person and in his or her different life phases. It is commonly called *graha* (planet but not necessarily the planets of only the solar system). If the *graha* of a person is in favorable position, anything would yield good result. Everything may go waste or counterproductive when the *grahas* are in bad position. So, the act of a person is not an outcome of rationally calculated decision making process, but the one dictated by his or her *grahas*.

But the question may arise: how to know the position of *graha*? In many cases, it is something unknowable through conventional knowledge. Therefore, an individual is free to do anything if he or she thinks or believes it is appropriate to act in that particular way in that particular situation. In many cases, rituals are observed to make *grahas* favorable to the person in question. In this regard, *graha santi puja* (worship of planetary objects) is observed to receive blessings from *graha*. In decision making process the idea of *graha* plays important role because it rationalizes an act of a man, including an act of extreme violence, terrorism, as an outcome of some external consequences for which the actor is not solely responsible. An act of terrorism, is not only dependent on the will or interests of both the victim and the perpetrator, but because of the resultant consequences of their respective *grahas*. The position of the *graha* brings fortune, *bhagya* and *karma*, therefore one need not be worried towards the consequences of a certain act.

In this respect, *lekhanta* (the end of the writing) is an important notion to understand. On the sixth day after the birth of a child, *bhavi*, the writer of the fate of the new born person, visits the baby and writes *bhagya* on his or her foreheads, which dictates his or her life until he or

she dies. The final lines of the writing describes the way that person is destined to die. If someone is murdered by an act of violence, then it is understood that the last lines of his fate was written in that way, so no one should feel guilt concerning the incident that killed the person in particular. In rationalizing terrorism, this notion offers scope to interpret the event in a particular way that reinforces the motive for terrorism.

So, how a person derives rationalities for terrorism is not a universal phenomenon. Various traditions, both in the West and the East, have their unique ways for rationalizing terrorism. Both the Eastern and Western traditions acknowledge a diversity of rationalities across cultures. However, the dominant Western notions of rationality oversimplify it and tend to employ generalized notions insensitive to cultural differences. It further asserts that only human beings are capable of reason, therefore only human beings are rational.

The rationality that sanctions terrorism in a certain community also depends upon the structure of the community. At a certain point, rationality given by a certain tier of the community can be instrumental, but it may not remain so forever. Society is dynamic in nature, therefore the status of the individuals is also changing, and so are the rationalities. In a certain context, the speaker can become a listener, and the former listener can become a speaker. In this changed position, the rationalities also go through a changing process to suit the interest of the dominant group of that community. Therefore, we need to ask questions like: Who is constructing rationalities in a society? Why rationalities are constructed in that manner? Who is the actor or the speaker? Who is the follower or the listeners? What is the power relationship between the speaker and the listener? For whom do those sorts of rationalities benefit? For whom does it harm? How and why, under certain conditions, a certain set of rationalities are constructed more preferable than other rationalities? How are rationalities made functional in a certain community?

Rationality does not exist outside the relationships constructed by the dominant knowledge and ideology of the society. This dominant knowledge is often constructed to serve certain interest of a certain group

in the community. The outsiders of the community often are informed about the dominant rationality that represents the interest of a particular group, whereas the operating rationality of the underclass remains obscure. In terrorism studies, the actors are often classified as oppressed or marginalized or the victims of injustice, who rarely get a chance to have their voice heard in the mainstream discourse. Since the studies on terrorism are also influenced by the social structure, many researchers tend to understand it through the eyes of the dominant discourse. Generally, the functional ingredients of terrorism are often collected, categorized, analyzed, and treated as rationality from the perspective of the dominant ideology; therefore, the rationalities and perspectives of terrorist actors are often ignored, or misrepresented by the mainstream discourse.

So, which rationality is the authentic rationality? The rationality of the actor is the authentic one, because it offers a foundation for the act itself. Other sets of rationality are merely a representation of the same from particular perspectives. As every representation is misrepresentation, rationality represented by a certain theory of knowledge does not necessarily reflect the rationality that operates in the real world. Therefore, to understand the rationalities of terrorism of a certain terrorist group, it is important to understand it from its own context that involves its culture, history, belief systems and traditions. Since various methods to understand rationality of terrorism from the dominant perspective have become unable to offer practical expedients to predict and address terrorism effectively in the contemporary world, understanding it from within is an alternative way for both scholars and practitioners in the field of the terrorism studies.

Conclusion

Rationality is a contentious issue to understand in terrorism studies. However, there have been tremendous attempts to understand it objectively from various perspectives. Prominent among them are the Western and the Eastern perspectives.

The dominant Western perspective to understand rationality of terrorism suffers from the European *economistic* determinism. It tends to understand the basis of a certain act, including that of terrorism, in its instrumental value to generate more benefit than the means employed. But the idea of benefit is conceived by the value given to that particular outcome. Value is often given to a certain outcome according to the beliefs and attitudes of the subjects in question. These beliefs and attitudes are culturally shaped. Disregarding the cultural components in shaping values fails to capture the real motivating factors behind a certain act. From such orientation, the Western approach fails to differentiate types of terrorists. It may be helpful to capture the rationalities of terrorists who are pursuing private or collective prosperity by employing terrorism instrumentally, but it is not sufficient to understand the rationalities of terrorists who act in selfless opposition to oppression, or to achieve their ultimate goals of life.

The Western tradition, however, tries to engage with the native voices to understand the rationalities of terrorism in a certain cultural context. But the problem with this is that the Western scholars or Western educated scholars employ their own means or methods to see the social phenomenon through a Western lens. This tendency reinforces phenomena like colonization or globalization. Thus, the very Western ideas of rationality become canon for the production of knowledge to understand and control social endeavors in the East. In this way, native voices are silenced by the cacophony of dominant Western discourses, and the mainstream scholarship tend to endorse the "tested" Western models of rationality. This applies to the understanding of terrorism.

"Home-grown" scholars and practitioners in the field of terrorism studies do also suffer from the Eurocentric views due to their scholarly or institutional relationships with the Western institution or body of knowledge. General patterns of scholarly enterprises in the third world are guided by the knowledge developed in the West. The scholars and the practitioners tend to test their theories developed in the West on the laboratory of the East, collaborating with institutions and scholars who are guided by the same Western lines of thinking.

For example, a team of scholars from the Western tradition visits or studies Eastern culture and trains his colleagues and students to analyze the issue from the same paradigm. Particularly in terrorism studies, most of the academicians as well as practicing institutions are from the Western hemisphere. Moreover, the funding and other financial and nonfinancial incentive to conduct that particular research influences the outcome. This is a type of scholarly adventurism. The outcome often serves Western interests in Eastern communities. Such types of investigation is not a recent. Rather, as Said notes, it has its roots in "the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory."[21]

Religious books like *Vedas*, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *puranas*, not only influence but guide human behavior in Indian subcontinent. These religious texts are ambivalent concerning violence. In addressing violence as a means to the ends, however, selective interpretations of these texts by ancient scholars like Manu, Kautilya and Kamandaka often encourage human beings to use violence in the pursuit of the objective of human life and to defend one's own *dharma*.

This special condition of the Eastern community demands a closer view to understand what it means by the words like *purusartha* (objectives of human life) or *dharma*. These very ideas and ideals offer rationalities for actions which is considered to be unacceptable in other situations. But the problem again appears is that there are multiple layers in the Eastern social world. Each layer has its peculiar tradition that offers rationalities for violence which may not be compatible with the other. In such situations, an attempt to understand rationalities for violence in a certain tradition or sub-tradition cannot be comprehensive. Rather it may offer an explanation from a particular perspective which eventually fails to have universal validity.

The problems we discussed earlier concerning the role of the Guru apply to knowledge in general. Individuals in a community often depend upon guidance of authority and are not well informed about ethical action at an individual level. They depend upon someone who is considered

to be more knowledgeable and who is venerated by the community as a good man. This person, as a guru, or a leader, determines the value or the course of action to attain particular set of values. In so doing, he appeals the community members to act in a certain way, sometimes including acts of terrorism, to achieve a better state of affairs for the community. Hence, terrorism derives its rationality, particularly operating rationality, from the leaders of the organization or the community.

In Nepalese context, understanding rationalities for terrorism invite multiple perspectives. The mainstream discourses on terrorism are heavily influenced by the Western tradition. Scholars outside of the West often find it easy to position their arguments in the light of the Western tradition. Various researches conducted with such views have not been able to shed enough light on the rationalities entrenched in various cultures and sub-cultures of Asia, including the Nepalese community. For this reason, they have not been able to offer practical tools for the practitioners to understand terrorism in the contemporary world.

There have been few serious scholarly works in the field of terrorism studies in Nepal from a socio-psychological point of view involving culture as the basis of rationality. Many of the previous researches have attempted to explore relationships between terrorism and other sociological factors like poverty, literacy, age group, and in some cases, ethnicity and globalization. But their findings are contradictory in nature. They have been useful to reinforce conventional arguments about the particular instances of rationalities of terrorism, but they have not been able to offer some specific tools for effective counterterrorism strategies. The complex socio-political space of Nepal is evolving in such a way that conventional theories of social sciences have been unable to capture its dynamics. Bidhan Golay notes:

> Nepali history seems caught in a time warp where the same old hackneyed events unfailingly keep appearing in its unchanging form over and over again. For some strange reason the paradigm of social enquiry in the hills remains

ossified and immune to the world of social and cultural theories.[22]

Positioning the above arguments in the political space of Nepal, it is important to investigate the issue of rationality for terrorism from the contextual cultural perspective

ENDNOTES

[1] Robert F.Trager and Dessislava P. Zagorcheva, "Deterring Terrorism: It Can Be Done", *International Security 30* Winter 2005/2006, pp.87–123.

[2] Martha Crenshaw. "Explaining Suicide Terrorism:A Review Essay", *Security Studies, Vol.16* No.1, January 2007, p.141.

[3] Frey, B.S., Luechinger, S., 2002a: "Terrorism: Deterrence may Backfire." Paper prepared for the DIW Workshop on "The Economic Consequences of Global Terrorism" in 2002. Available at: *http://www.diw.de/documents/dokumentenarchiv/17/39104/diw_ws_consequ ences200206_frey_luechinger.pdf* (last accessed on 30 June 2014).

[4] Raz, Joseph (2005). "The myth of instrumental of rationality", *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy 1 (1*): 2-28. *http://www.jesp.org/*

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[6] Kalberg, Stephen, " Max Weber's Types of Rationality: Corner stones for the Analysis of Rationalization Processes in History", *Vol.85 American Journal of Sociology*, (March, 1980) p.1146.

[7] Dryzek, J.S., *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond: liberals, critics, contestations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) p.31.

[8] Human actions are not guided by economic profit. Individuals can sacrifice some of their benefits for the benefit of others and to achieve non-economic goals as well. See Camerer, Colin, *Behavioral Game Theory: Experiments in Strategic Interaction*. 2003, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ. See also Andreoni, James (1990) "Impure Altruism and Donations to Public Goods: A Theory of Warm Glow Giving," *Economic Journal 100*:464-77. There are similar arguments like the notion of inequity aversion (Fehr, Ernst and Klaus M. Schmidt (1999) "A Theory of Fairness, Competition and Cooperation," *Quarterly Journal of Economics, 114*:817-68); preferences for fairness (Rabin, Matthew (1993) "Incorporating Fairness into Game Theory and Economics," *American Economic Review, 83(5)*:1281-1302); preferences for reciprocity (Falk, Armin and Urs Fischbacher (2006) "A Theory of Reciprocity," *Games and Economics Behavior*

*54(2):*293-315); and combinations of intrinsic and reputational concerns (Benabou, Roland and Jean Tirole (2006) "Incentives and Prosocial Behavior," *American Economic Review, 96(5):*1652-1678).

[9] Max Weber. 1949. *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* (New York: Free Press, 1949), p.52.

[10] See, Simon, H.A., 1957, *Models of Man* (New York: Wiley & Sons, 1957). Daniel Kahneman, P. Slovik, and A. Tversky, *Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). See also B. P. Stigum and F. Wenstop (eds), *Foundations of utility and Risk Theory with Applications* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1983); Isaac Levi, *Hard Chouces* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); L. Daboni, A. Montesano and M. Lines, *Recent Developments in the Foundations of Utility and Risk Theory* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1986) Richard Thaler, Quasi-Retional Economics (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1991); Daniel McFadden, 'Rationality for Economists', *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty, 19* (1999).

[11] See, Conlisk, John. 1996. "Why Bounded Rationality?," *Journal of Economic Literature 34*: 669- 700. Aslo see Casson, Mark and Nigel Wadeson. 1997. "Bounded Rationality, Meta-Rationality, and The Theory of International Business," Working Paper No. 242 (Discussion Papers in International Investment and Management), Dept. of Economics, University of Reading.

[12] Rasmussen, D.M. (1990). *Reading Habermas*. Cambridge: Basil Blackwell.

[13] See, Ljubiša Mitrović, "New Social paradigm: Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action", The scientific journal Facta Universitatis, *Philosophy and Sociology Vol.2, No 6/2,* 1999 pp.217 - 223.

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[17] Kuhn, T.S. (1962). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press (2nd edition published in 1970)).

[18] *Upa* means near, *ni* means down, and *sad* means to sit. It refers to the tradition of getting knowledge and wisdom necessary for *moksha* by sitting down near a guru in the Upanishadic system.

[19] In Nepal, the sweating of the statues of gods and goddesses is often interpreted as "divinity being angry with the rulers" by local gurus. In return, the ruler community offers resources, both materials as well as nonmaterial, to please the angry divine images.

After receiving the resources from the ruling elites, the religious community conducts a special ritual, *chhema puja* (worship for forgiveness) in order to pacify the angry god or goddess. If they fail to offer such special donation, then the community, normally in the periphery, confronts with the center with various means. Sweating of a stone that represents god Bhinsen in Dolakha district of Nepal is an illustrious phenomenon.

[20] For Hierarchical order of Hindu society, see Dumont, Louis. *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implications* (Originally published in French in 1966), University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1980.

[21] Said, Edward.1993 *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf), p.8.

[22] Golay, Bidhan, "Rethinking Gorkha Identity: Outside the Imperium of Discourse, Hegemony and History". Peace and Democracy in South Asia, Volume 2, Numbers 1 & 2, 2006, available at *http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/pdsa/pdf/pdsa_02_01_02.pdf*, retrieved on 12 December, 204.p.33.