

RATIONALITY AND STRATEGIC DECISION MAKING:
An Inter-disciplinary study of Concepts, Definitions
and Approaches

Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University

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PRATEEK KAPIL



Centre for International Politics, Organization and Disarmament

School of International Studies

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY

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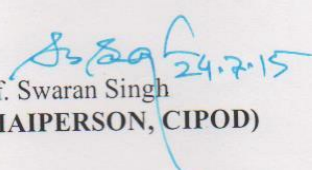
DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled "**RATIONALITY AND STRATEGIC DECISION MAKING: AN INTER-DISCIPLINARY STUDY OF CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS AND APPROACHES**" submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.


PRATEEK KAPIL

CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


Prof. Swaran Singh
(CHAIPERSON, CIPOD)


Dr. Happymon Jacob
(SUPERVISOR)


Chairperson
Centre for International Politics,
Organization and Disarmament
School of International Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067



Centre for International Politics,
Organization and Disarmament
School of International Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067

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Prof. Swaran Singh

Dr.Happymon Jacob

CHAIPERSON, CIPOD

SUPERVISOR

Introduction

Strategy is essentially a tool for decision making. Theory is used as an explanatory or understanding tool depending on different epistemological principles. An interaction between theory and strategy is imperative in contemporary international relations. During the course of the evolution of International relations, the discipline was divided into silos where methodological priorities, policy relevance, critical thinking and creative destruction of concepts have progressed in parallel. However, there is still a huge gap between advancement of the discipline and the large problems and policy questions of International politics, relations and security. There has been a proliferation of perspectives centered on various concepts which has led to a multiplicity of meanings and explanations. One such concept is the concept of RATIONALITY.

Rationality has become synonymous with 'self interest across the social sciences' however the same social sciences have started to offer many perspectives and interpretations of the concept. This study fundamentally argues that Rationality is merely 'an exercise of Reason' and not 'exercise of reason for self interest'. The concept therefore is varied and an abundance of literature hitherto has been overlooked in the formulation of rationality. Its

direct impact is resonated across the conceptions of rationality in the discipline of International relations further throwing up important implications for the more practical art of decision making. This study therefore is an interdisciplinary study of concepts, definitions and approaches. The scope is limited to the qualitative study of the same. It is primarily a qualitative study undertaken with the help of primary and secondary sources and conceptual works done in various disciplines with respect to the concept.

It is relevant to international relations because the existing theories of realist, neo-realist and neo classical realism, liberalism are built on certain outdated conceptualizations of rationality. Inclusion of new approaches will only add to their explanatory power and help in countering criticisms. For instance, Realist criticism of rational choice theory being incapable of explaining prevailing power and interest-based calculations is exaggerated because rationality does not preclude power balances. It becomes operational only when strategies are adopted within a certain power balance thus altering and changing it in the ensuing rational choice interaction. 'Interests' themselves change/modify during a rational interaction. There is a distinction in the concept of rationality when viewed from a theoretical perspective compared to a strategic perspective because theory looks at

explanation while strategy looks at practical action and policy and the process of dynamic interaction rather than explanation of final outcomes.

This Study intends to highlight the depth in definition of rationality and how an absence of such depth has led to certain exaggerated criticisms of rationality in IR discourses. As we can see various disciplines have provided qualitative additions to the concept. An interdisciplinary research of definitions and qualitative debates will help in better understanding and nuancing the concept for future applicability. The dissertation is intended as a survey of the literature and thereby come to certain conclusions. I am limiting my research to an interdisciplinary survey of mere qualitative definitions of the concept and how it affects its conceptualization in IR. This could be useful for further research in decision making, case studies and addendums in IR theories. This study aims to test whether there is indeed an agreeable ground in various conceptualizations.

This study surveys the epistemological issues in various disciplines in conceptualization of rationality through classics, primary documents, interpretations of primary sources and their epistemological critiques. This study invokes empirical data where applicable to substantiate my arguments. However, the primary focus is on debates which are still qualitative in nature and that is the area the study focusses on. This study has taken the

help of surveys of how these various epistemologies and conceptualizations have been received in academic circles and policymaking circles and whether there is scope for creative destruction which involves analyzing current concepts in conceptualizing rationality and through them, arriving at a more updated formulation of rationality in IR in addition to rebutting certain existing criticisms.

The study begins by looking at the debates about rationality in IR in Chapter one. This chapter primarily deals with theorists in IR and their ensuing debates. The chapter looks at perspectives around Realism, liberalism, constructivism, culture theorist and critical theorists. The chapter entails debates and works done around the concept itself done with specific theoretical standpoint. The chapter examines the manifestations of rationality in Strategic theory. Strategic theory is essentially the theory of decision making encapsulated in the works of strategic thinkers, historians and practitioners and concepts such as strategy, instrumentalisation of history and Strategic scripts.

The analysis of these debates is intended to answer the following research questions:

- “Why is rationality narrowly defined in mainstream IR theories and what are the gaps in formulations?” Do present criticisms have an idealized and an exaggerated exacting standard for the concept of rationality due to its narrow definition or are they valid?
- Do present criticisms have an idealized and an exaggerated exacting standard for the concept of rationality due to its narrow definition or are they valid?
- Why do ‘Interests’ themselves change/modify during a rational interaction?
- Why is rationality central to strategic decision making?
- What are the gaps in current formulations of rationality in Strategic theory and decision making discourses?

Chapter 2 delves into new approaches to rationality given by various disciplines. The chapter limits itself to conceptual and definitional engagement. However, the new formulations shed light on how rationality as a concept is evolving while retaining its core principles. This chapter explores definitions and concepts of rationality from across the breadth and depth of definitions given by various disciplines. The debates within different perspectives are also highlighted. The chapter asks the following questions:-

- Why have the new approaches hitherto remained marginalized in the existing literature?

- Does an inter-disciplinary common ground exist between different formulations and how can it be applied to strategic decision making situations?

Chapter 3 is entitled “Rationality, Cognition and Strategic Culture”. The role of the decision maker is most critical in this analysis. Therefore how cognition and rationality work in the mind of a decision maker is of critical importance. Decisions are made according to both reason and context. Context however is ever changing. There has been some work done on the process of cognition itself which helps us how we progress or fail in thinking rationally. By listing out the linkage between cognition, strategic thinking and strategic culture, the chapter analyses the various concepts which have tried to bridge the gap between cognition itself and rational thinking. The chapter engages with questions such as:

- What does it mean to be rational in a strategic situation?
- How does a strategic decision come about and eventually plays out in strategic situation?

Chapter 4 analyses the preceding questions along with concluding analysis and tests the following hypotheses-

- Mainstream IR theories limit the definition of rationality defined to ‘interests’ which is insufficient because rationality is only helpful to exert control over a situation through exercise of reason. That exertion of control may or may not be/lead to pre-conceived outcomes due to self interest.

- Political objectives of the leadership and consequent strategy drive ‘national interest’ rather than vice-versa.
- A more rigorous analysis of what constitutes ‘Rational’ through various disciplines is required to understand what constitutes ‘Self-Interest’. Therefore, the present definition lacks rigorous empiricism and a more comprehensive representation of perspectives is required.

Finally, the study is intended to highlight various debates that have remained marginalized in discussion around this concept. It is an attempt at mainstreaming marginalized approaches in an inter-disciplinary framework. It is a neo-rational attempt at formulations of rationality in strategic decision making with respect to the discipline of International relations.

Chapter 1 – Rationality in Strategy and Theory

The concept of rationality is at the center of academic debates in International relations and largely at the center of debates in social sciences. This study defines Rationality here as the exercise of reason and not in the more narrow sense of exercise of reason for self-interest. This study intends to explore the various formulations of rationality through the perspectives of various disciplines and arrive at insights that are relevant to the discipline of International relations.

The primary paradigm has been credited to the work done in the field of rational choice theory however as this study will try to show that rationality is a much broader concept. It will look at various debates within the field of rational choice theory supplemented by the work done in the field of bounded rationality and heuristics which can give us a deeper understanding of rational choice theory itself. The limitations of context driven explanations themselves contribute to rational explanations being more suitable. Rationality therefore is a much debated concept and the new approaches are helpful in improving the

existing discourse on the concept. The sociological, strategic theory, philosophical, economic and scientific definitions have the potential to give qualitative additions to the definitions prevalent in existing IR theories. The scope of the dissertation is to explore those new additions.

The debate about rationality is relevant to international relations because the existing theories of realist, neo-realist and neo classical realism, liberalism are built on certain outdated conceptualizations of rationality. Inclusion of new approaches will only add to their explanatory power and help in countering criticisms from the theories from the left.

The neorealist conceptualization of balance of power as being an outcome which works as an invisible hand in explaining international politics is too general. The inability of neorealism to demonstrate consistent behavioral or systemic outcomes from the structural constraints that it emphasizes—distribution of power or capabilities—may render the issue of its decision-making assumptions, moot. To the degree that structural constraints are awarded less explanatory weight, however, other issues of rationality loom larger(Kahler 1998).

Balance of power as behavior is the more operative part with respect to applying rationality and that is where what constitutes rational 'powerful' behavior becomes another pertinent research question. Reason as we know is a subset of agency in the agent-structure debate. Power itself does not drive rationality. The rationalization of what constitutes as power is what is important. Therefore, power is not the primary variable. The rationality of power is the primary variable. e.g. during the start of the Peloponnesian war between Athens and Sparta, It was far from obvious that Sparta will go to war due to the prevailing balance of Power or that other states would balance against Athens. The conflict precipitated due to a series of incremental strategic steps where various actors bargained, coerced and incentivized each other in a rational interaction. However what was unclear was what each considered as a rational outcome and the consequent strategies that each followed. That is the gap that this study intends to explore. Similarly, liberalism and neo-liberalism have defined rationality as applied to classical game theory but what is missing is how political objectives or the paradoxical nature of strategic thinking which is explained by the "I think that she thinks that I think iteration" (Luttwak, 2001 pp 209-211) and indirect nature prioritizes the principle of surprise and deception (Liddell Hart 1965) leads to sub-

optimal outcomes as opposed to outcomes closer to Nash equilibrium as liberals would contend they can achieve if so called ‘planned strategies’ were adopted. This is because some strategists have defined strategy as a ‘duel of opposing wills’ (Luttwak, 2001 pp 209-211) which leads to a situation where an adversary may not be looking to be rational deliberately only to sabotage your rational goals. He may hedge to postpone a Nash equilibrium¹ situation only to wait for conditions which may benefit him/her more at a later stage. But he may also then lose an opportunity to achieve a possible solution in the irrational hope of more benefit. Thus, a conclusive argument either way is difficult as the concepts are much debated currently.

Finally a common criticism of rationality as is currently defined in the form of ‘Instrumental rationality as self interest’ is that individuals are not rational and socially constructed as argued by the constructivists such as (Wendt 1992). The criticism is exaggerated because rational choice theory as a paradigm can subsume both endogenous and exogenous variables. Rationality does not preclude abandoning individual preferences. It also does not preclude the problem of aggregation of individual rational choices into social choice theories. Further instrumental rationality is different from procedural

¹ For more on Nash equilibrium – <http://www.columbia.edu/~rs328/NashEquilibrium.pdf> International Encyclopaedia of Social sciences, , 2nd Edition, pp 540-542.

rationality defined as mere exercise of reason. Procedural rationality is a form of rationality which is independent of cognitive and psychological variables and biases. Hence IR theories need to include strategic theory, decision making theory, cognitive and psychological variables to move away from explanations based on the narrower definition of instrumental rationality as self interest.

Further, this chapter analyses the conception of rationality in Strategic theory. The most contested idea is whether rationality is possible in Strategy. The most articulate manifestation of exercise of rationality is the grand strategic approach. Rationality finds usage in the central arguments of various strategic thinkers such as Bernard Brodie, Basil Liddell hart, Graham Allison, Lawrence Freedman and Carl Von Clausewitz. Finally the use of History as a variable is point of contestation among scholars in formulating 'rational' or contrarian strategy. I elaborate these debates in the following chapter.

Strategic theory

“Strategy is the art of creating power” - (Lawrence Freedman, 2011)

Strategic effect can be measured as the difference between the outcome anticipated by reference to the prevailing balance of power and the actual outcome after the application of strategy. (Freedman 2011) Strategy is not so much a means of asserting control over situations but a way of coping with situation in which no body is in control.(Freedman, 2011).Friction is an inherent part of strategy.Efficiency is subordinate to effectiveness in strategy.

Strategic theory debates two views of rationality. In the second view, Edward Luttwak considers strategy as a paradox or a duel of opposing wills where in deception, improvisation and indirect approach aimed at disrupting what John Boyd called the OODA(Boyd, 1996) loop of your opponent. Contrasting the view of Clausewitz, Jomini, Schleiffen of war being total and an extension of politics, this view of strategy considers moving from one desired end state to another with constant recalibration of ends, means and ways. This view provides a view of strategy which critiques contemporary rational

choice theory as seeking to instrumentalize history without providing it the context of its time.

Costs in strategy

A useful framework to calculate strategy in rational choice is to think of strategy as a spectrum between control and coercive strategies. Coercive strategies can be further divided into deterrence strategies and compellance strategies (Porter 1996). Coercive strategies can be achieved through the strategies of denial and strategies of punishment. Therefore deterrence can be achieved by deterrence and denial.

Same holds for control and compel lance strategies. The costs involved are those of enforcements costs, reputational costs, compliance costs and resistance costs. Deterrence strategies are those where you lower the adversary's compliance costs and you lower your own enforcements costs. Compel lance strategies are those where increase the adversary's resistance costs through punishment or denial. They also lead to an increase in your own enforcement costs.

Costs and military budgeting are a fundamental aspect of security. This keeps security goals in check and helps in regulating the security dilemma which is critical to international security. A state which mobilizes all its resources for mainly security goals starts acquiring the characteristics of a garrison state and distances itself from both the society and the polity. The Costs framework therefore is an alternate rational framework for analyzing decision making.

STRATEGIC THINKERS

The views of the following strategic thinkers represent alternate rational concepts of strategy and through their formulations how the exercise of reason furthers the process of articulating strategy.

Bernard Brodie

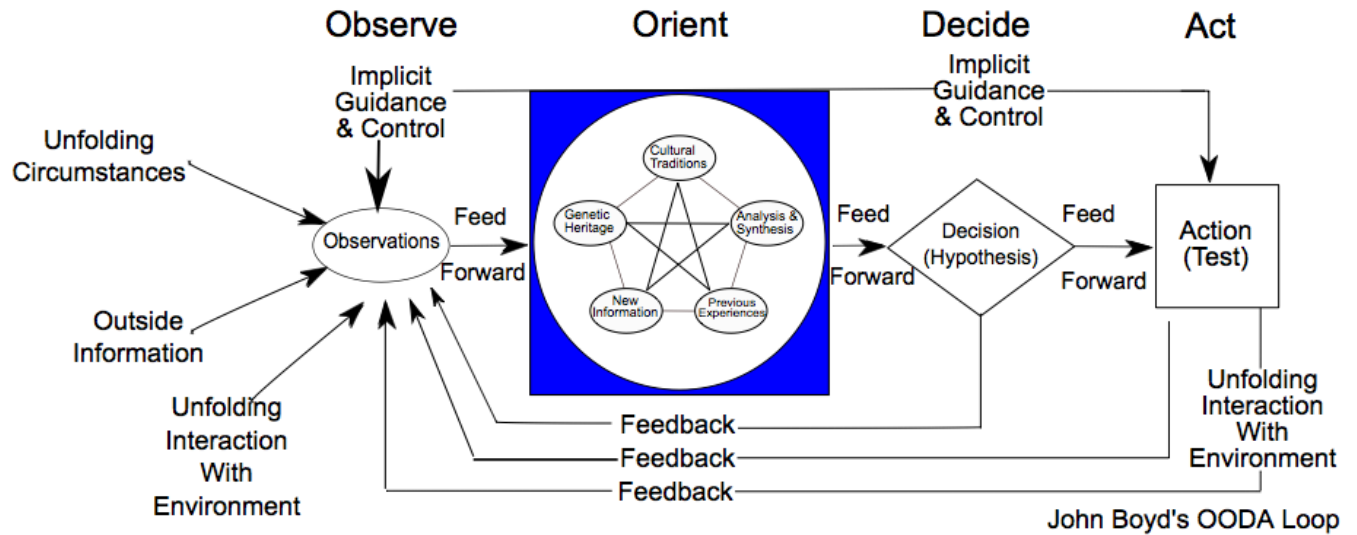
Brodie's fundamental insight into strategy is as follows: "That is, a balanced force could be defined as one in which the marginal utilities, tactically and strategically considered, of the last increments to each of the existing components were approximately equalized. To gauge marginal utilities among those components would be anything but easy, but at least the

conceptual basis of balance would be clarified in a way that helped to indicate the scope and the direction of the analysis necessary to provide the answers.” (Brodie, 1949)

Which means any additional increment to either strategy or tactics will yield strategic and tactical benefits. He accepts it is extremely difficult to do so but believed in its eventual feasibility by applying the laws of economics to strategy. This was contentious argument in practice because of the difficulty involved in measuring such marginal tactical and strategic utility but in theoretically he stated that strategy can be treated as a social science. He said just as micro-economics is a science of money, Strategy is a science of force and all the other resources.

John Boyd

John Boyd devised the OODA (Observe, Orient, Decide, ACT) loop which is a simple linear rational process of decision making with a rigorous incorporation of variables along with feedback after every cycle. It is not a theory of decision making but a mere process of and approach to strategic thinking and cognition. (Image source: [Wikimedia Commons](#))



Basil Liddell Hart

(Liddell Hart 1965) explains the concept of the indirect approach. He says "if we assume that a strategist is responsible to achieve a military decision to a strategic situation. His prime responsibility then becomes to seek it under the most advantageous circumstances in order to produce the most profitable result."(Liddell Hart 1965).

The main import of this section is that Liddell hart explains that even an element of surprise and deception has to be planned according to a rational planning process and one of the fundamental questions for a strategist is identifying what kind of strategy is on or off the

table at any given time in any given strategic situation and it can only be identified according to the indirect nature of strategy and which ever strategy provides the most advantageous conditions for decision. Conflictual strategies may be extremely detrimental in the long run even if they contain tactical surprise and deception for the adversary.

Thomas Schelling

Thomas Schelling is perhaps the most influential strategist on the issues of fungibility of force. An economist turned strategist he applied the principles of tacit and explicit bargaining to the use and threat of use of force. He underlined the importance of qualitative thresholds e.g. Line of Control between India and Pakistan. He insisted that a threshold is a point where adversaries can compromise on with or without the probability of further escalation. This can happen without explicit communication as well. He cites the example of a river or a natural unique feature where any step forward or backward by either player can lead to further escalation of conflict. A good example of this is the Korean War where the 38th parallel was one such threshold and the forward movement of American forces to another threshold which was the Yalu River led to the prolonging and stalemate of the conflict. The Koreans and the Americans had to recede to the 38th parallel for an effective compromise. LOC is a similar example. And the difference of perception of

Line of Actual Control as a qualitative threshold between India and China further demonstrates his argument. He says what desists players is not the use of force itself but the threat of more force to come. It is the utility of this potential use of force which should be exploited in diplomacy. This is the essence of bargaining. Schelling was also the pioneer in demonstrating the interdependence of decision making in conflict. He argued that any multiplicity of actors in a strategic situation forces actors to think in terms of interdependent logic (Schelling 1980). This corroborates with Edward Luttwak's assertion that Strategy is paradoxical. It is highly important what the adversary is doing. It can never be unidirectional.

Carl von Clausewitz

The seminal conservative strategist, Clausewitz came up with one of the first theories of war. He came with the seminal idea that any use of force has to be commensurate with the political objective but he qualified it by stating that in order to achieve this is, it is important to understand the character of war. He insisted that he was giving a theory of war not just strategy. He begins by saying that war is a nasty business and there is an inherent danger of escalation. Foremost among the character of war, is the dictum that war is the application of maximum strength to render the enemy defenseless. Maximal results with minimum

benefits. He also argued counter-intuitively that it is the people who want war not just the leadership (Clausewitz 1984). This is a retort to the relatively recent democratic peace theory. Wars are not precipitated by rationality but passions which is most prevalent in the masses rather than the political or military leadership because the latter understand the consequences of war more than anyone else in a state. It is this proto-nationalism which is the root cause to go to war. (Clausewitz 1984) Once a war is started, the Ziel (military aim) takes over the "Zweek" the political object of war and then moderation becomes very difficult to introduce in war. Vietnam War is a good example because according to Clausewitzian thinking the Americans suffered losses in the beginning because they were not ready to escalate to the point where the North Vietnamese were ready to. A single instantaneous decisive blow is very difficult to achieve in war. War works with a trinity of political purpose, hostility and chance and thus has a high chance of escalation. (Clausewitz 1984). This can be avoided by identifying the adversary's centre of gravity and a minimum application of force at this point can help achieve your objectives. Clausewitz warns us that war is total and anyone who considers it inherently controllable is being disingenuous. Political purpose of the two adversaries is the only factor that controls this inherently violent activity. The question to ask in the application of force is "what is it meant for". Sheer operational virtuosity is not sufficient in controlling escalation.

Graham Allison

'Essence of Decision' (Allison, 1999) sheds light on the process of decision making. He provides two models- one is the unitary rational actor model and other is the bureaucratic politics model. He says one way to conceive of decision making is the standard rational actor model. He says rationality helps us in institutionalizing the state so it behaves as a unitary rational actor model looking to maximize its objectives in a coherent cost-benefit analysis of the prevalent environmental payoff structure.(Allison 1999, pp 13-27) Allison argues that rationality helps us in analysis following the underlying Aristotelian principle in human nature that reason prevails over instincts and spirit. He says a reason is the only way society and politics can be organized in an orderly fashion. Therefore, the assumption of rationality further helps us to apply rational choice theory to any strategic situation in international politics. It also helps in theorization absence of which may lead to adhocism or arbitrariness in decisions and outcomes. (Allison 1999, pp 13-27)

His second model is important in terms of the institutions of strategy. He argues that all organizations are fundamentally bureaucracies and have a self-sustaining logic to their existence. (Allison 1999, pp 143-182) Therefore rationality in the context of an institution

becomes intertwined by the fundamental character, hierarchy and standard operating procedures of that bureaucracy. The Cuban missile crisis is a good example of the following where the executive committee that was set up by president crisis a day after the photographs of missiles surfaced. The various actors from the secretary of state, secretary of defense, chief of strategic air command, political adviser to the president and the various factions of the soviet politburo had their institutional interests to protect and the US government at the time was not functioning as rational unitary actor as the first model would argue.(Allison 1999, pp 143-182) However, it could be also argued that the final call did in fact lie with the president at every step and so to some degree the rational unitary actor was preserved. Inconclusiveness of the debate, notwithstanding, Allison's dialectic model of decision making underlines the importance of coherence of decision making and civil-military relations along with checks and balances of power that multiplicity of institutions brings. (Allison 1999, pp 143-182) Here is where the concept of Grand Strategy comes to fill in the lacuna. It is the prerogative of the political leadership of a country to articulate, debate and execute along with the advice and inputs of all the institutions of decision making- the fundamental questions of political ends and means.

Samuel Huntington

According to me, Huntington provides a model for civil–military relations with the axes of objective and subjective control. He describes objective control by which the military is an organized as professional arm for organized violence and does not interfere in the political outlook of the country. They maintain autonomy and distance from the polity and are exercised as any other professional corps (Huntington 1981)

By contrast, subjective control is one by which the political leadership tries to find common ground with the military on issues of political outlook. The military arm in this case is closer to the polity and has a stake in the formulation of political objective. They are invested in the political future of the country and society in general. (Huntington 1981). This type of control can lead to varying types of governments depending on the extent of relations and proximity and relative autonomy and professionalism of the political and military leadership.

It is arguable which form of control is better in terms of reconciling political objectives, military aims and available resources but objective control has long term benefits in the democratic form of governance. In addition, the limited resources of a nation make it prudent to raise a professional military corps in line with objective control. Flexibility can

be achieved if synergistic institutions can be set up for effective coordination of the political objectives and use of force in achieving national interest goals.

Colin Gray

Gray argues that Strategy can be analyzed with reference to the geographical environments to which it is specifically applied (i.e. land, sea, air, space, cyberspace) or with respect to weapons or technologies or with respect to different levels of violence (general, limited, irregular). Gray points out to Michael Howard's formulation of dimensions of strategy- social, logistical, operational and technological. He further qualified them as- moral, physical, mathematical, geographical and statistical. The first covers everything that is created by intellectual and psychological qualities and influences, the second consists of the size and composition of the armed forces, third to the lines of operation, fourth is influenced by the terrain of the theatre and fifth deals with support and maintenance.

Gray himself formulates² seventeen dimensions of strategy (Gray 1999):-

- People and politics- people, society, culture, politics and ethics.

²Ch 1, Colin Gray, Modern Strategy (OUP, 1999), pp. 16-38.

- Preparation for war–Economics and logistics, defense and force planning, recruitment, training and armament, information and intelligence, strategic theory and doctrine and technology
- War proper– military operations, political and military command, geography, friction, adversary and time.

Gray goes on to argue that strategy has both extrinsic and intrinsic value (Gray 1999, pp-16-38). The former maintains the balance between the military assets of a country with the political demands of the external world. The latter is the role of strategy to transform tactical performance into strategic effect for strategic performance according to the policy within the economic means available.

Strategic scripts – Strategy as a rationally conceived narrative.

Strategy can be analyzed as an improvised script but where it fundamentally differs from a conventional script is that the author cannot manipulate the characters and outcomes completely. A prescient example is the ubiquitous narrative of David and Goliath. In the story, the virtue of David being an underdog is hailed as a strategic advantage because his status as the underdog increases “his belief in God” in the original story. A more rational

strategic lesson however is not David's underdog status but his proficiency with the sling shot and his element of surprise in addition to Goliath's lack of preparedness in wearing a helmet and the fact that that in any subsequent battle Goliath will be ready for a surprise headshot. Therefore, influence of storytelling in strategy can be enhanced or mitigated by a rigorous rational cause and effect analysis of the narrative and similar or follow up narratives can be created for decision making to be used in other strategic situations. Strategic scripts, therefore is a novel framework to rationally conceive strategy. Context here is merely a descriptive variable not an explanatory one with respect to future use for decision making not merely understanding a strategic event.

A good strategy, like any other form of communication will follow a coherent and logical path. In strategy, it proceeds through the preparation for hostilities, the introduction of force, the decisive actions of one combatant over the other, the exploitation of those victories, and the final execution of the victorious combatant's will over the defeated. War and strategy has its own grammar—violence and shock, victory and defeat, destruction and creation—but not its own logic.(Friedman 2015). The strategic communication that expresses your will must be arranged in a logical manner to the enemy combatant and, perhaps more importantly, for your own forces. Troops in a conflict that do not understand

the big picture, or where the strategy is supposed to be headed, cannot make tactical decisions that fit in with the desired policy.

This points to a major problem in the national security community: the fascination with the concept du jour. Concepts like Air Sea Battle, offshore control, or strategic land power are comforting and may provide a plot point in some future strategic narrative. But, on their own, they fall away as disconnected pieces that cannot be contextualized. (Friedman 2015)

In *The Strategy Bridge*, Gray, calls strategy, a product of “an iterative process of dialogue and negotiation” between military leaders and policymakers (Gray 2010). Communication, however, is not one sided. As one side communicates its will and attempts to create a situation where it can be imposed, the other side does as well. Communication is a conversation, and strategy must simultaneously make its own plot while trying to derail the plot of the opponent in an environment where it is subject to the inherent probability and chance of war. Thinking about strategy as a narrative can help the strategist conceptualize the course he intends to take and can even help him communicate it to those who must decide to pursue it and those who must do the hard work of executing it (Friedman 2015).

All these arguments underline the problems with hitherto conceptualization of rationality. Rationality is merely exercise of reason of cause and effects, consequences and prerequisites, process and control. It is not the mere maximization of utility. Rationality in a strategic situation works best when nash equilibrium is reached where any deviation of the equilibrium would make one of the actors worse off compared to the equilibrium. Reason should not be merely exercised at an individual level but most importantly on an institutional collective level. This can be arrived at with a discussion on issues of common language and strategic education and cultivation of rationality by educating the masses and the leaders in a professional programme of philosophy, science and social sciences. History has to be contextualized but context devoid of reason changes every second. Coherent and logical ideas logically arrived at backed by observation and empirics are the most suitable formulation of rationality till then. Not mere self interest but acceptability and sustenance of the rational narrative itself to all the stakeholders. Strategic predisposition to rationality is required to achieve those agreements and sustenance. Creative destruction becomes very important in this regard. Even as we struggle to accept what is rational. We need to reject not stay indifferent but reject that what is irrational because as Hume puts it Human beings can't do without Rationality as a convention (Gendler 2011). Rationality is needed to prevent the conflictual Hobbesian argument of human nature being nasty and brutish.

Strategy as a rationally constructed narrative is the most distinct form of rationalism emerges in Strategic decision making with intermediary stages of completion. Strategy never stops. It is a habit.

Chapter 2– New approaches to Rationality

Strategic effect can be measured as the difference between the outcome anticipated by reference to the prevailing balance of power and the actual outcome after the application of strategy. Strategy is not so much a means of asserting control over situations but a way of coping with situation in which no body is in control.(Freedman 2013, pp 12–20). Strategic theory debates two views of rationality. In one sense, Strategy is looked at as a plan of ends, means and ways and policy flows from that long term strategy. The interaction is as

suggested by rational choice theory follows matrices of game theory. The actors follow the conventional definition of rationality which is defined through the following three assumptions about individuals' preferences for actions:

- Completeness – ranking in an order of preference.
- Transitivity
- Independence of irrelevant alternatives – If A is preferred to B out of the choice set {A,B}, then introducing a third alternative X can not make B preferable to A

Together these assumptions constitute the definition that given a set of exhaustive and exclusive actions to choose from, an individual can rank them in terms of his preferences, and that his preferences are consistent.

There are other perspectives in addition to the basic rational choice paradigm.

Perspectives from Philosophy

The philosophical debate about rationality centers on the following debates:-

Free Will, Determinism and choice

“Free Will” is a philosophical term of art for a particular sort of capacity of rational agents to choose a course of action from among various alternatives. This is the most broad philosophical debate with fundamental disagreements between free will proponents, determinists, compatibilists (free will and determinism can co-exist) and non-compatibilists (Free will and determinism cannot coexist) (Millican 2009)

Consequentialism, Deontology and Process

Justice over the years has various dimensions (Gendler 2011) – it is consequentialist, deontological, reparative or distributive. Consequentialist justice was given by Jeremy Bentham through his thesis of utilitarianism. (Gendler 2011) It is best encapsulated in the statement–“Greatest good for the greatest number”. It says as long as bad outcomes can be avoided, it is just and therefore rational. The view of deontology as given by Kant is that as long as the act is just if you would do to others as others would unto you. According to Kant, an act has to be just in itself. That he says can only come from a good will. Now both

these principles are well debated in social sciences for e.g. in the case of cosmopolitanism v Westphalia, Individual v Social rights and either is not conclusive but the debate illuminates the central issues in initiating a strategy. The third perspective is procedural justice where in an act is just and rational if it follows the 'due process principle'. Rationality here would be to weigh every situation according to these principles and come at a prudent solution. In some cases, the three formulations will be fundamentally opposed to others. Then the onus falls on the strategist as to how well he frames the problem to himself and to the other actors bearing in mind these different principles. Rationality still forms the primary tool of devising a strategy but knowledge of these debates and principles will help in minimizing the damage a particular context can do. (Millican 2009)

Hobbes, Rawls and Nozick

Similarly, the debate around social structures revolves around the views of Thomas Hobbes, John Rawls and Robert Nozick. Hobbes says people escape the state of nature (characterized by anarchy) and come together to form a state with a monopoly of force so they don't have to deal with the business of security themselves and pursue higher goals and forms of living. (Rawls 2009) says there are certain inviolable rights of human beings which are life, liberty, and equality, pursuit of happiness and consent of the governed. The

only way to achieve this is every citizen looks at every issue through a ‘veil of ignorance’- i.e. objectively without his own perspective, standing or stake in the issue involved. Nozick 1974 argues for a minimal state which only provides for the security of citizens and enforcement of contracts. For him, the process of justice is more important than justice as outcome. He says Liberty of an individual is the highest virtue in a society. There are problems with each conception- An overtly Hobbesian state can become a militaristic state, an ideal Rawlsian state is difficult to achieve without constraining some liberties and an overtly minimal state of Nozick may lead to anarchy still and violation of certain natural rights e.g. tragedy of commons and public goods.

Therefore, these philosophical debates show that social sciences and reason do not have as simple a linkage between theory, evidence and practice as do natural sciences. Having said that, rationality has proven itself to be the most beneficial mode of thinking when it comes to problems of social sciences and consequently International politics and security.

Psychology and Evolutionary Biology

Perceptions and engrained behaviors are an important variable albeit not a decisive variable. How do perceptions and rationality affect each other? Cognitive science has a large body of research on the theory of dual processing of human nature i.e. how human

beings process phenomenon. Often, the two processes consist of an implicit (automatic), unconscious process and an explicit (controlled), conscious process.(Kahnemann 2011).A reference is also to be made to the evolutionary biologists (Pinker 2003) and Tuschmann (2013) who have conceptualized our political behavior through evolutionary and genetic processes who postulated that human behavior is embedded in genetic code and humans do have innate knowledge rather merely socialized knowledge.

Perspective from Sociology

Rational action is presupposed by knowledge which is the first aspect. Second important aspect is impersonality where a problem can be first viewed both objectively and subjectively. But Rationalization, according to Weber, entails objectification. Third important aspect is control. Contrary to Weber's view is the foucoulidian view which postulates that there is no rationality but chaos. He says that knowledge itself is a constant power struggle through language and socialization. But as demonstrated by (Millican 2009) we cannot question everything beyond a point. He gives the example of the word

‘choice’. He asks us to consider the paradigm case of a young child who was introduced to the word by the formative experience of choosing between chocolate and vanilla ice cream. He further asks us to assume that the kid chose vanilla. Now he says to deny that the kid did not have a choice in this case and somehow he was already genetically predisposed or socialized into picking vanilla would be disingenuous. He says the kid might have an inherent preference for vanilla but he still had a genuine choice to exercise his rational faculty to prefer either of the two. In this case, he was not socialized into picking vanilla by language or any other factor but in fact exercised his rational choice. Rational choice therefore is inevitable in strategic decision making. It only differs in its conceptualizations.

Perspective from scientific methodology: From Occam’s Razor to Newton’s Flaming Laser Sword

The ‘social scientists’ are philosophers who follow Newtonian methodology. Reason according to them has to be backed by rigorous empiricism and not just description of context. “Newton devised his own philosophical method. If any hypothetical statement is made, it was always to be testable, either directly or by examining its logical consequences and testing them.” (Alder 2014) In order to derive logical consequences that could be tested,

it was extremely important to frame his statements with a very high degree of clarity.”(Alder 2014)

The name of the principle Newton’s laser sword is inspired by the occam’s razor principle which argued for satisfaction of karl popper’s falsifiability criteria along with parsimony for any proposition. Newton’s laser sword principle in fact says that we should not dispute propositions unless they can be demonstrated logically to have observable consequences(Alder 2014). In its alternate form,it requires a list of observable consequences and a formal demonstration that these consequences do indeed follow from the claimed proposition.

Quantitative perspective

National security depends on the collection of data as well as the accurate translation of same to produce (Tamaru 2015) meaningful action which enhances decision making rather than detracts. Information in the form of state secrets (intelligence) is only a single mapping; trade, immigration, intellectual exchange, markets, and humanitarian aid are all transformations between entities. By shifting from qualitative, and at times siloed,

examinations of these mappings to a more quantitative view, a state increases the odds that their actions are meaningful and that the alliances they choose are resilient. Accurate metrics and measurements of outcomes with an emphasis on accountability reduce reliance on faith in the form of ideology (whether political or military) to make decisions.

A democratic state simplifies its foreign policy communication to its peril. The US must ask that people rise to the complexity rather than work with its simplest form for lowest common denomination. American public opinion must have a deep grounding in the way international politics works. Early civic, economic, and international education is as vital to our national security as deep education in warfare. (Tamaru 2015)

This chapter has explained the various new approaches which utilize reason in analysis, understanding and explanation of Strategic Decision making. The new approaches and their interdisciplinary analysis point to the depth of rationality. The various disciplines have worked with laws, approaches and definitions that have been arrived at by reasoning. They all inculcate objectivity to arrive at problem solving concepts. The chapter has highlighted the main debates in across these disciplines.

CHAPTER 3: Cognition, Rationality and

Strategic culture

Introduction

This chapter deals with the issue of rationality and cognition. A fundamental debate in IR pertains to the application of rationality and context to different situations. Rationality is a hugely debated concept in philosophy. Across disciplines, the conceptualization of rational thought and practice provides various puzzles and problems. Yet, it is the most influential concept in modern day parlance and forms the foundations of approaching any problem (Kapil 2013). In his book *Republic*, Plato states that To be rational according is to let reason govern all intrinsic human thinking (Gendler, 2011). Reason he says is the supreme quality of Human beings which gives them their unique character. The internal reflective process of a human being is what gives him/her an evolutionary advantage. Knowledge according to rationality is innate and achieved through continuous reflection and processing. One's surroundings undoubtedly constrain or enable reason but the latter is the final instrument through which Human beings have the ability to shape the environment to their advantage. Aristotle considered Reason analogous to a charioteer who steers the seemingly irrational aspects of human thinking i.e. Spirit and Appetite. Further there are myriad debates within the concept of rationality itself. What are the qualitative, quantitative, observational or empirical inputs that are required to consider something as 'Rational'? There are often variables, it is argued which are beyond the scope of Human reasoning which provide every rational situation with a 'context' that is extremely difficult to limit within the analytical framework of rational thought. Comprehensive rationality and bounded rationality are two different classifications which provide an example of this debate. "Bounded rationality is the idea that in decision-making,

rationality of individuals is limited by the information they have, the cognitive limitations of their minds, and the finite amount of time they have to make a decision".(Gigerenzer 2002)

One way to define Rationality is the ability of an entity to examine the pros and cons of a situation to arrive at an outcome by which the said entity is better off without leaving anything or anyone worse off than before the situation presented itself. In strategic situations, it governs the issue of initiating a strategy by calculating whether the execution of the strategy will leave the strategist better off than before without making other variables worse off or making the total outcome better off irrespective of its individual parts being better off than it would have been without initiating a strategy. Rationality in strategy may not always lead to rational outcomes. That is because in strategy the fundamental principle is the existence of an adversary who is thinking exactly the same as you are. This dynamic is explained by a number of rational choice theory/Game theory scenarios such as chicken, prisoner's dilemma and stag hunt. That does not however mean that rationality cannot be applied to strategic situations. What in fact, it implies is that a strategist should look to make the strategic environment conducive to rational choice and action.

Cognitive and Philosophical inputs to Rationality

Cognitive science has shown that Humans have a tendency to be distracted by the heuristics of a situation. This presents one of the problems in applying rational thought. In more precise terms, heuristics are strategies using readily accessible, though loosely applicable, information to

control problem solving in human beings and machine. A good simplistic example of this is the following example.

Assume for example that a town of 600 people is hit by a plague. There is one plan to tackle this plague but it is presented to you in two different ways. One way it is presented to you is that if you choose the plan, 200 people will live. Other way it is shown is that if you choose the plan, 400 will die. (Gendler 2011) states that Cognitive experiments like the one done by Jonathan Haidt have shown that a majority of the respondents choose the former even though the two plans are exactly the same. That is because people have an intuitive judgment that saving 200 people living sounds better than 400 people dying. Although in quantitative terms the two outcomes are exactly the same. Heuristics are used by people every day in their lives but they are not necessarily rational responses to various situations that we encounter. Having said that, passing a final judgment is difficult as employing heuristics is also an important aspect of human nature. Strategists need to be aware of these distinctions to reach optimum outcomes.

An Example of the Kashmir Issue

The reason all these debates are relevant to strategic studies is because strategy in international politics does not occur in a vacuum. Armed forces have to be in synergy with governance for them to succeed. A rational Grand strategy articulated by a government can help armed forces integrate their operations in the larger strategic environment. This is most relevant in issues of war and

internal security. For example India's stand in Kashmir and its further tackling of the insurgency is an example of debates about justice, social structures and strategy coming together. India argues that a Unified India was partitioned by the British due to the extraordinary situations of violence prevalent at the time. Partition was agreed to by the Indians due to a consequentialist notion of justice to prevent further violence in the country as a large majority of muslims at the time, not all of them, wanted a state of their own. India agreed to it not on the basis of the two nation theory of two states for different religion but rather as a reaction to the large scale riots which had made Indian resistance costs to partition extremely high. This was followed by the understanding that all the princely states were free to join either union through legal instruments of accession. Pakistan meanwhile, claimed that they were defending a deontological position that the Islamic identity of the Kashmiri people deemed their actions just in trying to integrate the region to Pakistan. They claimed that their actions were just in themselves because they were acting out of good will. India on the other hand, maintained the deontological position that the secular identity of all Indians, hindus or muslims, was the primary factor and she herself was acting in good will in defending the integrity of its nation. The resultant outcome was a conflictual stalemate that persists to the day. This eventually led to five wars among the two nations. Now rationality here suggested that India maintain the status quo by keeping Kashmir within a Rawlsian view of distribution of goods and responsibilities while maintaining the monopoly of force of the Indian state equal to other regions in the country. This means granting to Kashmiri citizens all the inviolable rights that Rawls deemed

inviolable under a proper social contract according to the consent of the Kashmiri citizens. To paraphrase Rawls, one way to achieve this is if each Indian citizen puts himself under ‘a veil of ignorance’(Rawls 2009) i.e. he doesn’t know what is his/her status under the Indian state is and then decide the rights and duties of all citizens in the Indian Union including the Kashmiris. (Rawls 2009) maintained that you need the monopoly of force of the state to enforce any social contract as outlined in his ‘difference principle’ where he says resources of a state have to be aligned to the benefit of the least advantaged but the resultant state should then respect the principle of equality of all citizens. This objective of the Indian government was further complicated by the Hobbesian view of the Indian state as interpreted by the Pakistanis and certain Kashmiris who took up arms against the state. They do not recognize the monopoly of force of the Indian state (obvious in Pakistani case) which then manifests itself through cross border terrorism and violent insurgency. This then leads to certain sections of Indian establishment justifiably going away from a Rawlsian to a more Hobbesian state in their handling of this situation. The same can be said of the erstwhile insurgencies in north-east, Punjab and now the Naxal areas. A prudent strategy for the Indian state under these circumstances is to gradually move from the Hobbesian form imposed on it due to the challenge to its monopoly of force to a more Rawlsian form which would be a desirable for both the Kashmiris and the Indian state. An overreaction towards a more Hobbesian form towards the Kashmiris is a sub-optimal and a detrimental strategy for India.

The presence of Pakistan is the crucial factor. Unless both India and Pakistan realize that their deontological views of Justice with respect to Kashmir are fundamentally contradictory, it is not prudent to plan for peace. The only way peace can be achieved between the two states in this core issue is either through reparative justice or a more consequentialist notion of justice. If the Pakistani or the Indians stick to their deontological positions, conflictual strategies will automatically take precedence. However, if consequentialist or reparative notions are employed by both states, aimed at preventing future violence, negotiations or non-force strategies are possible. India meanwhile despite major friction should look to continuously introduce Rawlsian features of governance in the state of Kashmir. Despite deep seated problems to the same, it is the only viable outcome for the Indian state. Private investment, Education, designated areas of protest, free and fair election and intensive public relations strategies. The same holds true for other insurgencies as well. Comprehensive rationality of maintaining the territorial integrity of the state has to be checked by the more bounded rationality of achieving a long term integrated Kashmiri state. This may require a more decisive action on the issue of cross border interference where Pakistanis are dismissive of any consequentialist solution. Kashmiris do not have as strong a deontological conflict of justice as Pakistan does with respect to India. Indian strategy has to gradually move towards a more Rawlsian notion in tackling this situation. Rationality is usually given a more comprehensive or broad-based form by scholars but by introducing other variables to the environment it can account for context and deontological factors as well. For e.g. Prisoner's dilemma leads to different rational outcomes in

the context of normal prisoners as compared to the prisoners part of a mafia group who know they will be killed if they get out of jail. Therefore, rational choice is flexible enough to include more variables without being strait jacketed or losing relevance.

International relations is largely characterized by a Hobbesian view of states due to International anarchy. Beyond a point, states can justifiably prioritize the use of force in absence of a global leviathan. Without a global leviathan taking care of security, there is limited scope for what Hobbes stated was the primary reason individuals in domestic society and states in international realm come together- "Commodious living" (Locke and Laslett 1988) a phrase coined by John Locke. With a global leviathan, states can use the cooperation or peace dividend to focus on goals of development and prosperity. But Geography and Nationalism prevent such integration among nations. Therefore, it would not be amiss to consider International realm as a paradigm governed by superior force. In realist terms, International politics and security employ a consequentialist notion of justice. That is relative gains and losses between states. Any interaction between states focusses on outcomes rather than the deontological notion which focusses on the act or the goodwill. The Kantian notion of deontology has been propounded by certain scholars like (Morarvshik 1997) and (Hurrell 1990) but it has so far been proven ahistorical and difficult to achieve. The frequency of war and biased global institutions of governance have furthered the reasoning behind a more consequentialist realist notion of international relations. Strategic thought cannot overlook this point.

Rationality, Perception and Empirical Evidence

Strategic thought cannot overlook debates about perceptions because perceptions change the nature of questions in foreign and security policy and directly influence the perceptions of various actors. Perceptions are an important variable albeit not a decisive variable. How do perceptions and rationality affect each other? Cognitive science has a large body of research on the theory of dual processing of human nature i.e. how human beings process phenomenon. This table provides the various functions of the two systems prevalent in human psychology (Kahnemann 1976).

System 1	System 2
Unconscious reasoning	Conscious reasoning
Implicit	Explicit
Automatic	Controlled
Low Effort	High Effort

Large capacity	Small capacity
Rapid	Slow
Default Process	Inhibitory
Associative	Rule based
Contextualized	Abstract
Domain Specific	Domain General
Evolutionarily Old	Evolutionarily recent
Nonverbal	Linked to language
Includes recognition, perception, orientation	Includes rule following, comparisons, weighing of options
Modular Cognition	Fluid Intelligence

Independent of working memory	Limited by working memory capacity
Pragmatic	Logical

The leadership often has to account for interconnections between system 1 and system 2 when it comes to policymaking but it is important to not let system 1 completely overshadow system 2 in the interest of prudent rational policymaking.

The Rationalist school of thought believes in innate knowledge (Milican 2009). They contend that any phenomenon can be achieved by a deductive hypothesis which can then be falsified under certain conditions. Empiricists like Berkeley, Newton, Popper and Hum on the other hand believe that evidence is paramount and all phenomena have to be tested by observation and experience. Neither side completely precludes the other. They are not mutually exclusive. Both however argue that to test phenomenon, you have to have a hypothesis to an event you want to explain, further you need to look for evidence that confirms the hypothesis (rather than the other way round where you try to look for random or inductive hypotheses in a large dataset) and then you try to provide conditions under which your explanation can be falsified. This debate is extremely important in issues of military intelligence. For e.g. it can be argued that the Kargil intelligence failure occurred due to a certain cognitive bias of the leadership to intuitively not rationally seek consistency over

dissonance. Analysis assumed that for Pakistan, an act of intrusion was operationally irrational and finally that India's nuclear arsenal would act as a deterrent against Pakistan's irrational move of intrusion. It is easy to point the problems this intuitive thinking in hindsight but the larger point I'm trying to argue is that a more rigorous rational, cognitive and a social sciences approach by the same actors may have led to a more successful outcome for the leadership. Therefore, how to go about anticipating, planning or executing an event is strongly influenced by rational and other cognitive modes of thinking. The rationalist v empiricist debate is an extremely important tool of policymaking for the leadership.

Combined with cognitive science and philosophy, rational choice theory provides us with an exhaustive body of work on rationality and strategy. The application of scientific method rather than only abstract or experimental constructs is deemed better in strategic analysis today. (Spohn 2002) It is my case that Strategy is the art of the possible and it deals with how ends and means can be brought together. In modern day parlance, rationality is often confused with various meanings and various formulations but one criterion has remained unchanged. To reason is to continuously reflect. This continuous process of reflection leads one to calibrate objectives and resources at hand. A political leadership has the prerogative to rationally articulate a political objective in every situation so as to come to an optimal strategy for the same. There can be no strategy without policy leadership and no political objective can be achieved without articulating or debating a strategy for it.

Strategic Culture

There are two types of Strategic decision making: Strategic Policy and Strategic behavior. 'Policy' concerns with long term scenarios like strategic doctrines for e.g. national Security Strategy and 'Behavior' deals short term strategic decisions for e.g. day-to-day policy, issue specific and case-specific response. The term strategic culture is different and how you define it extremely critical to the consequences it will have on the two concepts above. There are different definitions of the term and the mere definitions have had a polarizing effect on the exponents.

The existing strategic cultural models like the one given by Colin Gray which this study elaborates further in the chapter, are either extremely broad wherein they suggest that all aspects of a state's strategic behavior will always be consistent with the state's strategic culture. The standard criticisms of these models are that they cannot account for behavioral anomalies that they assume too much continuity in strategic policy. The models like the one given by Alistair Ian Johnston assume that strategic culture is a dependent variable like all other variables in the strategic context and can change continuously owing to the environment. These however become merely descriptive and fail to separate the effects of strategic culture and any conclusions that these models draw are inherently transitory in nature and thus the strategist is never sure of the predictive value or the final applicability of his analysis. The main research problem therefore, quite obviously is how to agree on the initial template to theorise about strategic culture. It is also important to note that when strategic culture is defined too broadly to explain everything about a state's strategic policy

and behavior it may end up explaining very little and will be of very little significance. For e.g. when we say that US strategic culture was largely isolationist in the pre-war era, we need to bear in mind that America did regularly engage in the so-called banana wars in the Latin American states and an extremely bloody civil war on the American continent. (Bloomfield 2012)

The Johnston-Gray debate is the most prominent and the most polarized debate in the Strategic Culture literature.

(Alistair Ian Johnston 1995) in his now famous essay "Thinking about Strategic Culture" argued that Colin Gray's definition and other first generation models were 'under-determined' which he explained as containing not enough information for successful prediction of strategy. He observed that these models regard Strategic culture as an all pervasive independent variable which contains patterns of strategy and causes outcomes. He disagreed with this analysis and insisted that Strategic culture itself is a dependent variable and was itself an outcome.

Alternatively, (Johnston 1995) offered a positivist conceptualization of strategic culture by treating it like an ideational explanatory variable that caused strategic behavior rather than subsuming strategic behavior in its own definition which he argues analysts like Colin Gray do. In his model, he wanted to measure the causal effect of a state's strategic culture in relation to the contributions made by other variables like geography or relative power or leadership to strategic outcomes. He further articulated that if we define strategic culture this way, it is possible to explain anomalies in

the normal pattern of strategy of a state because any deviation would be caused because strategic culture itself a dependent variable will be influenced by the force of other dependent variables.

(Johnston 1995) defines strategic culture is a limited, ranked set of grand-strategic preferences that is consistent across the objects of analysis (statements, texts, white papers, NSS documents, epics etc.) and persistent across time. If preference rankings are not consistent across objects of analysis then a single strategic culture cannot be said to exist at that point in time

The criticisms of Johnston's model proceed in tow. While he criticizes the first generation models as difficult to operationalize, same could be said of his own model. Scholars like Bloomfield argue that while we can quantitatively measure material variables- we can define the range and accuracy of weapons, geography, etc. we cannot measure ideational variables like strategic culture if we regard them as dependent variables like Johnston does because ideas cannot be assigned weight like material variables can be. This led Colin Gray to argue that Johnston's analysis was an intellectual wasteland. (Gray 1999). He theorized that Strategic Culture should be regarded as an independent variable that defines the broad context of strategy rather than just another dependent strategic variable. His definition of Strategic Culture was as follows:-

Bloomfield (2012) states that comprising the persisting (but not eternal) socially transmitted ideas, attitudes, traditions and habits of mind and preferred methods of operation [so behavioral patterns] that are more or less specific to a particular geographically based security community that has had

a necessarily unique historical experience. (Bloomfield 2012) He concluded that culture should be conceptualized as ‘something out there or that which surrounds’ an actor, meaning that it is part of the strategic environment of a state or entity or actor and it always pushes the latter in preference of some directions more than the others. For Gray Strategic culture both shapes the context and the strategy of any actor. He then articulated the seven dimensions of strategy in his book “modern Strategy”- these were seven independent variables – Geography, Technology, Economy, Logistics, Politics, Ethics and Strategic Doctrines.

Johnston’s critique of Colin Gray’s model (Gray 1999) is that it is tautological and results in self-fulfilling prophecies and therefore it is impossible to theorize it, falsify it and thus analyze it. (Gray1999) openly admitted this in his update of the book and went as far to suggest that “a critic would be correct in observing that if a strategic culture is everywhere it is, in a practical researchable sense nowhere and then he defended his position by stating that the unity of cultural influence and policy action denies the existence of the boundaries needed for the study of cause and effect because all strategy is executed by humans who themselves are cultural agents. He said that his approach was to regard Strategic culture has an interpretive variable which describes the interplay for various variables. Gray leaves no room for any external variables which can influence a nation’s strategy he regards that Strategic culture is pervasive and continuous. Johnston can explain the anomaly because he regards strategic culture as only a strategic variable rather but his model also suffers from similar operational problems.As a conclusive analysis to this influential

debate, it can be stated that from Gray we take the notion that Culture provides context: that it guides and shapes interpretation and from Johnston we take the goal of building falsifiable theory which can be tested.

For example It is safe to say that the discourse on India's Strategic Culture has moved on from the days of (Tanham 1992) now famous article which professed the lack of strategic thinking in India. Various Indian scholars both in India and abroad have spent the last decade trying to decode and analyze India's strategic Culture (Bajpai 2002) albeit with mixed results. Various statements³(Menon 2012) from the establishment and the strategic community have hinted at the patterns and at the very least the existence of a strategic culture in India.

According to me, however, the Nehruvian pillars of strategic autonomy and multilateralism still persist in India's strategic thinking with neoliberalism gaining ground with the growth and integration of the economy. However, slow reforms process and stalemate on the reforms of international organizations like UNSC, WTO, IMF and World Bank have proved to be major roadblock to the neo-liberal line of thinking. The hyper-realists who argue for strict power politics and increasing hard military power, on the other hand, have been marginalized to crisis situations. Therefore, in Toto, the Nehruvian caution and strategic autonomy have come to be the central

features of Indian strategy even though neo-liberalism is visible in day-to-day policy. It has to be noted that the common thread across these lines of thought and consequently one tenet of India's strategic culture is the consensus on International system being anarchic in nature.

In a lot of ways, having a grand strategy help us in making the assessment about whether a nation has any strategic culture. As a corollary, not having a grand strategy leads to further existential questions about strategic culture. Even Johnston postulated that strategic culture is a ranked set of grand strategic preferences and patterns existing over the history and future of a nation. For e.g. British insistence (Bell 2015) on naval dominance, Australian debate (Dibb 1992) between continental or forward defense point to certain strategic cultures and their proponents. Although both the concepts of Grand Strategy and Strategic Culture are not interchangeable, they do have connection to each other. You cannot have a Grand Strategy without a Strategic Culture and having a Grand Strategy enlightens the debate, the history, the continuity or the aversion to particular strategic cultures in a strategic community. Containment as a grand Strategy informed American strategic culture at so many levels. Having made this point, there is a need for a much more rigorous analysis of the link between the two.

Conclusion

According to Johnston, if “strategic culture” is said to be the product of nearly all relevant explanatory variables, then there is little conceptual space for a non-strategic culture explanation of strategic choice (Johnston 1995). This makes valid tests of a strategic culture-based model of choice extremely difficult. He says that strategic culture can often be used as just an instrument: for conscious manipulation to justify the competence of decision-makers deflects criticism, suppress dissent and limit access to the decision process and he fears that strategic culture is often very different from operational strategy. However, the same criticisms can also be regarded as hyperbolic in democratic accountable societies but they are potent criticisms to say the least.

But to move on from the Johnston-Gray framework, (Bloomberg 2012) calls for the existence of strategic sub-cultures. He states that any state can have overlapping or contradictory sub-cultures. Prima facie it's a middle path but this approach has some standing. This line of thinking derives from the sociological idea put forward by Ann Swidler in 1986 that we should treat culture like a toolbox which contains various strategies of action and lines of thinking. It is a repertoire that we can tap into. Therefore, Bloomberg deriving from this suggests that there do exist, strategic sub-cultures in nation states. Accepting that there are two or more subcultures within a strategic culture can help explain breaks in strategy and if we can understand the strategic debates in a country we can ascertain which strategic sub-culture is dominant and predict when is a change likely to come. However, this model also suffers from Gray's model. It leads to tautologies and the model is not falsifiable. Johnston's criticism of Gray hold true in Bloomberg's model as well.

A strategist therefore wonders whether Strategic cultural analysis is a viable and practical approach. In my opinion, it is. That is because beyond the important criteria of building a falsifiable and consistent theory, strategic culture has immense discursive utilities in outlining and enlightening the debate on strategy. It provides a framework albeit with caveats which provides a useful starting point to fairly dependable predictive model on strategy. It broadens the tools, concepts and debates and prevents narrow calculations of operational strategy which might suffer from the ebbs and flows of day-to-day policies. It goes beyond treating the State as a black box and provokes us to study it from inside. **Strategic culture is important because it operates at the level of Strategic thinking which is crucial to long term thinking of a nation and the international system.**

Chapter 4: Analysis and Conclusion

The Project started with the following research questions

Research Questions

- Why rationality is narrowly defined in mainstream IR theories and what are the gaps in formulations?
- Why do 'Interests' themselves change/modify during a rational interaction?
- Why is rationality central to strategic decision making?
- What are the gaps in current formulations of rationality in Strategic theory and decision making discourses?
- Why have the new approaches hitherto remained marginalized in the existing literature?
- Does an inter-disciplinary common ground exist between different formulations and how can it be applied to strategic decision making situations?
- What does it mean to be rational in a strategic situation?
- How does a strategic decision come about and eventually plays out in strategic situation?
- Do present criticisms have an idealized and an exaggerated exacting standard for the concept of rationality due to its narrow definition or are they valid?

Rationality as narrowly defined in mainstream IR theories and gaps in formulation

Rationality is narrowly defined in the field of IR. As has been argued, an individual might include variables like common interest as part of his own self interest. Cognitive Psychology argues that an individual decision maker is incapable of processing all the variables necessary to arrive at a truly optimal rational solution. Therefore, it is simplistic to say that self interest or national interest of a singular kind governs strategic decision making. What is important however is that the exercise of reason is central to any formulation of any strategy and not context, norms or culture. Epistemological cynics for e.g. Post modernists and Critical theorists reject the notion of Knowledge itself in turn arguing that knowledge itself is created to serve the power of specific interests. This is non-falsifiable criticism and hence invalid. Also if this argument was to be accepted, all forms of knowledge and enquiry become incredible. There is an important distinction between skepticism and cynicism. Objective truth, rational axioms and empirical evidence thus become the primary epistemological tools to formulate rationality in a given situation. Assumptions which have limited empirical evidence are thus to be discarded in favor of more comprehensive theoretical formulations. It is not enough to say that balance of power, motives or preferences alone form an explanatory theory in international politics. The most rational

primary variable with empirical support is Westphalian order. All other theoretical formulations are disputable. Therefore, theory alone is ill-suited to inform decision making. It has to be supplemented by praxis and strategy.

'Interests' change/modify during a rational interaction.

Interests don't change with evidence/context but only when a situation/plot of a strategic interaction changes. Interests also change in relation to the interlocutors and fellow players in a strategic interaction. Here Strategy as a narrative/script comes to a fore. Lawrence freedman compares a strategist to a script writer except a strategist can never know whether his strategic script for a situation will conclude as a tragedy or comedy. A scriptwriter can control the plot but a strategist merely aspires to. It is to be noted that while a strategist is always working under conditions of uncertainty, he is always looking to exert rational weberian control over his situation. Uncertainty in that regard is not a goal or an asset but it can be used as both in reaching a rational goal. Deception, indirect approach and asymmetry are tactical measures which cannot substitute a larger rationally conceived strategy with certain goals, means and ways. The political objective and thinking

of the leadership are of critical importance. An efficient and effective strategy is not the one which satisfies all players. It is the one which satisfies merely those who themselves are thinking rationally and empirically and are willing to achieve the nash equilibrium. Players who are deliberately sabotaging a nash equilibrium should be competed with or weeded out of the interaction by other players. They are not looking for a nash equilibrium and hence a rationally optimal solution. Instead they are looking for a zero-sum confrontation. A strategist can have short term points or goals in his script. But strategy in itself never stops. The five stages can be similar to any plot structure Exposition, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action, and Denouement. Strategy hence is a habit to continuously work and improve on towards more just and consensual outcome between players who want a solution. No strategy can sustain between players who are looking only for zero-sum confrontation as outcome. A strategy of disengagement is the only option to avoid conflict in that case.

Interests change when a different rational conception of the sequential inter-related events is presented pointing towards an alternate nash equilibrium solution.

Rationality is central to Strategic decision making.

Rationality is a way through which Human beings exercise agency over their circumstances. To be irrational is to accept uncertainty which makes action very difficult to sustain. Also inconsistency and deconstruction can only take us so far. The most important aspect of politics is choice, creativity and sustainability. Reason and Consistency allows decision makers to gauge evolutionary progress in human beings. Through the study of cause and effect, Decision makers arrive at durable solutions to human problems. It also helps in judging the overall progress of a national project. The centrality of rationality comes from the philosophical debates between free will and determinism elaborated in chapter 3 of this dissertation and secondly through Noam Chomsky's Linguistics theory (1986). The basis to Chomsky's linguistic theory is that the principles underlying the structure of language are biologically determined in the human mind and hence genetically transmitted. He therefore argues that all humans share the same underlying linguistic structure, irrespective of socio-cultural difference. Rationality manifested as universal language therefore is the central mode of thinking connecting human beings across diverse deterministic backgrounds and socialization and hence important in strategic interaction.

Gaps in formulations of rationality in Strategic theory and decision making discourses.

Strategic theory has gaps in current formulations such as the problem of aggregation, the problem of history and how to incorporate cognitive psychology, behavioral economics and evolutionary biology into strategic decision making. There are gaps relating to philosophical, sociological and natural deterministic aspects of strategic decision making.

Marginalization of new approaches in the existing literature

The new approaches have remained marginalized for the following reasons:

The approaches have only matured with recent advances in the literature. The mushrooming of scholars in cognitive and behavioral economics after the 2008 financial crisis and the return of interest in heuristics has contributed to bringing the new approaches to the forefront. Research in philosophy, sociology and psychology and increase in interdisciplinary methodologies across all the social sciences has contributed to the revival of inter-disciplinary approaches.

There has been a disadvantage in approaching strategy from particular silos because strategy is a dynamic enterprise where the interaction never stops. It is a perpetual process with short term goals and setbacks. Strategy cannot be reduced to achieving goals. It proceeds to post-goal accomplishment phase and keeps undergoing multiple iterations. Therefore, while it is important to keep short term goals and formulate strategic affects to measure effectiveness and efficiency of a particular strategy it is important to continuously introduce variables from different disciplines to remain strategically proactive and remain ahead of the curve. For e.g. Winning war is important but winning the peace is equally important and peace time variables are characteristically different from conflictual or competitive time variables. Multiple disciplines inform as to what is rational according to their perspective in a given situation. The challenge is formulate a strategy which satisfies majority of the definitions given by different disciplines in a given strategic situation. Here interdisciplinary is not merely an approach it becomes a particular rational mode of thinking itself with its own common language and terminology. Therefore, a sociologist working in isolation is fundamentally different from a sociologist thinking in a multi-disciplinary perspective. In fact, a further shift from an inter-disciplinary to a multi-disciplinary mode of thinking could further help to mitigate the problem of marginalization of new approaches to the problem of rationality.

Inter-disciplinary common ground between different formulations and Application to strategic situations

A common ground does indeed exist between different formulations. All formulations insist on the Occam's razor principle in formulation of a concept with falsification according to a strict scientific method. This can be further called the "Newton's sword principle". The principle being most rational formulations will be cut through unless they adhere to a strict scientific empiricism which falsifies a rationally deduced hypothesis. The problem of induction can be overcome by strict adherence to the scientific method. In case of certain human problems, where there are information asymmetry, deception and irrationality, rationality consists of an optimal solution characterized by nash equilibrium rather than a perfect solution. In absence of such a solution or fundamental disagreement, conflict, balance of power offers the only plausible solution which is fair to the conflicting parties. In such a case, the avoidance of war and conflict due to disproportionate losses resulting from a conflicting path dependency becomes the rational thing to do.

The strongest common ground between approaches is a conventional preference for consensus building based not on satisfying all the actors involved but only towards a shared

commitment to the scientific method in human and political problems. Epistemological cynicism about any objective truth results in an inevitability of conflict. Although conflict is not always destabilizing inherently but it does exacerbate irrational thinking. The insistence on polemics, deconstruction, narrative-counter narrative approach leads to polarization although engagement even in case of polarization has to remain constant for information symmetry. A shared preference for order and incremental progress is critical to rational progressive thinking. A continuous effort towards transparency and nash equilibrium informed by continuous reflection on philosophical debates defines rationality across the approaches. The creative destruction of certain concepts based on consensus and the principle of incremental progress is very important to advance our common understanding of rationality in strategy. A strategy devoid of reason may lead to success in the short term but may lead to suboptimal situations in the long term. There is a strong evidence of irrationality among human beings but that continues to be a retrograde phenomenon which has to be mitigated in the long run. Common language philosophy is the branch of philosophy which can help in linguistic differences associated with the meaning of the same words among academics and decision-makers alike.

Evolution of a strategic decision in a strategic situation

A strategic decision comes about through dynamic strategic interaction with players avoiding dominated strategies, looking to exert control and commonly pursuing a nash equilibrium solution. Instrumental rationality defined as self interest alone is very difficult to impose on real time situations because of the clarity and rigor needed. Therefore, the decision maker chooses the next best thing and becomes an optimizer. Having said that, certain rational preferences conceived as national interest and that rational preferences or strategies can be articulated in a Grand Strategic document which then can be invoked in a strategic situation. Rationality therefore is a pre-requisite in efficient strategy because it incurs the least amount of risk. Inefficient or ineffective strategies however can invoke non-rational solutions in which case conflict and risk imposes rationality on decision makers or conflict itself becomes the rational solution to avoid protracted and repeated losses.

An idealized and an exaggerated exacting standard for the concept of rationality

Rationality is indeed an intricate concept because it is not instinctive and emotive yet it is indispensable in maintaining order and human control of strategic affairs. Therefore, there

is a lack of rigorous empiricism, information processing behavior and psychology of humans. The criticisms of rationality are exaggerated from the perspective of the constructivists and epistemological cynics. But there are many gaps in the current formulations of rationality. Through this chapter I have tried to highlight those gaps and incremental advancements in the debates about rationality in strategic affairs. Rationality can take the form of instrumental rationality in simple strategic situations but there are many situations which contain many more complex situations where instrumental rationality of self-interested utility maximization is not enough. In those cases, more updated formulations of rationality need to be applied as highlighted in this dissertation.

HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses have been verified

- Mainstream IR theories limit the definition of rationality defined to ‘interests’ which is insufficient because rationality is only helpful to exert control over a situation through exercise of reason.

That exertion of control may or may not be/lead to pre-conceived outcomes due to self interest as demonstrated by the fact that Rationality has a much broader definition. A strategy can be formulated without the principle of self interest and it can include larger interest while still remaining rational. One example of doing this is through the strategic scripts approach.

- Political objectives of the leadership and consequent strategy drive ‘national interest’ rather than vice-versa.

The leadership drives decision making through incorporating procedural and bounded rationality and discarding purely instrumental rationality in formulating interests. Debates outlined about new approaches and debates around cognition and strategic culture highlight this point in this study.

- A more rigorous analysis of what constitutes ‘Rational’ through various disciplines is required to understand what constitutes ‘Self-Interest’.

The present definition lacks rigorous empiricism and a more comprehensive representation of perspectives is required. These perspectives include sociological, strategic theory, philosophical, economic, behavioral, cognition and scientific perspectives. A common ground can be found in formulating what is “Rational” in determining self interest rather than mere instrumentality.

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