

# CHAPTER

# 4

## ความสมเหตุสมผลเหตุผลเชิงวิพากษ์ ทางรอดของสังคมไทยยุคหลังสมัยใหม่

Critical Rationality: the Window of Opportunity of  
the Post-Modern Thai Society

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## บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้มีความพยายามที่จะวิเคราะห์ วิเคราะห์ วิฤติการณ์ของการแบ่งแยก และการรวมขอมระหว่าง 2 ขั้วอำนาจในการแย่งชิงพื้นที่ในอำนาจอธิปไตยของประเทศ และพยายามสร้างทางเลือกให้กับสังคมไทยยุคหลังสมัยสังคมไทยที่มีระบอบการปกครองแบบประชาธิปไตย โดยมีความต้องการที่จะตอบคำถามว่า ในความขัดแย้งและแบ่งแยกนั้น อะไรคือทางรอดของสังคมจากการค้นคว้า คติวิเคราะห์ วิพากษ์ วิเคราะห์ และการบริหารความรู้ ผู้ศึกษาพบว่า ท่ามกลางความสับสนวุ่นวายของสังคม สิ่งหนึ่งที่ยังคงดำรงตนอยู่อย่างเป็นเอกเทศและมั่นคง ก็คือ ความสมเหตุสมผล ถึงแม้ว่าสังคมนั้นอาจถูกรบกวาน หรือถูกทำให้เปราะบาง เพราะไม่อาจจะปกป้องตนเองให้ปราศจากภาวะวิสัยได้ แต่การสร้างความชอบธรรมให้กับสังคมนั้น ด้วยการบริหารความรู้ และวาทกรรม อาจเป็นอีกทางเลือกหนึ่งของสังคมไทยที่จะประนีประนอมยอมความกับสังคมนั้นเชิงประจักษ์ในสังคมประชาธิปไตยฉบับวัฒนธรรมไทยได้อย่างดี

**คำสำคัญ:** สังคมนิยมวิพากษ์/ ยุคหลังสมัย

## Abstract

This article is an attempt to analyse and criticise a crisis of social division and compromise between the two power camps which have been trying to seize control of the country's sovereignty and provide alternatives for the post-modern Thai society, which is governed by constitutional monarchy in which the King serves as head of state. This study would like to find out what window of opportunity Thai society has within the conflicts and division through a process of researching, analysing, criticising,

and managing knowledge. This study found that among the chaos, the only distinctive and secure entity existed is truth. Truth may be unavoidably disturbed and stained, but righteousness can be created to contribute to truth by means of knowledge management and discourse which will give an alternative to Thai society to compromise with empirical truth in the Thai-style democracy.

**Keywords:** Critical Rationalism/ Post-Modern Society

## Color War

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100,000 antigovernment and 50,000 pro-government protesters took to the streets in sign of continuing political tensions gathered around the city in scenes during the last couple years ago. The fighting over the "colour" was a symbol that represented the fervent animosity between Red Shirt supporters of former Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra and their Yellow Shirt rivals. The colors were so widely used in the creation of the political unity in the wider campaign of diverse public debate.

However, the Thai capital remained generally calm nowadays as National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) has taken over Thailand since following the 2014 Thai coup d'état. (USA today, 2014) On 20 May 2014, the military declared martial law nationwide in an attempt to stop the country's escalating political crisis. (Bangkokpost, 2014)

## Statement of the problems

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The political crisis which appeared in the public debate in Thailand after the Thai military crackdown in April- May 2010 had created a phenomenon of the Yellow Shirts, the Red Shirts, or even the Blue Shirts and the Multi-coloured Shirts. The issue was left unresolved and created division in the society. While an attempt for reconciliation between all the colours had been made, the fight between the anarchist democracy or bureaucratic polity camp and the liberal democracy camp or the camp of the working class or the grassroots still carries on to protect the ideal or to reserve the benefits of the group.

The two divided camps have fought for the country's sovereignty. The original three branches of the sovereignty namely, the executive, the legislative, and the judiciary are seen to be impotent. The country's sovereignty is said to have only two eggs in the basket instead of three. The executive and the legislative are viewed as being governed by the politicians while the judiciary has been made powerless and has affected the security of a certain group of people who, therefore, have tried to nurture the judiciary egg to grow as big as the executive and legislative egg to balance the power in the Thai government with constitutional monarchy in which the King serves as head of state. (Kasian Tejapira, 2011)

An attempt to maintain the power territory, the ambiguity, and confusion of truth which threatened the society have driven people to manage and develop knowledge through the political

interaction within limitation of knowledge in order to liberate themselves from the confinement of information or from the information they are forced to consume from a certain group of people. Some of those manage to liberate themselves, yet some feel they are tied up and cannot escape.

I believe that, within the ambiguity, rational truth\* is a way out for Thai society. Although rational truth is said to be hard to find, truth is above everything else. No matter how struggling Thai-style democracy is, the Shirt Colours phenomenon has shown that among the disagreement, human beings have attempted to compromise with rationality to elevate their own bounded rationality closer to the absolute rationality through the process of criticism and discourse or even through the process of disagreement of the public in the post-modern democratic Thai society.\*\*

### Rationality: Wolf in sheep's clothing

Rationality or Rationalism is a philosophical movement in the 17th Century. It was regarded as modern philosophy during the Age of Reason or the Age of Rationalism. It shaped the belief

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\* Rational truth applied to the article is the state of the reason that comes from the quality of communicative critique in order to liberate society from the social circumstance of enslaving and conflict.

\*\* The post-modern democratic Thai society is insinuate notion and mood of radical pluralism over the people in Thai society, that there are many ways of knowing, and many truths to a fact. This notion gained significant popularity over the twentieth-century post-structural thought.

of the Western Renaissance Philosophy. Rationalism has been used to define rational principle in metaphysics, logic, ethics, physical, and politics sciences. Rationalism was later divided into two schools of thoughts; those who believe in empiricism which views all knowledge as sense experience or physical sciences and those who believe in rationality in mathematics as the model of knowledge. (Hobbes, 1682)

Rationality has been used in a decision-making process. When the goal involves making a decision, a policy analyst's rational behavior should be optimal. The process of rationality must be explicit when evaluating and scrutinising the problem. The rationality factors depend on how much information is available, whether the knowledge is complete or incomplete, as well as, how the problem is framed and formulated. (Habermas, J., 1984)

In public policy administration, Max Weber proposed that rationality could be processed into four types. The first, which he called Instrumental Rationality, concerns the expectations of the behavior in the environment. These expectations aim at the result of the decision which has been rationally calculated. The second is Belief Rationality, which is related to merits, thoughts, religious beliefs, and culture. Weber's third rationality, Affectual Rationality, is related to values which Weber considered as meaningfully oriented rationality. In the fourth type of traditional rationality, Weber stated that combinations of these orientations tend to be found. (Weber, 2002)

Weber's primary concern in using rationality is to eliminate human's selfishness and a decision making process which involves value laden assessment. Therefore rationality is crucial in policy making and has been adopted by public administrators and politicians to determine a transparent and fair policy.

In management and policy making, rationality has been used in Reinventing Governance of New Public Management. The rationality of the government administration in the free market is considered an important factor of the public administration reform in a modern society. NPM has been used in the public service reform by employing a business structure and market oriented strategy to create efficiency and effectiveness of the public administration, transparency, competition, and to eliminate monopoly.

Patrick Dunleavy (2006) pointed out that NPM aims at minimisation of public sector's departments making government agencies easily accessible by the public. At the same time, competition is encouraged. Members of the public are treated as a customer while the public sector has a duty to provide the common goods. The government has to provide efficient quality where its marginal government cost equals public demand. The United Kingdom, for example, adopted NPM in its public management and administrative policy making. A good example of the country's efficient quality common goods is the British railways which allow a competition between the private and public sectors resulting in British railways being one of the most efficient railways services in the world.

However, a disadvantage of rationality is that the completeness of the model depends on the suitability and accountability of information which is the source for decision making. Rationality is, therefore, limited under technical validity in seeking for information, the environment, and the surrounded factors.

Herbert Simon (1983) pointed out that when optimal solution cannot be determined, a policy maker needs to make a decision based on choices available to seek a satisfactory solution for the group within cognitive limitations and structures of the environment, which is called bounded rationality. In this process, rationality is processed through decision-making to support what has been done, in which Simon called logically defendable.

Therefore, rationality is still exploited by the politicians and public administrators by adding credibility to what has been thought or decided. Rationality has been transformed into bounded rationality creating ambiguity and decreasing the righteousness of decision making process before being used in policy making by the politicians and public administrators. As a result, rationality can no longer serve the liberal society. It is exploited as a slave of the bureaucratic polity in its attempt to collaborate with the liberal democracy.



## Critical Rationality: A slave of the liberal democratic society

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When rationality has been reprocessed, it fails to form righteousness of the empirical data and to validate poor decision making of the government. As the bounded rationality is stained, justification is needed to cover up the dishonor. Bounded rationality is raised closer to the absolute rationality. It is, therefore, necessary to employ critical rationality to allow the society to criticise the existing bounded rationality.

In Karl Popper's *The Open Society and its Enemies Volume 2* (2002), Critical Rationality or Critical Rationalism was explicitly discussed. Popper stated that, in critical rationality, scientific theories or any other claims to philosophy or knowledge should be rationally criticized. Any claim to knowledge should be evaluated whether it is falsifiable and thus empirical or it is not falsifiable and thus non-empirical. When the claim is falsified and retained, how probable the claim is depends on how much subsection to criticism it has received and how severe the criticism has been. This process of critical rationality allows knowledge to be empirical truth. (Popper, 2002)

As a result, critical rationalism, which has been used in discourse of postmodernity, suggests that knowledge is scientific and objective. Knowledge cannot be reduced to an individual's value or attitude. Knowledge is truly liberate as it has been rationally criticized and it is brought closer to truth as the improved version of the truth or verisimilitude while the rest of

the information content is open to future falsification. (Popper, 2002)

It can be said that critical rationality is a form of bounded rationality which has been rationally criticized and become closer to truth. I believe that no knowledge acquires absolute rationality. Even a renowned scientific knowledge that atom was the smallest particle has later been proved wrong when it was discovered that a quark is smaller than protons and neutrons. It may be accepted that the earlier knowledge was technically valid and can be called bounded rationality as when the knowledge was acquired, it was limited by the technology in the falsification process.

When using critical rationality in public administration of the Blacksburg Perspective and NPA, civil servants are put in the centre of the public services to create active citizenship. It is a crucial mechanism in the public administration allowing it to be criticised by members of the public. The public policy can be scrutinized and falsified by the society to create rationality of the government administration.

### Critical rationality crisis

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“Democracy does not mean the rule of the majority only. If we elected 500 criminals and 5 monks and asked them to vote whether we should go and commit a robbery. The 500 criminals would always win the votes to commit a robbery. This does not mean the majority holds the integrity.” (Mom Rajawongse Seni Pramoj cited in Kasian Tejapira, 2011)

The public administration scholars and idealist policy makers see critical rationality as lacking idealism. The idealists believe in Hegel's philosophy where truth should be based on history and concrete knowledge under a relationship between mind and nature creating a unity of knowledge, history, religion, art, philosophy. Rights and duties of criticism and administration are believed to be reserved for those who are educated and understand the problems to prevent the state's insecurity. (Hegel cited in Houlgate, Stephen, 2005)

Hegel pointed out that the claim over the territory, for example, reflected a problem of those who lack any control over the territory, knowledge, and autonomy. The claim over the territory of the minority was viewed by Hegel as barbaric. Therefore, administrative power should be based on truth of the state history and on concrete knowledge to prevent an individual's aggravation.

The idealists believe that critical rationality is not a solution to the post-modern society. According to the idealists, firstly, Thasnai Sethasenee (2011) pointed out that an attempt to use a criticism process in critical rationality is a modern way of thinking. It is a narrative which means there are a starting point and a conclusion to the problem. Homi Bhabha stated that an expression is a strategy of critical rationality. However, its complexity, confusion, and ambiguity result in the failure to find truth. Secondly, critical rationality is considered bounded rationality. Although there is an attempt to overcome the

circumstances to be closer to rationality, it is evident that a classic or behaviorist approach failed to falsify the claim. Thirdly, when critical rationality is given to those who do not understand the problem to make a decision, it will create disagreement, severance, and division (Agassi, 2004). Fourthly, critical rationality can be subject to different viewpoints of people from different groups. A critical process of a very sensitive issue can easily bring disagreement. In Thai society the conflict of the Shirt Colours or a border dispute between Thailand and Cambodia, for example, both originated from the ignorance of the people who held administrative power. Hegel believed that rationality should rely on historical factor and concrete knowledge under a principle of empirical data which can be scientifically proved otherwise those who can gain benefit from the situation will use criticism and discourse for their own objectives or benefits (Hegel cited in Houlgate, Stephen, 2005). Lastly, critical rationality cannot be proved that it contributes to a more rational policy. Although critical rationality has been used in knowledge management and there is an attempt to elevate critical rationality to become absolute rationality, it has created doubts in those who have administrative power and a challenge to the authority has been made.

## Critical rationality: a window of opportunity of the post-modern Thai society

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I, however, believe that critical rationality can be utilised in policy making and public policy in postmodernity of the democratic society even though the society may seem critical or faithless. Firstly, if absolute rationality is seen to be an end or a goal of the policy makers or public administrators, critical rationality, then, can be seen as the means for the policy makers or public administrators to compromise with absolute rationality through criticism and discourse of the public (Popper, 2002).

Secondly, if we believe that induction approach is not adequate for policy making and an hypothesis has not been proved, the limitation of information and irrationality cannot be avoided. Therefore, the reconciliation will be irrational. To make the reconciliation rational, the people have to go through a rational process. (Gigerzner, 1999)

Thirdly, when absolute rationality is restricted in reality, absolute rationality has to be redefined to be able to survive. Ecological rationality, then, is an alternative to absolute rationality according to the adaptive toolbox theory (Gingerzner, 2000).

Finally, when an individual can acquire practice of wisdom, it will balance out their selfishness. The critical process will be revised and scrutinized. Knowledge will be exchanged. An individual will be united with the society resulting in supper rationality which will reduce bounded rationality of the policy (Hofstadter, 2001)

## Lesson learned after the crisis of faith

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Rationality has been used in policy making in postmodernity. Rationality has reduced the value of humanity through a process of empirical data and ignoring the fact that human beings are capable of creating value through a process of criticism and knowledge exchange. Rationality praises objectivity. It creates a separation between human beings. It lacks soul connection. Therefore, critical rationality is a way to increase people's potential in practice of wisdom creating participation in policy making and makes them feel part of the state. Human beings can liberate themselves from boundaries. Blacksburg Perspective, Minnowbrook I, II, and OECD frameworks have shown the initiative of knowledge management on the society helping to liberate people from bounded rationality which is used in policy making. While absolute rationality give a limited scope to a particular group of people, critical rationality allow human beings to a process of trial and error and free human beings from the strain of bounded rationality and compromise with absolute rationality in postmodernity in the Thai- style democracy.

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