

## **Terrorism: The Artha Kranti perspective**

The sheer audacity and ease of execution of the recent terror attacks in Mumbai have shocked and frightened the world. It has drawn public attention firmly to the phenomenon of Terrorism once again. As seen from comments in the electronic and print media, Indian citizens across the socio-economic spectrum have generally agreed upon the following inferences:

1. The Indian political class has totally failed to address basic concerns of the citizens – even physical security, while it remains firmly focused on its self serving agenda of ‘power and wealth’.
2. Preliminary inquiry has exposed complete failure and lackadaisical attitude of the Administration and all governmental agencies entrusted with National security.
3. Security forces on the ground are mostly underpaid, overworked, ill-equipped and deployed largely for VIP security.
4. After the usual lip service, the situation will soon lapse into its ‘normal’ mode, till the next attack. We will continue to live in a state of insecurity – at the mercy of Gods and Saints.

Like everything else, every citizen has his or her own analysis of this phenomenon – usually based on a varying mixture of personal experience, belief, knowledge (as fed by the media) and a healthy dose of imagination to fill in the gaps. Unfortunately – it becomes like the proverbial elephant and five blind analysts grasping at its various body parts.

Usually, we tend to over simplify this phenomenon in order to be able to state it strongly, and the usual root causes that we ‘find’ are:

1. Religious fundamentalism – Islamic fundamentalist groups, the catholic IRA, the Sikh extremists (during the eighties), Hindu extremist groups
  2. Political aspirations – secessionist insurgencies in the North East, LTTE in Sri Lanka etc.
  3. Ideological movements – Maoist struggles worldwide
  4. Extreme social oppression and economic deprivation – many Asian / African countries
  5. Political manipulation – ‘It is all a hoax – politicians are behind everything.’
- And so the debate goes on...

Let us try and take a fresh and holistic view of this phenomenon in true ‘Artha Kranti’ fashion. The attempt therefore is to keep the analysis totally impartial, objective, politically and ideologically neutral and focused on problem solving rather than merely fixing blame.

### **The Analysis:**

Like every other observable social phenomenon, Terrorism also has its root causes – **the ‘Motives’ and enabling factors – the ‘Means’**. Their relationship with each other can be best explained as the one between ‘Seed’ and ‘Soil’. Both can exist independently, but to create a plant, they have to come together.

### **The Motives:**

Root causes for any problem cannot possibly exist in hundreds or even dozens – there are usually one or two – at the most three...

The two basic possible motives we see are (a) Poverty and (b) Social oppression. However, the origins of even these phenomena can be traced further back.

- (a) Poverty is defined as scarcity or deficiency, implying a lack of resources necessary for survival. However, this lack of resources could be due to simple non-availability of the resource (lack of fertile land in a desert, or lack of infrastructure in a rugged mountainous region) or lack of the means to buy the resource. The first is a natural problem and often beyond resolution. The second reason however points clearly to a failure of systems of economic governance - primarily entrusted with the equitable distribution of resources among the populace. It may therefore be inferred that failure of the State and its systems is the primary cause of poverty in modern times.
- (b) Social Oppression – In many instances this is closely linked with Poverty – either causing it or arising from it, or doing both in a vicious circle. Caste, religion, class, profession, sect, region, ideology, language – all these and many more reasons have evolved as prime divisive factors over the last few thousand years of human existence and it is not always possible or even relevant to track down the ‘original’ reasons for their birth. However, based on our understanding of human behavior, it would not be far off the mark to presume that even these purely ‘social’ causes had historical economic roots. Nevertheless, in the Indian context, social oppression deserves a distinct space, separated from economics.

### **The cause-effect-cause sequence arising from Motives is given below:**

- Poverty creates an experience of deprivation which is often dangerously aggravated by disparity. Ostentatious displays of wealth inevitably trigger envy in minds of the have-nots, and frustration is born.
- When the existing ‘legitimate’ means and systems fail to provide a way of breaking out of the curse of poverty, a sense of desperation – wanting to overcome these challenges ‘at any cost’- takes root.

- The other motive – Social oppression results in a deep rooted sense of humiliation, indignity and collective hurt. Leadership takes advantage of this feeling and first whips up, then channels these emotions into collective indignation.
- Beyond a point, the natural reaction to oppression is rebellion. Rebellion is sometimes overtly expressed, as in movements for political freedom. (e.g. freedom movements of erstwhile European colonies, or in recent times the movements for independent Gorkhaland, Nagaland, Bodoland etc) Sometimes it merely manifests itself as rebellious tendencies within the constitutional framework (e.g. the demand for an independent ‘Vidarbha’ or ‘Telangana’ state within the nation, recent agitations by the MNS in Mumbai).
- Whether arising from Poverty or from Social oppression, over a period of time the problem evolves into an all pervasive sense of helplessness, of having no hopes of ever getting justice from the existing system and a general loss of faith in ‘legitimate’ establishment. The affected population has concluded that peace is not going to get it anywhere, violence is acceptable and justified if it results in change. They are now ready for ‘impregnating’ with ‘higher’ thought.
- The initially dormant seeds start experiencing the first stirring of collective sentiment. These are perfect opportunities for Thinkers (ideologues) and Leaders to step in and take charge. There are these masses of angry people with real or perceived needs, all seeking direction, desperate for a solution.
- Depending upon numerous factors such as geographical location, economic profile, literacy to name a few, the intellectual space gets occupied with one dogma or the other. Sometimes, there is more than one ideology in the fray, leading to an even quicker polarization of thought and the drawing of battle lines.
- Ideologies or ‘isms’ propounded passionately by gifted speakers, brilliant writers and poets, charismatic leaders etc. are powerful forces. (e.g. Hitler in the late 20s, Indian freedom fighters in the 20s and 30s, and many more such cases) They are capable of uniting faceless and headless fragmented masses into a single conceptually united ‘body’ and endowing it with an identity, a leadership and a clearly (or not very clearly) defined ‘enemy’. The masses now have clarity – they ‘know’ the cause of their woes and they know what needs to be done to change their lot.
- Leaders of movements have to necessarily be masters of mass communication to succeed. Mass communication calls for a standard ‘Doctrine’ as the original, uncontested source of all knowledge, the ‘book of answers’ on which all dialogue is based. (e.g. religious Books of revelation, The Communist Manifesto, Mein Kampf, etc)

- As wave after wave of propaganda hits the eager masses, a small number of people are drawn close to the center of the movement. Some are genuinely devoted to the cause, to the extreme point of being willing to die for it. Some are opportunists, looking for the fame and power and political opportunities. Some may be creative people – actors, writers, poets, singers, playwrights – expressing powerfully through their chosen medium and convincing and enrolling more and more people all the time.
- Activists naturally inclined towards violence are automatically drawn to the centre of ‘action’ and are the volunteers. Volunteers get indoctrinated – almost brainwashed - to the extent that ‘nothing else matters, nothing else will suffice, nothing but the ‘goal’ must be achieved, whatever the cost’.
- **This is the how the foot soldier for all militant movements is born.**

Note: There are exceptions. Educated and affluent people do get directly attracted to extreme violence (e.g. Sept 11 WTC Bombers) but mercifully they are very few. Such people are more commonly found in roles of thinkers and ideologues.

**At this stage, the ‘seed’ is live, ready to germinate. However it needs enabling factors – soil, nutrients, water, sunlight, protection from higher forms of life, suitable temperature, air... These are the ‘Means’.**

### **The Means:**

The objective of every indoctrinated militant is clear – he is a noble warrior, fighting his enemy for his people or ideology, willing to make the highest sacrifice smilingly and become immortalized in legends as a Hero. The choice of methods and tools used – legitimate or otherwise, brutal or peaceful, discriminating or indiscriminate – is open to interpretation and strictly determined by practical needs. Terrorism is merely the extreme and desperate expression of a militant movement. Its purpose is simple - to attract attention.

So what are the elements (the means) that a militant depends on for accomplishing his objective? Keeping our context in focus, what does a militant ‘desire’ in India to enable him to carry out acts of terrorism?

1. An ambiguous foreign policy, therefore weak defense policy, which leads to inadequately funded and equipped Security forces
2. A porous border - geographically very difficult to seal and guard, but possible to penetrate.
3. A weak administration and lax, ideally corrupt internal security system.
4. Politically influenced systems of governance

5. A system which enables free and non-traceable movement of large sums of money, viability of printing and using fake currency
6. Sympathy amongst at least a small section of the local population.
7. Generally weak national character, poor sense of national pride among Indians
8. Deep and reliable sources of funding

Even a cursory look at this list reveals the state of affairs. One does not need a huge amount of research to realize that India qualifies on all counts and actually emerges with flying colors as the terrorist's 'target of choice'. India is a 'dream enemy', if there is such a thing.

Not only do we have all the enabling factors in abundance, we even have our own local seed factories, producing millions of potential seeds with every passing day.

As said earlier – the relationship between seed and soil is not symbiotic – it is more unilateral and unidirectional. The seed on its own cannot sprout without the enabling factors. The accompanying flowchart brings out clearly the interdependencies of various factors and the direction and sequence of each step. The impact of the Artha Kranti proposal, if implemented, is clear for all to see on this chart. The impact will be profound and permanent:

- It will attack the root cause of Poverty immediately.
- Over a period of time, as the other socio economic benefits of AK percolate and gradually address age-old grievances, lines of social fracture will start healing. The 'seed' factories will shrink and scale down drastically – if not disappear altogether.
- On the other hand – the Artha Kranti proposal will effectively and permanently eradicate almost all the internal means of terrorism – except for geographical constraints.
- The factor of local sympathy may not remain relevant for long once the root causes start being addressed ( social injustice, inequitable allocation of resources etc)
- Foreign funding is rendered impotent as soon as high denomination currency is abolished and all high value transactions are routed through banking and monitored. (e.g. the US response after Sept 11 WTC attacks)

**There can be no doubt whatsoever that the Artha Kranti proposal alone has the promise to efficiently address and neutralize the threat of Terrorism and Militancy – whether homegrown or foreign-origin – once and for all.**