



UPSC 360°

The Hindu Unwrapped - Daily Current Affairs Mastery for UPSC CSE (Clear that it's based on The Hindu editorials / news analyses - very aspirant-friendly)

Significance

PRAHAAR is a landmark initiative as it provides India with a unified, technology-driven national counter-terrorism framework, making it highly relevant for GS Paper 2, GS Paper 3, Essay, and Ethics papers in UPSC CSE.

India's First Comprehensive National Counter-Terrorism Policy & Strategy: PRAHAAR

Introduction

India has been one of the major victims of terrorism in South Asia due to its geopolitical location, internal diversity, and historical conflicts. The country has faced cross-border terrorism from Pakistan, Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) in central India, insurgency in the North-East, separatist movements, and emerging cyber-enabled radicalisation. Earlier, India's counter-terror response was largely reactive and fragmented, with different agencies working in silos. To overcome these structural gaps and prepare for 21st-century hybrid and technology-driven terrorism, India introduced its first comprehensive National Counter-Terrorism Policy and Strategy named "PRAHAAR."

PRAHAAR marks a paradigm shift from reactive counter-terrorism operations to a proactive, integrated, intelligence-driven, and technology-enabled national security framework.



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What is PRAHAAR?

PRAHAAR is a holistic national counter-terrorism strategy designed to integrate policy, intelligence, law enforcement, military response, technology, and society into a single coordinated framework. It adopts a Whole-of-Government Approach (Centre, States, security agencies, judiciary) and a Whole-of-Society Approach (citizens, private sector, civil society, academia, media) to prevent and combat terrorism.

It recognises terrorism as not only a security threat but also a social, ideological, technological, and financial challenge.

Objectives of PRAHAAR

The core objectives of the strategy are based on the global "5P Model" of counter-terrorism:

1. Prevention

- Early identification of terrorist threats using intelligence, surveillance, AI, and predictive analytics.
- Disrupting recruitment, funding, and propaganda networks.

2. Protection

- Safeguarding critical infrastructure such as airports, railways, power grids, digital networks, financial systems, and smart cities.
- Strengthening border security and maritime security.

3. Prosecution

- Strengthening legal frameworks to prosecute terrorists, sympathisers, and financiers.
- Fast-track investigation and trial mechanisms for terror-related cases.

4. Response

- Rapid response systems for terror attacks, hostage situations, and mass casualty incidents.
- Integrated crisis management involving armed forces, CAPFs, police, and disaster agencies.

5. De-radicalisation

- Countering extremist ideology through education, digital literacy, community engagement, and counter-narratives.
- Rehabilitation and reintegration of vulnerable individuals.

Key Pillars of PRAHAAR

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1. Intelligence and Technology Integration

PRAHAAR emphasises technology-driven intelligence gathering and data fusion.

Key features include:

- Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Big Data Analytics, Machine Learning, and Facial Recognition Systems.
- Cyber intelligence and monitoring of dark web, encrypted platforms, and social media.
- Integration of intelligence agencies such as:
 - Intelligence Bureau (IB)
 - Research and Analysis Wing (RAW)
 - National Investigation Agency (NIA)
 - National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO)
 - State Intelligence Units

Goal: Move from post-attack investigation to pre-attack prediction.

2. Legal and Institutional Strengthening

PRAHAAR proposes strengthening India's counter-terror legal framework:

- Strengthening laws such as:
 - Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA)
 - NIA Act
 - Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA)
- Establishment of special fast-track courts for terror cases.
- Strengthening witness protection, forensic capabilities, and digital evidence laws.

Focus: Swift justice to dismantle terror ecosystems.

3. Border and Internal Security Architecture

PRAHAAR recognises borders and internal fault lines as major terror entry points.

Key measures:

- Smart Border Management using drones, sensors, and smart fencing.
- Strengthening coastal security and maritime surveillance.

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- Coordination between:
 - Armed Forces
 - Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs)
 - State Police
- Focus on Left-Wing Extremism zones and insurgency-prone areas.

Aim: Prevent infiltration and internal insurgency expansion.

4. Counter-Radicalisation and Community Engagement

PRAHAAR recognises that terrorism is not only military but also ideological warfare.

Key strategies:

- Community policing and trust-building programmes.
- Education reforms and digital literacy to counter online propaganda.
- Counter-narratives against extremist ideology.
- Role of religious leaders, NGOs, youth groups, and media.

Goal: Prevent youth radicalisation and lone-wolf terrorism.

5. International Cooperation

Terrorism is transnational; hence PRAHAAR focuses on global cooperation:

- Intelligence sharing with friendly countries.
- Extradition treaties and Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties (MLATs).
- Active participation in:
 - FATF (Financial Action Task Force)
 - UN Counter-Terrorism Committees
 - Regional security forums (SCO, Quad, ASEAN)

Aim: Disrupt global terror financing and safe havens.

Significance of PRAHAAR

PRAHAAR is significant for India due to multiple reasons:

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- First Unified National CT Policy: India earlier lacked a comprehensive formal policy document.
- Integrated Security Governance: Brings military, intelligence, police, judiciary, and society on one platform.
- Tech-Driven Security: Addresses cyber-terrorism, AI-driven propaganda, and digital recruitment.
- Global Leadership: Strengthens India's credibility as a global counter-terrorism leader.
- Exam Relevance:
 - UPSC GS Paper 3 (Internal Security)
 - Essay topics on terrorism, technology, governance
 - IR and Security Studies

Challenges in Implementation

Despite its ambitious nature, PRAHAAR faces several challenges:

1. Federal Structure Constraints

- Law and order is a State subject, requiring strong Centre–State coordination.

2. Privacy and Civil Liberties

- Surveillance technologies raise concerns about data privacy, misuse, and civil rights.

3. Resource and Capacity Constraints

- High cost of technology, training, and infrastructure.
- Shortage of skilled cyber and intelligence professionals.

4. Cyber and Lone-Wolf Terrorism

- Decentralised, online radicalisation is difficult to detect and prevent.

5. Global Terror Financing Networks

- Complex cross-border financial channels and crypto-based funding.

Way Forward

To ensure effective implementation of PRAHAAR:

- Strengthen Centre–State intelligence coordination mechanisms.
- Establish robust data protection laws and accountability frameworks.

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- Invest in capacity building of police, judiciary, and intelligence agencies.
- Promote public awareness, digital literacy, and youth engagement programmes.
- Strengthen global counter-terror diplomacy and financial surveillance.

Conclusion

PRAHAAR represents a paradigm shift in India's counter-terrorism strategy—from reactive counter-terror operations to a comprehensive, proactive, intelligence-driven, and technology-enabled national security doctrine. If implemented effectively, PRAHAAR can significantly enhance India's internal security architecture, counter emerging hybrid threats, and position India as a global leader in counter-terrorism governance.

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UPSC/Satet PCS PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

Q1. PRAHAAR, recently in news, is related to:

- A. India's missile defence system
- B. India's national counter-terrorism policy
- C. India's cyber security framework
- D. India's border infrastructure project

Answer: B

Q2. Which of the following is NOT a core objective of India's counter-terrorism strategy?

- A. Prevention
- B. Protection
- C. Prosecution
- D. Privatisation

Answer: D

Q3. Which of the following laws is associated with counter-terrorism in India?

- 1. UAPA
- 2. NIA Act
- 3. PMLA
- 4. Right to Information Act

Select the correct answer using the code below:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 1, 2 and 3 only
- C. 2 and 4 only
- D. 1, 3 and 4 only

Answer: B

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Q4. Consider the following statements about counter-terrorism strategy:

1. Terrorism is considered only a military threat.
2. Community engagement is important in de-radicalisation.
3. International cooperation is necessary to curb terror financing.

Which of the statements are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: B

Q5. FATF is important in counter-terrorism because it deals with:

- A. Border security
- B. Terror financing and money laundering
- C. Military cooperation
- D. Cyber warfare

Answer: B

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UPSC/Satet PCS MAINS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

GS Paper 2 (Polity & Governance / IR)

- Q1.** Discuss the challenges of implementing a national counter-terrorism policy in a federal polity like India. Suggest measures to strengthen Centre-State coordination. (250 words)
- Q2.** Examine the role of international cooperation in countering terrorism and terror financing with reference to India's global engagements. (250 words)

GS Paper 3 (Internal Security)

- Q3.** "India's first comprehensive National Counter-Terrorism Policy marks a paradigm shift from reactive to proactive security governance." Discuss. (250 words)
- Q4.** Explain the key pillars of India's counter-terrorism strategy. How does technology strengthen counter-terror operations? (250 words)
- Q5.** Terrorism is no longer only a military challenge but also a social and technological one. Analyse with reference to India's counter-terrorism framework. (250 words)

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