

PRAHAAR Strategy: Inside India's National Counter-Terror Framework

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PRAHAAR Strategy Latest News

- The Ministry of Home Affairs has released **PRAHAAR**, India's first publicly articulated national counter-terror strategy document.
- The eight-page framework outlines India's overall approach to tackling terrorism, detailing past measures, existing mechanisms, and future plans.

What PRAHAAR Outlines

- PRAHAAR frames India's terrorism challenge as multi-dimensional, shaped by decades of cross-border violence, global jihadist networks like Al-Qaeda and ISIS, and the growing misuse of advanced technologies such as drones, encrypted platforms, dark web tools, crypto-financing, cyberattacks, and potential access to CBRNED materials.
- It avoids limiting the threat to any single region or group.

The Seven-Pillar Response Framework

- **Intelligence-Led Prevention** – Focus on proactive disruption of propaganda networks, sleeper cells, funding channels, and arms supply chains through real-time inter-agency coordination.
- **Swift and Proportionate Response** – Local police-led action backed by specialised counter-terror forces to ensure rapid and calibrated operational response.
- **Capacity Aggregation** – Modernisation of police forces, standardised training, and enhanced coordination across agencies to strengthen preparedness.
- **Rule of Law and Human Rights** – Firm commitment to legal safeguards, due process, and protection of civil liberties while combating terrorism.
- **De-radicalisation and Community Engagement** – Graded interventions targeting vulnerable groups, especially youth and women, alongside community outreach and rehabilitation efforts.
- **International Alignment** – Strengthened global cooperation through intelligence sharing, legal assistance, extradition treaties, and multilateral designations.
- **Recovery and Resilience** – A whole-of-society approach involving civil administration, professionals, NGOs, and communities to rebuild and enhance societal resilience.

Guiding Principle

- PRAHAAR is anchored in a political stance of zero tolerance for terrorism, while explicitly avoiding the association of terrorism with any religion or identity.

What Is New About PRAHAAR

- **Not New Tools, But a Unified Framework**
 - Most mechanisms cited in PRAHAAR — such as MAC, NSG, NIA, UAPA, CAPFs, and community outreach programmes — are already operational.
 - The document does not create new agencies or confer new powers.
 - Its novelty lies in consolidating these elements into a single, publicly articulated national counter-terror strategy.
- **Bringing Coherence to India's CT Architecture**
 - Previously, India's counter-terror (CT) framework was dispersed across laws, standard operating procedures, Cabinet decisions, and state-level arrangements.
 - PRAHAAR unifies these scattered components under one national policy statement.
- **Elevating Previously Implicit Elements**
 - **Human Rights and Rule of Law** – PRAHAAR formally recognises human rights and legal safeguards as a named pillar of counter-terror policy.
 - **Linking Security and Development** – The strategy explicitly connects counter-terror efforts to poverty alleviation, education, housing, employment, scholarships, and women's empowerment in vulnerable communities.
 - **Clear Political Messaging** – It affirms that India does not associate terrorism with any religion or community — a position that carries diplomatic significance in international forums.

- More than introducing new powers, PRAHAAR serves as an articulation of intent, signalling to citizens and adversaries alike that India's counter-terror approach is coordinated, comprehensive, and resolute.

How Does PRAHAAR Compare with Western Counter-Terror Strategies

- PRAHAAR is a concise eight-page framework outlining guiding principles.
- In contrast, the US National Strategy for Counterterrorism (34 pages) and the UK's CONTEST strategy (78 pages) provide far more detailed and operational blueprints.

Level of Detail and Operational Clarity

- PRAHAAR emphasises intelligence-led policing, inter-agency coordination (MAC, JTFI), roles of police and specialised forces, training, and socio-economic interventions.
- However, it does not publicly specify agency-wise responsibilities, sub-programmes, or measurable objectives.
- The US strategy translates broad goals into specific "lines of effort" and concrete commitments — such as tightening border screening, disrupting terror financing through anti-money laundering standards, and strengthening global CT partnerships.
- The UK's CONTEST framework provides detailed implementation structures, including a Counter-Terrorism Operations Centre (CTOC) and clearly defined roles for local authorities, schools, and councils under the Prevent/Protect/Prepare architecture.

Oversight and Accountability

- PRAHAAR stresses adherence to the rule of law but does not commit to public reporting or independent review mechanisms.
- By contrast:
 - The US framework includes annual assessments to Congress and measurable targets.
 - The UK system operates through formal reporting lines and structured oversight across departments and local CT bodies.

Ideological Scope

- PRAHAAR primarily focuses on cross-border and jihadi terrorism.
- Western strategies explicitly address a wider ideological spectrum, including extreme right-wing and hybrid forms of extremism.

Strengths and Weaknesses of PRAHAAR

- **Strengths**
 - Explicit rejection of religious profiling.
 - Formal recognition of human rights and rule of law as core pillars.
 - Integration of security and development approaches.

- **Weaknesses**

- Limited operational detail in the public document.
- Absence of clear oversight and measurable benchmarks.
- Challenge of converting aspirational goals into routine practices at district and police station levels.

Conclusion

- PRAHAAR's impact will ultimately depend on effective implementation, clear division of responsibilities, capacity-building at the grassroots, and robust coordination across agencies and states.

Source: IE | IE

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