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INTERNAL SECURITY

50 Most Important Topics for UPSC

Extremism, borders, cyber security & agencies — key facts, tables and FAQs for
Prelims & Mains

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Internal Security: 50 Most Important Topics for UPSC

Internal Security — the GS Paper-III segment on threats within India's borders — is among the most scoring areas of the Mains syllabus because its questions follow a predictable structure: the nature of the threat, its causes, the state's response, and the way forward. Prelims draws factual questions on agencies, Acts, doctrines and border facts. The subject rewards organised, balanced answers far more than strong opinions.

These 50 topics cover the complete internal security syllabus in three parts: the security framework and extremism, borders with organised crime and terror financing, and cyber security

with emerging threats and agencies. Every topic has a quick-revision table plus exam-oriented notes — what it is, why it matters, the key facts, and exactly how UPSC tests it. Use the table of contents below to jump straight to any topic.

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Part I: Security Framework & Extremism

1. Internal Security: Meaning, Components and Key Challenges

Key fact	Detail
Definition	Protection of the nation, its people and institutions against threats arising within its own borders
Components	Public order, counter-terrorism, counter-insurgency, intelligence, border management, protection of critical infrastructure
Constitutional base	Police and public order are State subjects (Seventh Schedule, List II); the Centre advises, assists and coordinates
Major challenges	Left-wing extremism, North-East insurgency, cross-border terrorism in J&K, communal violence, cyber threats

What it is: Internal security is the condition in which a nation is protected from threats originating within its own borders. Unlike external defence, which guards against foreign armies, internal security deals with insurgency, terrorism, left-wing extremism, communal violence, organised crime and cyber attacks. Its components include the maintenance of public order, intelligence gathering, counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations, peacetime border management, and the protection of critical infrastructure such as power grids, railways and communication networks.

Why it matters: India's internal security challenges are among the most complex in the world because of its size, diversity and difficult neighbourhood. Left-wing extremism once affected well over a hundred districts, the North-East has hosted multiple insurgencies, and Jammu and Kashmir faces sustained cross-border terrorism. Internal instability diverts resources from development, deters investment, displaces civilians and tests the legitimacy of democratic governance. A stable internal environment is therefore the foundation on which economic growth and national power rest.

Key facts: In India, police and public order are State subjects under the Seventh Schedule, while the Centre assists through central armed police forces and intelligence agencies. The Intelligence Bureau handles internal intelligence, and the National Investigation Agency investigates terror cases with all-India jurisdiction. The Ministry of Home Affairs coordinates the national response. A former Prime Minister described left-wing extremism as the single biggest internal security challenge, and official data shows a steady decline in extremist-related violence over the past decade.

How UPSC tests it: In Prelims, expect statement-based questions on the constitutional division of powers — police as a State subject, Article 355, and the mandates of agencies such as the NIA, IB and NSG. Mains GS-III questions ask candidates to analyse the major internal security challenges, evaluate the balance between security operations and development, and suggest a way forward. Strong answers demonstrate awareness of the federal dimension: internal security is a shared responsibility of the Centre and the states.

2. 2. Constitutional and Legal Framework for Internal Security

Key fact	Detail
Seventh Schedule	Police and public order are State subjects (List II); defence and armed forces are Union subjects (List I)
Article 355	Imposes a duty on the Union to protect every state against external aggression and internal disturbance
UAPA, 1967	Principal anti-terror law; the 2019 amendment allows the designation of individuals as terrorists
NIA Act, 2008	Created the National Investigation Agency after the 26/11 Mumbai attacks, with nationwide jurisdiction

What it is: India's internal security framework rests on a constitutional division of powers and a set of special laws. The Constitution makes policing a state responsibility while obliging the Union, under Article 355, to protect states against internal disturbance. Parliament has enacted laws such as the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, the National Investigation Agency Act, the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act and the National Security Act. Institutions like the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Intelligence Bureau, the NIA, the Multi-Agency Centre and NATGRID complete the architecture.

Why it matters: Security threats do not respect state boundaries — a terrorist module may plan in one state, fund itself in another and strike in a third. The constitutional design therefore demands constant Centre-state coordination. Special laws give agencies extraordinary powers of arrest, detention and investigation, which raises questions of federal balance and civil liberties. Understanding this framework is essential because every major security debate in India — from AFSPA to UAPA amendments — is ultimately a debate about how much power the state may wield in the name of security.

Key facts: Article 355 is the constitutional anchor of the Centre's role in internal security. The UAPA of 1967, substantially amended in 2004, 2008 and 2019, is India's main anti-terror statute. The NIA was created in 2008 following the Mumbai attacks and can take up cases across states without state permission in scheduled offences. The

National Security Act of 1980 permits preventive detention up to twelve months. At the state level, laws like Maharashtra's MCOCA target organised crime syndicates.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims frequently tests the year and purpose of laws — UAPA (1967), NIA Act (2008), AFSPA (1958) — and statements about Article 355, List I and List II entries. Mains GS-III questions probe the tension between security legislation and fundamental rights, asking candidates to evaluate whether laws like UAPA strike the right balance. Cite committee reports and Supreme Court observations to strengthen answers on preventive detention and federalism.

3. 3. Left Wing Extremism: Origin, Causes and Spread

Key fact	Detail
Naxalbari, 1967	Peasant uprising in Naxalbari, West Bengal, led by Charu Mazumdar, Kanu Sanyal and Jangal Santhal
CPI (Maoist), 2004	Formed by the merger of the People's War Group and the Maoist Communist Centre; later banned as a terrorist organisation
Red Corridor	Once stretched across ten-plus states; now concentrated in pockets of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha and Maharashtra
Ideology	"Protracted people's war" — the goal of capturing state power through armed agrarian revolution

What it is: Left-wing extremism, popularly called Naxalism, is an armed Maoist movement that seeks to overthrow the Indian state through what it terms a protracted people's war. It began with the 1967 Naxalbari peasant uprising in West Bengal and consolidated in 2004 with the formation of the CPI (Maoist) from two major underground groups. The movement draws its cadres mainly from tribal communities in forested central India, exploiting genuine grievances over land alienation, displacement by mining and industry, and weak governance in remote areas.

Why it matters: Left-wing extremism has long been treated as India's gravest internal armed challenge, at its peak affecting well over a hundred districts across the so-called Red Corridor. It has killed thousands of security personnel and civilians, destroyed schools, roads and telecom towers, and held back development in some of the country's poorest regions. Because the movement feeds on real governance deficits — land rights, forest rights, displacement — defeating it requires the state to govern better, not merely to fight harder.

Key facts: The movement's intellectual roots lie in the 1967 Naxalbari uprising and the ideology of Charu Mazumdar. The CPI (Maoist) was formed in 2004 and was subsequently banned under the UAPA. Chhattisgarh's Bastar region, particularly districts like Sukma and Bijapur, has been the epicentre of Maoist violence. The Salwa Judum vigilante movement of 2005 was declared illegal by the Supreme Court in 2011. Official data records a sharp decline in LWE violence and in the number of affected districts over the past decade.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims asks about the Naxalbari uprising (1967, West Bengal), the formation of CPI (Maoist), and the states of the Red Corridor. Mains GS-III repeatedly asks for the causes of LWE — land alienation, tribal displacement, governance deficit — and for a critical evaluation of the government's twin-track response of security operations plus development. Answers should reference the SAMADHAN doctrine and the declining trend in violence with data-backed reasoning.

4. 4. Government Response to LWE and the SAMADHAN Doctrine

Key fact	Detail
SAMADHAN, 2017	Eight-pillar doctrine: Smart leadership, Aggressive strategy, Motivation and training, Actionable intelligence, Dashboard-based KPIs, Harnessing technology, Action plan per theatre, No access to financing
Security track	CAPF deployment, fortified police stations, state police modernisation, specialised units on the Greyhounds model

Development track	Roads, mobile towers, schools, health centres and banking in affected areas; Aspirational Districts programme
Surrender policy	Rehabilitation packages with financial assistance, vocational training and land for surrendered Maoists

What it is: The government's response to left-wing extremism follows a twin-track strategy: calibrated security operations combined with accelerated development in affected areas. In 2017 the Home Minister announced the SAMADHAN doctrine, an eight-pillar framework covering smart leadership, aggressive strategy, motivation and training, actionable intelligence, dashboard-based performance indicators, technology, theatre-wise action plans and cutting off Maoist financing. Alongside operations, the state has pushed roads, mobile connectivity, schools, health centres and financial inclusion into former Maoist strongholds.

Why it matters: Past experience shows that force alone cannot end an insurgency rooted in governance failure. The twin-track approach recognises that every new road, school and mobile tower shrinks the space in which extremists operate, while surrenders rise when cadres see a viable future outside the movement. The results are visible: official figures show a steep fall in LWE-related deaths and a shrinking geographical footprint. The approach has become the template for dealing with grievance-based internal conflicts across India.

Key facts: SAMADHAN was unveiled in May 2017 at a review meeting of LWE-affected states. Security measures include the deployment of central armed police forces, construction of fortified police stations, and intelligence-led operations. Development schemes target connectivity — roads under dedicated programmes, mobile towers in remote areas — and the Aspirational Districts programme covers many affected districts. Surrender-cum-rehabilitation policies offer financial aid and skill training. The number of districts classified as LWE-affected has fallen sharply from its peak.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims may ask for the full form or pillars of SAMADHAN and the year of its launch. Mains GS-III expects a critical evaluation of the security-plus-development strategy — its successes, such as declining violence, and its gaps, such as uneven implementation and human rights concerns. Frame answers around the idea that development is the long-term antidote to extremism, and suggest strengthening local governance, land-rights implementation and surrender policies as the way forward.

5. 5. The Urban Naxalism Debate

Key fact	Detail
The term	Refers to alleged Maoist sympathisers and overground support networks operating in cities
Bhima Koregaon, 2018	Arrests in the Elgar Parishad case brought the term into national prominence
Security view	Urban networks provide funding, legal aid, propaganda and recruitment pipelines for armed cadres
Critics' view	A vague label that risks criminalising dissent, activism and academic inquiry

What it is: "Urban Naxalism" is a contested term used to describe individuals and networks in cities who are alleged to sympathise with or support the Maoist movement — academics, lawyers, activists and journalists among them. Security agencies argue that such overground networks raise funds, run propaganda, provide legal defence for arrested cadres and recruit educated youth, while never picking up guns themselves. The term entered mainstream debate after the 2018 arrests linked to the Elgar Parishad event and the Bhima Koregaon violence in Maharashtra.

Why it matters: The debate strikes at the heart of the balance between national security and civil liberties in a democracy. If genuine support networks exist, ignoring them leaves a critical flank of the Maoist strategy unaddressed. But if the label is applied loosely, it can chill legitimate dissent, academic research and human-rights advocacy — the very freedoms that distinguish a democracy. How the state handles this question shapes public trust in counter-extremism policy and invites judicial scrutiny of laws like the UAPA.

Key facts: The Elgar Parishad case of 2018, investigated by Pune police and later the NIA, led to arrests of activists and academics under the UAPA. Security agencies describe a three-tier Maoist structure: armed guerrilla squads, mass organisations, and urban overground supporters. Critics, including civil-liberties groups, argue the term has no legal definition and is deployed selectively. Courts have in several instances granted bail while questioning the strength of the evidence, keeping the evidentiary debate alive.

How UPSC tests it: This is primarily a Mains GS-III theme on the tension between internal security imperatives and fundamental rights. Questions may ask whether the state is justified in targeting ideological sympathisers, or how to distinguish support for extremism from legitimate dissent. Balanced answers acknowledge the security concern, insist on evidence-based prosecution, due process and judicial oversight, and warn against the misuse of anti-terror laws. Prelims may touch on the Elgar Parishad case in current-affairs questions.

6. 6. Insurgency in the North-East: Historical Roots

Key fact	Detail
Naga movement	India's oldest insurgency; the Naga National Council declared independence on 14 August 1947 under A. Z. Phizo
NSCN, 1980	Formed after rejecting the Shillong Accord of 1975; split into NSCN-IM and NSCN-K in 1988
Assam	ULFA was formed in 1979 during the anti-foreigner agitation; the Assam Accord was signed in 1985
Mizoram	The Mizo insurgency ended with the Mizo Accord of 1986 — widely seen as a model peace settlement

What it is: Insurgency in the North-East refers to a cluster of armed movements seeking secession, autonomy or tribal homeland rights across the region's eight states. The oldest is the Naga movement, which began before Independence under the Naga National Council led by A. Z. Phizo. Other major movements include the Mizo insurgency of the 1960s, ULFA in Assam from 1979, and Bodo, Meitei, Tripuri and Karbi groups. The roots lie in distinct ethnic identities, the trauma of Partition, porous international borders, perceived neglect by the Centre, and competition over land and resources.

Why it matters: The North-East shares international borders with five countries and is connected to mainland India only by the narrow Siliguri Corridor, making its stability a strategic imperative. Decades of insurgency stunted the region's economy, displaced communities and bred a culture of extortion that corrupted public life. Because many groups operate from sanctuaries across the Myanmar border, the problem has a foreign-policy dimension as well. Lasting peace in the region unlocks its potential as India's gateway to Southeast Asia under the Act East policy.

Key facts: The Shillong Accord of 1975 split the Naga movement; hardliners formed the NSCN in 1980, which divided into the IM (Isak-Muivah) and K (Khaplang) factions in 1988. ULFA emerged from the Assam agitation against illegal migration and signed no settlement for decades. The Mizo Accord of 1986, signed with Laldenga's MNF, ended insurgency in Mizoram and is considered the most successful settlement. Tripura withdrew AFSPA entirely in 2015 after militancy declined, and Meghalaya followed in 2018.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims tests the chronology — NNC (1947), Shillong Accord (1975), NSCN (1980), Assam Accord (1985), Mizo Accord (1986) — and the factions and leaders involved. Mains GS-III asks for the causes of North-East insurgency and a critical assessment of the government's response, from military operations to peace accords. Strong answers distinguish between movements driven by secession, autonomy and identity, and evaluate accords on implementation rather than signatures alone.

7. 7. North-East Peace Accords and Current Status

Key fact	Detail
Framework Agreement, 2015	Signed between the Government of India and NSCN-IM; a final Naga settlement is still being negotiated

Bodo Accord, 2020	Third Bodo peace accord, restructuring the Bodoland Territorial Region in Assam
Bru-Reang Agreement, 2020	Permanent settlement of displaced Bru tribals in Tripura
Karbi Anglong Accord, 2021	Settlement with Karbi militant groups in Assam

What it is: Over the past decade the government has pursued an accord-based strategy to wind down North-East insurgencies, combining ceasefires, negotiations and rehabilitation packages. Key milestones include the 2015 Framework Agreement with the NSCN-IM, the 2020 Bodo Accord, the 2020 Bru-Reang settlement that ended a decades-old displacement crisis, and the 2021 Karbi Anglong Accord. The approach pairs dialogue with sustained security pressure and development spending, and several groups have laid down arms under its umbrella.

Why it matters: The accord wave has delivered the most peaceful decade the region has seen since Independence, with insurgency-related deaths falling dramatically. Peace has allowed infrastructure projects, border trade and tourism to expand, advancing the Act East policy. But accords are only as good as their implementation — unfulfilled promises on autonomy, rehabilitation and political representation can revive old grievances. The unfinished Naga settlement remains the region's biggest loose end, and the ethnic violence that erupted in Manipur in 2023 showed how quickly new fault lines can open.

Key facts: The 2015 Framework Agreement recognised the "unique history" of the Nagas, but disagreements over a separate flag and constitution have stalled a final deal. The Bodo Accord of January 2020 was the third such settlement after 1993 and 2003. The Bru agreement resettled thousands of displaced tribals in Tripura. AFSPA has been progressively withdrawn — fully from Tripura and Meghalaya, and partially from Assam, Nagaland, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh — reflecting improved ground conditions. Manipur's 2023 ethnic clashes remain a serious concern.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims asks to match accords with years and groups — Bodo (2020), Bru-Reang (2020), Karbi Anglong (2021), Framework Agreement (2015). Mains GS-III questions evaluate whether the accord strategy has succeeded, asking candidates to discuss implementation gaps, the pending Naga issue and the Manipur crisis. Good answers argue that dialogue must be backed by development, rehabilitation and credible political commitments, not just signatures on paper.

8. 8. Jammu and Kashmir: Security Dynamics After 2019

Key fact	Detail
August 2019	Article 370 abrogated; Article 35A nullified by presidential orders and parliamentary resolutions
J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019	Created two Union Territories — J&K with a legislature and Ladakh without one — effective 31 October 2019
Delimitation, 2022	Assembly constituencies redrawn; assembly elections held in September–October 2024
Security picture	Sharp fall in stone-pelting and shutdowns; infiltration attempts and targeted killings continue

What it is: In August 2019 the government abrogated Article 370, ending Jammu and Kashmir's special constitutional status, and reorganised the former state into two Union Territories — Jammu and Kashmir with a legislature, and Ladakh without one — with effect from 31 October 2019. The move was followed by a prolonged security lockdown, detention of political leaders, and restrictions on communication. A delimitation exercise redrew assembly seats in 2022, and assembly elections were finally held in late 2024, restoring an elected government in the Union Territory.

Why it matters: Kashmir sits at the intersection of India's toughest security challenges: Pakistan-sponsored militancy, radicalisation of youth, and the political question of Kashmiri alienation. The post-2019 period has seen a visible decline in street violence, hartals and stone-pelting, and record tourist arrivals — but targeted killings of minorities and migrant workers, infiltration across the Line of Control and narco-terror funding show the militancy infrastructure

is degraded, not dismantled. How the elected government, the Lieutenant Governor and the security forces share power will shape the next phase.

Key facts: Article 370 was abrogated through a presidential order and parliamentary approval on 5–6 August 2019. The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act bifurcated the state into two UTs. The Delimitation Commission's 2022 award increased assembly seats, and elections in September–October 2024 restored democratic government. Security agencies report a decline in local militant recruitment alongside continued cross-border infiltration. The region remains central to India-Pakistan tensions and to debates on federalism and constitutional change.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims tests the dates and mechanics — Article 370 abrogation (2019), the two UTs, the Reorganisation Act, delimitation. Mains GS-III and GS-II ask candidates to assess the security and political impact of the 2019 changes, the challenge of cross-border terrorism, and the path to lasting normalcy. Balanced answers weigh the decline in street violence against continuing militancy, and argue that security gains must be consolidated through political engagement, jobs and democratic deepening.

9. 9. AFSPA: Provisions, Debate and Reform

Key fact	Detail
AFSPA, 1958	Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act; applies to areas declared "disturbed" by the Centre or the state
Section 4	Empowers armed forces to shoot, arrest without warrant, and search premises without warrant
Section 6	No prosecution of armed forces personnel without prior sanction of the Central Government
Key reviews	Jeevan Reddy Committee (2004) recommended repeal; Supreme Court upheld the Act in 1997 with safeguards

What it is: The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act of 1958 gives the armed forces extraordinary powers in areas notified as "disturbed" — currently parts of the North-East and Jammu and Kashmir. Section 4 allows personnel to shoot to kill, arrest without warrant and search without warrant; Section 6 bars prosecution without Central Government sanction. Enacted originally for the Naga insurgency, it was extended to other disturbed regions. The Supreme Court upheld its constitutionality in 1997 in the Naga People's Movement case, but laid down strict guidelines for its use.

Why it matters: AFSPA is the sharpest expression of the security-versus-liberty dilemma in Indian democracy. The armed forces argue it is indispensable for operating against insurgents in hostile terrain, where ordinary policing is impossible. Critics point to decades of alleged fake encounters, enforced disappearances and the impunity that Section 6 creates, arguing it alienates the very populations the state seeks to win over. The debate directly affects Centre-state relations, India's human-rights record and the prospects of peace in conflict zones.

Key facts: The Jeevan Reddy Committee (2004) recommended repealing AFSPA and folding necessary powers into the UAPA. In 2016 the Supreme Court ruled, in the extrajudicial killings case, that AFSPA grants no blanket immunity and that every death in an encounter must be probed. AFSPA has been fully withdrawn from Tripura (2015) and Meghalaya (2018) and partially from other North-Eastern states as security improved. Disturbed-area notifications are reviewed periodically, and civil-society campaigns for repeal continue.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims asks about AFSPA's year (1958), its key provisions and the committees associated with it — Jeevan Reddy, and the Santosh Hegde committee on Manipur encounters. Mains GS-III frequently poses the classic question: does AFSPA help or hinder counter-insurgency? Strong answers present both sides, cite the 1997 and 2016 Supreme Court rulings, discuss the withdrawal trend in the North-East, and suggest reforms such as time-bound reviews, stronger accountability and gradual denotification.

10. 10. Terrorism: Definition, Types and Ideological Sources

Key fact	Detail
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Working definition	Unlawful use of violence against civilians to create fear for political, ideological or religious goals
No global consensus	The UN has never agreed on a single legal definition — the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism is still pending
Types	State-sponsored, religious, ideological (left and right), ethno-nationalist, narco-terrorism, cyber terrorism
India's experience	Punjab militancy (1980s), Kashmir militancy, 26/11 Mumbai attacks (2008), Pulwama attack (2019)

What it is: Terrorism is the deliberate use of violence against civilians or non-combatants to spread fear and coerce governments or societies into political, ideological or religious concessions. It differs from conventional warfare in targeting the innocent for maximum psychological impact, and from ordinary crime in pursuing political ends. Ideological sources range from religious extremism and ethno-nationalism to far-left and far-right doctrines. Modern terrorism is increasingly networked, media-savvy and transnational, exploiting global finance, travel and the internet.

Why it matters: India has been among the countries most affected by terrorism for four decades — from the Punjab militancy of the 1980s to the Kashmir insurgency, the 2001 Parliament attack, the 2008 Mumbai attacks and the 2019 Pulwama bombing. Terrorism kills civilians, provokes communal polarisation, strains relations with neighbours and forces massive security expenditure. Because terrorist groups now recruit online, move money through hawala and cryptocurrencies, and strike in cities, counter-terrorism must span intelligence, policing, diplomacy and technology.

Key facts: There is no universally accepted legal definition of terrorism; India's draft Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism has been pending at the UN for years. The 9/11 attacks of 2001 led to UN Security Council Resolution 1373, obliging states to criminalise terror financing. In India, the UAPA is the principal anti-terror law, and the NIA investigates terror cases nationwide. Groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed are designated terrorist organisations by the UN Security Council.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims tests factual anchors — the UAPA, NIA, UN designations, and statements distinguishing terrorism from insurgency. Mains GS-III asks candidates to analyse the ideological sources of terrorism, the challenges of a global definition, and India's counter-terrorism strategy. Answers should cover the intelligence-operations-diplomacy triad, mention UN Resolution 1373 and the FATF, and argue for international cooperation alongside domestic resilience and communal harmony.

11. 11. Cross-Border Terrorism and Proxy War

Key fact	Detail
Proxy war	A state uses non-state militant groups to bleed a rival without engaging in open warfare
Key groups	Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed — both designated terrorist organisations by the UN
Major attacks	Parliament attack (2001), 26/11 Mumbai (2008), Pathankot (2016), Uri (2016), Pulwama (2019)
India's responses	Surgical strikes (2016), Balakot airstrike (2019), diplomatic isolation, FATF pressure on Pakistan

What it is: Cross-border terrorism is violence planned, funded or directed from across an international border, while proxy war is the broader strategy of using militant groups as instruments of state policy against a rival. India has faced Pakistan-sponsored cross-border terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir and beyond for over three decades. Groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed operate training camps, launch pads and fundraising networks across the border, with India's security establishment holding Pakistan's army and intelligence agencies responsible for sustaining them.

Why it matters: Proxy war lets a weaker state impose continuous costs on a stronger neighbour while maintaining deniability and avoiding the risks of conventional war — a particular danger between two nuclear-armed states. For India it means a permanent, low-intensity conflict that kills soldiers and civilians, radicalises Kashmiri youth and complicates diplomacy. Every major attack — from the 2001 Parliament attack to Pulwama in 2019 — has brought the subcontinent close to war, making cross-border terrorism the single most volatile element in South Asian security.

Key facts: The 2001 Parliament attack led to a year-long military standoff; the 2008 Mumbai attacks killed 166 people over three days. After the 2016 Uri attack India conducted surgical strikes across the Line of Control, and after Pulwama in 2019 it carried out the Balakot airstrike — a doctrinal shift toward direct retaliation. Pakistan remained on the FATF grey list from 2018 to 2022 over terror-financing concerns. India continues to push for the global designation of individual terrorists at the UN Security Council.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims tests the chronology of major attacks and India's responses — Uri (2016), Pulwama and Balakot (2019) — plus the UN designation of groups and individuals. Mains GS-III asks for an assessment of India's counter-strategy: the mix of military retaliation, intelligence, border management, diplomacy and economic pressure. Strong answers discuss the nuclear dimension that constrains responses, the role of FATF, and the need to combine firmness with a political outreach to Kashmiris.

12. 12. Role of External State and Non-State Actors

Key fact	Detail
State actors	Foreign intelligence agencies, state sponsorship, training camps and safe havens across borders
Non-state actors	Terrorist groups, arms and drug traffickers, hawala operators, radical preachers, cyber criminals
Narco-terror nexus	Drug trafficking along the western border funds militant activity in J&K and Punjab
Fake currency	Counterfeit Indian notes have been used to finance terror; the NIA investigates such cases

What it is: India's internal security is shaped by a web of external state and non-state actors. State actors include foreign intelligence agencies that sponsor, train or shelter militant groups as instruments of policy. Non-state actors range from terrorist organisations and insurgent groups with cross-border sanctuaries — notably along the Myanmar border — to arms smugglers, drug cartels, hawala networks and online radicalisers. These actors supply money, weapons, training, propaganda and ideological direction to domestic violent movements.

Why it matters: External support is what converts local grievances into durable armed campaigns. Without cross-border sanctuaries, funding and arms, most insurgencies and terror modules would wither. The drug-terror nexus is especially corrosive: narcotics smuggled across the western border finance militancy while devastating Punjab's youth. Counterfeit currency has funded terror operations, and foreign-based radical preachers reach Indian audiences directly through social media. Countering these actors requires diplomacy, intelligence-sharing and border management, not just domestic policing.

Key facts: Several North-Eastern insurgent groups have historically maintained camps across the Myanmar border, making bilateral cooperation with Myanmar essential. The narco-terror linkage in Jammu and Kashmir involves heroin trafficked from across the western border, with proceeds funding militant networks. Hawala channels and, increasingly, cryptocurrencies move terror funds outside formal banking. India has signed mutual legal assistance treaties and intelligence-sharing arrangements with multiple countries, and works through Interpol against transnational modules.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims may ask about the narco-terror nexus, hawala, fake currency and India's intelligence-sharing mechanisms. Mains GS-III expects analysis of how external actors sustain internal conflicts — with examples from Kashmir, Punjab and the North-East — and an evaluation of India's response toolkit: diplomacy, FATF, border fencing, anti-drone measures and international conventions. Answers should stress that internal resilience (governance, communal harmony) is the ultimate defence against external manipulation.

13. 13. Radicalisation: Process, Drivers and Counter-Strategies

Key fact	Detail
Definition	The process by which individuals adopt extremist beliefs that justify or glorify violence

Key drivers	Identity crisis, perceived injustice, online echo chambers, charismatic recruiters, socio-economic alienation
Online dimension	Encrypted apps and social media enable self-radicalisation without any physical contact with a group
Counter-approach	De-radicalisation programmes, counter-narratives, community policing and family counselling

What it is: Radicalisation is the gradual process through which an individual comes to accept extremist ideology as legitimate and violence as justified. It typically moves through stages — grievance, exposure to extremist narratives, identification with a cause, and finally a willingness to act. In the digital age, this journey often happens entirely online: algorithm-driven echo chambers, propaganda videos and encrypted chat groups can indoctrinate a person who has never met a recruiter. Radicalisation is not confined to any one religion or ideology; left-wing, right-wing and religious extremisms all use similar psychological pathways.

Why it matters: Radicalisation is the supply chain of terrorism and extremism — every attacker was once a sympathiser. India's agencies have busted modules of youth radicalised online by transnational propaganda, showing that geography no longer protects anyone. Because radicalisation thrives on real or perceived injustice — discrimination, unemployment, communal polarisation — it is also a mirror of governance failures. A purely punitive response risks deepening alienation; prevention must address the grievances that make extremist narratives attractive.

Key facts: Security agencies distinguish between radicalisation (adopting extremist beliefs) and violent extremism (acting on them) — only the latter is criminal, which complicates early intervention. The NIA has investigated multiple cases of online self-radicalisation linked to transnational propaganda. De-radicalisation and rehabilitation programmes, run in some states with community and religious leaders, focus on counselling rather than prosecution for early-stage cases. Counter-narrative campaigns use credible voices to challenge extremist propaganda online.

How UPSC tests it: Mains GS-III increasingly asks about radicalisation as a distinct theme — its drivers, the role of the internet, and how de-radicalisation differs from counter-terrorism. Answers should cover the process model, online self-radicalisation, and a multi-pronged response: community policing, education, counter-narratives, family engagement and careful use of law. Prelims may test statements distinguishing radicalisation from extremism, or ask about de-radicalisation initiatives in current affairs.

14. 14. Communal Violence as an Internal Security Threat

Key fact	Detail
Nature	Collective violence between religious or ethnic communities, threatening the social fabric
Common triggers	Rumours, religious processions, social media misinformation, provocative speeches, political mobilisation
Legal tools	Rioting provisions under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, preventive detention, prohibitory orders, curfew powers
Prevention	Early warning systems, rapid and impartial police response, inter-community dialogue, hate-speech regulation

What it is: Communal violence is organised or spontaneous collective violence between religious communities, ranging from riots and arson to targeted killings. Independent India has witnessed major episodes of communal bloodshed roughly once a decade, each leaving deep scars on inter-community trust. Triggers are often small — a rumour, a procession route, an inflammatory video — but they ignite underlying tensions built up through segregation, political mobilisation and historical grievances. In the social-media era, misinformation can turn a local dispute into a city-wide conflagration within hours.

Why it matters: Communal violence does what external enemies cannot: it fractures the nation from within. Riots kill and displace citizens, destroy livelihoods, ghettoise cities and create generations of resentment that extremist groups

then exploit for recruitment — both Islamist and Hindutva radicalisation feed on communal incidents. It damages India's democratic image abroad, deters investment and consumes enormous policing resources. For a diverse society, preventing communal violence is not merely law and order; it is the preservation of the constitutional promise of fraternity.

Key facts: The criminal law now governing rioting and related offences is the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, which replaced the Indian Penal Code in 2024. Preventive tools include prohibitory orders, preventive detention under the National Security Act, and the deployment of central forces in sensitive areas. Past inquiry commissions have repeatedly stressed the same lessons: swift, visibly impartial police action in the first hours decides whether a spark becomes a riot. Regulating hate speech while protecting free expression remains an unresolved legal challenge.

How UPSC tests it: Mains GS-III and GS-I ask candidates to analyse the causes of communalism and communal violence, its linkages with radicalisation and internal security, and the way forward. Strong answers trace the riot-to-radicalisation pipeline, demand police reforms and impartial administration, and suggest long-term measures: shared public spaces, textbook reform, inter-faith dialogue and speedy justice. Prelims may test legal provisions on rioting, unlawful assembly and preventive detention in statement-based questions.

15. 15. Lone-Wolf and Urban Terror Attacks

Key fact	Detail
Lone wolf	An individual who plans and executes an attack alone, inspired but not directed by a group
Why cities	Dense crowds, symbolic targets and media presence maximise the terror impact
Indian context	Few classic lone-wolf attacks; agencies focus on online-inspired modules busted by the NIA
Response	Intelligence-led policing, urban surveillance, NSG regional hubs, mock drills and public awareness

What it is: A lone-wolf attacker is an individual who plans and carries out violence alone, inspired by an extremist ideology but without operational direction or material support from any organisation. Urban terror attacks more broadly target cities because crowded markets, transport hubs and iconic buildings offer maximum casualties, symbolism and media coverage — the 2008 Mumbai attacks remain the defining example for India. Lone wolves are the hardest threat to detect: with no handler, no funding trail and no co-conspirators, they leave almost no intelligence footprint until they strike.

Why it matters: Globally, lone-wolf attacks have risen as terrorist groups shifted from directing operations to inspiring them online, publishing do-it-yourself propaganda for sympathisers everywhere. For India, the danger is that online radicalisation converts an ordinary disaffected youth into a weapon without any border crossing or training camp. Cities concentrate India's economic and political life, so even a small attack paralyses commerce, spreads panic nationwide through live media, and pressures governments into hasty responses.

Key facts: India has seen few textbook lone-wolf attacks, but the NIA and state police have repeatedly busted modules of youth radicalised online by transnational propaganda before they could act. The NSG maintains regional hubs in major cities for rapid response to urban terror situations. Post-26/11 reforms strengthened coastal security, created the NIA and the National Intelligence Grid, and expanded CCTV and emergency-response systems in metros. Public-awareness campaigns urge citizens to report suspicious behaviour and unattended objects.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims may test the NSG's mandate, the post-26/11 institutional reforms (NIA, NATGRID, coastal security), and statements defining lone-wolf terrorism. Mains GS-III asks why lone-wolf attacks are uniquely hard to prevent and what a layered urban counter-terror strategy looks like — intelligence, technology, rapid-response forces and community reporting. Answers should note the online-inspiration model and argue for balancing surveillance with privacy safeguards.

16. 16. Role of Media and Social Media in Security Challenges

Key fact	Detail
Double-edged role	Spreads awareness and emergency alerts, but also rumours, panic and extremist propaganda
2018 lynchings	Viral WhatsApp rumours triggered mob lynchings, prompting government advisories to platforms
Terrorist use	Groups use social media for recruitment, propaganda and claiming responsibility for attacks
Regulation	IT Act Section 69A blocking powers; IT Rules 2021 impose due-diligence duties on intermediaries

What it is: Media and social media are now central actors in India's internal security landscape. On one side, they alert citizens during emergencies, expose wrongdoing and enable the state to communicate rapidly. On the other, they are weaponised: terrorists recruit and spread propaganda online, rumours trigger mob violence, live coverage of ongoing operations can aid attackers, and hostile foreign actors run disinformation campaigns. With hundreds of millions of Indian users on WhatsApp, YouTube and other platforms, a single viral falsehood can destabilise a district overnight.

Why it matters: The 2018 wave of mob lynchings driven by viral child-kidnapping rumours on WhatsApp showed how misinformation kills. During terror attacks, irresponsible live broadcasting has revealed the positions of security forces. Extremist groups run sophisticated multilingual propaganda targeting Indian youth, and adversarial states amplify divisive narratives during elections and crises. Regulating this space without strangling free speech is one of the hardest governance challenges of the digital age — overreach damages democracy, underreach costs lives.

Key facts: Section 69A of the IT Act, 2000 empowers the government to block online content on grounds including sovereignty and public order, following Supreme Court-approved procedures. The IT Rules of 2021 require significant social-media intermediaries to appoint grievance officers and act on takedown orders within defined timelines. After the 2018 lynchings, the government pressed WhatsApp to limit message forwarding and label forwarded content. Media guidelines for covering terror operations stress delayed, responsible reporting.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims tests Section 69A, the IT Rules 2021 and statements on intermediary liability. Mains GS-III asks candidates to evaluate social media as a security challenge — misinformation, radicalisation, disinformation — and to propose a regulatory balance between security and free speech under Article 19. Strong answers discuss platform accountability, digital literacy, fact-checking ecosystems and the limits of blocking as a strategy.

17. 17. LWE vs Insurgency vs Terrorism: Key Differences

Key fact	Detail
Core objective	LWE seeks state capture via agrarian revolution; insurgency seeks secession or autonomy; terrorism seeks to coerce through fear
Social base	LWE: tribal and land grievances; insurgency: ethnic and regional identity; terrorism: ideological, often externally sponsored
Indian examples	LWE: CPI (Maoist); insurgency: NSCN factions, ULFA; terrorism: Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed
State response	LWE: security plus development (SAMADHAN); insurgency: dialogue and accords; terrorism: intelligence, force and diplomacy

What it is: Left-wing extremism, insurgency and terrorism are distinct forms of political violence that are often confused. LWE is a Maoist movement aiming to capture state power through armed agrarian revolution, rooted in tribal land and governance grievances. Insurgency is an armed rebellion by an ethnic or regional group seeking secession, autonomy or a separate homeland, as seen in the North-East. Terrorism is the use of violence against civilians to create fear and coerce political concessions, frequently sponsored from across the border in India's case.

Why it matters: Confusing these categories leads to wrong policy. A development-heavy response suits LWE's grievance roots but cannot answer cross-border terrorism, which demands intelligence and diplomacy; meanwhile, dialogue and accords that work for insurgencies are meaningless against groups whose goal is to bleed India on a foreign patron's behalf. Each category also carries different legal regimes — UAPA for terror, AFSPA for disturbed areas, surrender policies for LWE cadres. Precision in diagnosis is the first step to an effective cure.

Key facts: The three differ in objective (revolution vs. separation vs. coercion), organisation (mass-based guerrilla zones vs. ethnic armies vs. clandestine cells) and geography (central India's forests vs. border regions vs. cities and the LoC). Government strategy reflects this: SAMADHAN's twin track for LWE, ceasefires and peace accords for North-East insurgencies, and the intelligence-operations-diplomacy triad for cross-border terrorism. Overlaps exist — insurgents use terror tactics, and terror groups exploit local grievances — but the core logic of each remains distinct.

How UPSC tests it: This is a favourite Mains GS-III comparative question: "Distinguish between left-wing extremism, insurgency and terrorism, and discuss whether India's response to each has been appropriate." Answers should use a crisp table of differences — objective, base, methods, examples, response — and then evaluate policy per category. Prelims may test one-line distinctions or ask which example belongs to which category. A concluding line on calibrated, category-specific strategy earns marks.

Part II: Borders, Organised Crime & Terror Financing

18. 18. India's Border Management: Principles and Challenges

Key fact	Detail
Border forces	BSF (Pakistan, Bangladesh), ITBP (China), SSB (Nepal, Bhutan), Assam Rifles (Myanmar)
Nodal body	Department of Border Management, Ministry of Home Affairs — created in 2004
Core principle	"One border, one force" — a single force responsible for each border for clear accountability
Key reform trigger	Kargil Review Committee and the Group of Ministers report on national security flagged border-management gaps

What it is: Border management is India's system for securing its land borders of over 15,000 km with seven neighbours. It rests on three pillars: guarding the border through designated forces, building border infrastructure such as roads and fencing, and developing border-area communities so that people living near the frontier act as partners in security rather than a vulnerability. The Department of Border Management under the Home Ministry coordinates policy, while the Army guards the most sensitive stretches such as the Line of Control.

Why it matters: Every major internal security threat India faces — terrorism, insurgency, arms and drug smuggling, illegal migration, and counterfeit currency — crosses the border first. A porous border multiplies the cost of policing the interior, because once threats enter, they disperse into cities and hinterlands. Effective border management therefore decides whether security agencies fight threats at the frontier, where they are concentrated and visible, or deep inside the country, where they are diffuse and costly.

Key facts: India shares land borders with Pakistan, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar, plus a maritime boundary. The BSF guards the Pakistan and Bangladesh borders, the ITBP guards the China border, the SSB guards the Nepal and Bhutan borders, and the Assam Rifles guards the Myanmar border, while the Army holds the Line of Control. The Group of Ministers' report after Kargil recommended the "one border, one force" principle, modern surveillance, and faster border infrastructure to close long-standing gaps in coordination and equipment.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims asks which force guards which border, when the Department of Border Management was created, and statements on the "one border, one force" principle. Mains GS-III frames questions on why border management remains difficult despite multiple forces — terrain, inter-agency coordination, infrastructure delays, and the development–security balance in border areas — and asks for a way forward combining technology, force integration and border-area development.

19. 19. India–Pakistan Border: LoC, International Boundary and Sir Creek

Key fact	Detail
Line of Control	772-km military control line in J&K; Army-guarded; defined by the 1972 Shimla Agreement
International Boundary	Radcliffe Line border in Punjab, Rajasthan and Gujarat; guarded by the BSF
Sir Creek	96-km disputed marshy estuary off the Kutch coast; dispute affects maritime boundary and EEZ claims
Ceasefire origin	The LoC traces back to the Cease Fire Line drawn under the 1949 Karachi Agreement after the first Kashmir war

What it is: The India–Pakistan frontier has three distinct segments. The Line of Control divides Jammu and Kashmir and is a live military frontier with frequent ceasefire violations, infiltration attempts and artillery exchanges. The International Boundary runs through Punjab, Rajasthan and Gujarat and is a settled, fenced border guarded by the BSF. Sir Creek is a separate, unresolved dispute: a marshy tidal estuary where India follows the mid-channel (thalweg) principle and Pakistan claims the entire creek, a difference that matters because it fixes where the maritime boundary and Exclusive Economic Zone begin.

Why it matters: The LoC is the principal infiltration route for terrorism into Jammu and Kashmir, so its management is directly tied to the internal security of the Union Territory. The International Boundary faces cross-border smuggling of drugs, arms and fake currency, plus drone-based drops. Sir Creek matters because an unresolved maritime boundary invites poaching disputes, affects fishermen on both sides, and leaves a stretch of sensitive coastline ambiguous — ambiguity that hostile actors can exploit.

Key facts: The Cease Fire Line of the 1949 Karachi Agreement was redesignated the Line of Control under the 1972 Shimla Agreement. The Army is responsible for the LoC while the BSF holds the International Boundary. The Sir Creek dispute centres on whether the boundary follows the middle of the navigable channel, as India argues, or the eastern bank, as Pakistan claims. Cross-border tunnels, drone drops and firing incidents make this India's most militarised and incident-prone border, and ceasefire understandings between the two sides are periodically tested.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims tests the origin of the LoC (Shimla Agreement, 1972), which force guards which segment, and the geography of Sir Creek. Mains GS-III asks about the LoC as an infiltration corridor and the security implications of an unsettled maritime boundary, often linking ceasefire violations, smart-fencing solutions and the challenge of managing a border with a hostile neighbour that uses proxy warfare.

20. 20. India–China Border: The LAC and Border Management

Key fact	Detail
Line of Actual Control	Undemarcated de facto boundary, roughly 3,488 km across Western, Middle and Eastern sectors
Guarding force	Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), with the Army deployed at key sectors such as Ladakh
Key agreements	1993 Peace and Tranquillity Agreement, 1996 CBMs agreement, 2005 guiding political parameters, 2013 BDCA
Eastern sector line	The McMahon Line, drawn at the 1914 Shimla Convention, which China does not recognise

What it is: The India–China border is not a settled international boundary but a Line of Actual Control whose alignment the two sides perceive differently. It runs through three sectors: the Western sector in Ladakh, where India claims Aksai Chin; the Middle sector in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand; and the Eastern sector, where the McMahon Line forms the basis of India's claim over Arunachal Pradesh. Because perceptions of the LAC differ, patrols

from both sides enter overlapping zones, producing standoffs that are managed through flag meetings, hotlines and diplomatic channels.

Why it matters: This is India's most consequential border dispute: it involves a nuclear-armed neighbour, covers strategically vital terrain including the approaches to Ladakh and the Siliguri Corridor's broader neighbourhood, and directly shapes India's defence budgets, infrastructure priorities and foreign policy. Every standoff diverts military resources and tests crisis-management mechanisms, while the unresolved boundary feeds a permanent two-front security planning problem alongside Pakistan.

Key facts: The 1993 Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity was the first formal framework for managing the LAC, followed by confidence-building measures in 1996, agreed political parameters and guiding principles in 2005, and the Border Defence Cooperation Agreement in 2013. The ITBP is the designated border-guarding force, and a major programme of strategic border roads has been pushed to close the infrastructure gap with the Chinese side. Differing LAC perceptions remain the structural cause of recurring face-offs.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims asks about the three sectors, the McMahon Line and Shimla Convention (1914), the ITBP's role, and the sequence of border agreements. Mains GS-III expects analysis of why the LAC remains unstable — undemarcated boundary, differing perceptions, infrastructure asymmetry — and evaluates India's response: border infrastructure, force posture, diplomatic mechanisms and the balance between deterrence and engagement.

21. 21. India–Bangladesh Border: Fencing and Migration Issues

Key fact	Detail
Border length	About 4,096 km — India's longest land border, guarded by the BSF
Land Boundary Agreement	2015 agreement (with a constitutional amendment) exchanged enclaves and settled the boundary
Fencing project	Large-scale fencing and floodlighting along the border; riverine stretches fenced with technology instead of wire
Key challenges	Illegal migration, cattle smuggling, human trafficking and fake-currency smuggling across a porous frontier

What it is: The India–Bangladesh border is India's longest land frontier, running through West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. Much of it passes through villages, rivers and floodplains where the boundary cuts through fields and homes, making it inherently porous. India has responded with physical fencing and floodlighting on most of the border, while riverine and low-lying stretches — where fencing is impossible — are covered by electronic surveillance. The 2015 Land Boundary Agreement resolved the historic enclave problem by exchanging over a hundred enclaves, removing a major source of statelessness and administrative ambiguity.

Why it matters: This border shapes the demography and politics of India's entire Northeast and eastern states. Illegal migration strains local resources, alters electoral rolls and fuels ethnic tensions, while cattle smuggling funds organised crime networks. Because the terrain makes a fully sealed border impossible, management here is the test case for India's ability to combine physical barriers, technology and bilateral cooperation with Bangladesh's Border Guard Bangladesh into a workable security regime.

Key facts: The BSF is the designated border-guarding force on this frontier. The 2015 Land Boundary Agreement, implemented through a constitutional amendment, exchanged enclaves and demarcated the boundary, ending decades of statelessness for enclave residents. Fencing covers the great majority of the feasible stretches, with floodlights for night surveillance, while technology-based solutions cover riverine gaps. Joint BSF–BGB coordination mechanisms, including border conferences and coordinated patrolling, anchor the bilateral management of this frontier.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims asks the border's length, the guarding force, and facts about the 2015 Land Boundary Agreement and enclave exchange. Mains GS-III frames the border as a case study in managing a porous, populated

frontier — illegal migration, smuggling economies, limits of fencing in riverine terrain — and asks for solutions blending technology, bilateral cooperation and development of border districts.

22. 22. India-Myanmar Border and the Free Movement Regime Debate

Key fact	Detail
Border length	About 1,643 km through Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram; guarded by the Assam Rifles
Free Movement Regime	Allowed border tribes to cross up to 16 km without documents; the government announced its review and fencing of the border in 2024
Security challenge	Insurgent groups use camps across the border; drug and arms smuggling flow through jungle routes
Ethnic dimension	Shared tribal communities (Nagas, Kukis, Chins) live on both sides, complicating any hard-border approach

What it is: The India-Myanmar border runs through remote, forested hills where the same tribal communities have lived on both sides for centuries. The Free Movement Regime recognised this reality by permitting tribes to cross within 16 km of the border without passports or visas. But the same porosity lets insurgent groups maintain camps across the frontier and move weapons and drugs through jungle tracks. Following instability in Myanmar and ethnic violence in Manipur, the government announced in 2024 that the FMR would be scrapped and the entire border fenced — a decisive shift from a soft to a hard border.

Why it matters: This frontier is the lifeline of insurgency in the Northeast: as long as militants can slip across to safe havens, counter-insurgency operations face a permanent ceiling. It is also a major drug corridor from the Golden Triangle. The FMR debate captures India's core border dilemma — security demands a sealed frontier, but sealing it disrupts the lives of border tribes and can alienate the very communities whose cooperation security forces need.

Key facts: The Assam Rifles is the border-guarding force on this frontier, operating under the Army's operational control. The Free Movement Regime permitted limited document-free movement for border tribes, and its announced withdrawal in 2024 marked a major policy reversal. The border passes through four states, and insurgent groups have long exploited the Myanmar side for camps and logistics. Fencing the full length through dense jungle and mountainous terrain is a slow, expensive engineering challenge.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims asks the border's length, the guarding force, and what the Free Movement Regime permitted. Mains GS-III uses this border to examine the security-community trade-off: insurgent safe havens versus tribal livelihoods, the feasibility of fencing in jungle terrain, and how Myanmar's internal instability spills over into India's Northeast.

23. 23. Coastal Security After 26/11

Key fact	Detail
Trigger	The November 2008 Mumbai attacks — the attackers arrived by sea, exposing gaps in coastal surveillance
Overall authority	The Indian Navy was designated responsible for overall maritime security, including coastal security
Coastal waters role	The Indian Coast Guard was given responsibility for coastal security in territorial waters
Coordination layer	Joint Operations Centres, a coastal radar chain and the NC3I network link the Navy, Coast Guard and marine police

What it is: Before 2008, India's 7,500-km coastline was guarded by multiple agencies with weak coordination, and the sea route into Mumbai was effectively unmonitored. The 26/11 attacks, in which terrorists hijacked a fishing vessel

and sailed into Mumbai undetected, forced a complete redesign. The new architecture has three tiers: the Navy holds overall responsibility for maritime security, the Coast Guard handles coastal security in territorial waters, and state marine police forces patrol shallow waters, creeks and harbours. These tiers are linked through Joint Operations Centres and a national command, control, communication and intelligence network.

Why it matters: A coastline that long, dotted with major ports, refineries, nuclear installations and financial centres, is an obvious target for sea-borne terrorism and smuggling. Coastal security is also economic security: nearly all of India's trade by volume moves by sea, and offshore energy assets need protection. The post-26/11 system exists so that no vessel can again approach a major city unnoticed — the failure it was built to prevent.

Key facts: After 26/11 the government designated the Indian Navy as the authority responsible for overall maritime security and the Indian Coast Guard as the authority for coastal security in territorial waters. Coastal Security Schemes funded state marine police stations, patrol boats and jetties, while a chain of coastal radar stations and automatic vessel-identification systems now feeds the National Command Control Communication and Intelligence network. Regular coastal security exercises test coordination between central agencies, states and fishing communities, whose cooperation remains the weakest link.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims asks which agency is responsible for what — Navy (overall maritime security), Coast Guard (coastal security in territorial waters), marine police (shallow waters) — and the 26/11 trigger. Mains GS-III asks for a critical evaluation of the coastal security architecture: multi-agency coordination problems, gaps in fishing-vessel tracking, and the way forward through technology integration and community-based surveillance.

24. 24. Border Infrastructure: Roads, Fencing and CIBMS

Key fact	Detail
Border roads	The Border Roads Organisation builds strategic roads; 73 roads of strategic importance were identified along the China border
Fencing	Fencing with floodlighting covers most feasible stretches of the Pakistan and Bangladesh borders
CIBMS	Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System — "smart fencing" using sensors, cameras, radars and command centres
Pilot sites	CIBMS pilots were implemented on the Jammu (Pakistan) and Dhubri, Assam (Bangladesh) borders, including the BOLD-QIT system

What it is: Border infrastructure is the physical backbone of border management: roads that let forces reach the frontier quickly, fencing that blocks infiltration and smuggling, and surveillance systems that watch what fences cannot. The Border Roads Organisation builds the strategic road network, including the long-delayed roads along the China border that close the mobility gap with the other side. Where terrain defeats fencing — rivers, marshes, dense jungle — India has turned to the Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System: a "smart fence" of thermal cameras, ground sensors, radars and laser walls feeding into command-and-control centres.

Why it matters: Troops cannot hold a border they cannot reach, and fences without surveillance are easily breached. Infrastructure decides the real effectiveness of every border-guarding force: good roads cut response times from hours to minutes, and sensor-based surveillance multiplies a small force's coverage. The China-border road programme is also strategic signalling — infrastructure parity denies an adversary the advantage of faster mobilisation on its own side of the frontier.

Key facts: The Border Roads Organisation, under the Ministry of Defence, is the principal agency building strategic border roads, including the 73 strategically important roads identified along the China border. Fencing with floodlighting covers the bulk of feasible stretches on the Pakistan and Bangladesh borders. The CIBMS pilots — including the BOLD-QIT (Border Electronically Dominated QRT Interception Technique) system in Dhubri, Assam — demonstrated how sensors, cameras and quick-reaction teams can secure riverine stretches where physical fencing is impossible.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims asks about the BRO, the CIBMS concept and where its pilots were implemented. Mains GS-III expects analysis of why border infrastructure lags — difficult terrain, land acquisition, environmental clearances, funding — and how technology like CIBMS changes the cost-effectiveness of guarding, with a way forward on maintenance, indigenisation and integration with force deployment.

25. 25. Organised Crime and Its Linkages with Terrorism

Key fact	Detail
The nexus	Terrorist groups use crime syndicates' smuggling routes, hawala channels and networks for logistics and funding
Classic Indian case	The 1993 Mumbai serial blasts used established gold-smuggling networks to land RDX and weapons
Global framework	The UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Convention, 2000) targets such networks
Shared commodities	Drugs, arms, counterfeit currency and human trafficking fund both crime syndicates and terrorist groups

What it is: Organised crime and terrorism are distinct enterprises — one seeks profit, the other political impact — but they increasingly share the same infrastructure. Terrorist groups need what crime syndicates already have: clandestine routes across borders, forged documents, money-movement channels and corrupt contacts. In return, syndicates profit from servicing terrorists. The 1993 Mumbai blasts are the textbook Indian example: the conspiracy rode on the landing networks of gold smugglers to bring in RDX and assault rifles, converting a criminal pipeline into a terrorist weapon.

Why it matters: Treating terrorism and organised crime as separate problems lets the same network survive under a different label — crack down on the terror cell while its smuggling lifeline stays intact, and the next attack is already funded. For India, the nexus runs through D-Company-style syndicates, cross-border drug routes that finance militancy in Jammu and Kashmir, and fake-currency networks. Breaking the crime-terror pipeline is therefore as important as neutralising individual terrorists.

Key facts: The UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, adopted in 2000 (the Palermo Convention), provides the international framework against syndicates whose activities cross borders. In India, investigations have repeatedly shown terrorist operations using drug-trafficking proceeds, hawala transfers and smuggling routes originally built for contraband. Agencies including the NIA, the Narcotics Control Bureau and the Enforcement Directorate each attack a different strand of the nexus, which is why inter-agency coordination is central to dismantling it.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims asks about the Palermo Convention (2000) and may use the 1993 Mumbai blasts as a statement-based question on the crime-terror nexus. Mains GS-III frequently asks candidates to "discuss the linkages between organised crime and terrorism" — expecting the convergence argument, Indian examples, the funding-logistics-sharing mechanism, and a way forward built on intelligence fusion, financial investigation and international cooperation.

26. 26. Drug Trafficking and Narco-Terrorism

Key fact	Detail
Source regions	Golden Crescent (Afghanistan–Pakistan–Iran) and Golden Triangle (Myanmar–Laos–Thailand) flank India
Narco-terrorism	Drug profits finance terrorist groups — a documented pattern in Jammu & Kashmir and Punjab
Nodal agency	Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), under the Ministry of Home Affairs, coordinates drug-law enforcement

Core law	The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985, with stringent bail and punishment provisions
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What it is: India sits between the world's two largest opium-producing regions — the Golden Crescent to the west and the Golden Triangle to the east — making it both a transit corridor and a consumer market for heroin, opium, methamphetamine and synthetic drugs. "Narco-terrorism" describes the point where this trade meets militancy: terrorist groups tax, protect or directly run drug consignments, converting narcotics revenue into weapons and operations. Routes through Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, the Northeast and maritime corridors off the western coast carry this combined threat.

Why it matters: Drug trafficking hits India twice — as a public-health crisis destroying a generation of youth, particularly in border states, and as a security threat financing terrorism and insurgency. Every heroin consignment that crosses from across the western border potentially funds the next attack, while addiction hollows out the workforce and burdens health systems. It is one of the few threats that simultaneously erodes human capital, social stability and national security.

Key facts: The NDPS Act of 1985 is India's principal anti-drug law, notable for stringent punishments and restrictive bail conditions. The Narcotics Control Bureau, created under the Act and functioning under the Home Ministry, coordinates enforcement across central and state agencies. Maritime drug seizures off the Gujarat and Kerala coasts have revealed the scale of sea-borne trafficking, while cross-border consignments in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir have repeatedly been linked to terror financing, confirming the narco-terrorism nexus on India's western frontier.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims asks the NDPS Act's year, the NCB's parent ministry, and the locations of the Golden Crescent and Golden Triangle. Mains GS-III expects the narco-terrorism argument — how drug money sustains militancy — plus the enforcement challenge of porous borders and maritime routes, and a way forward combining interdiction, intelligence-sharing, demand reduction and international cooperation.

27. 27. Arms Smuggling and Small Arms Proliferation

Key fact	Detail
Entry routes	Cross-border smuggling from Pakistan and Myanmar, plus leakage from conflict zones and illegal manufacture
Drone drops	Unmanned aerial vehicles are increasingly used to drop pistols, grenades and drugs across the Punjab border
Core law	The Arms Act, 1959 (amended in 2019 with stricter punishments and licensing controls)
Global framework	The UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons targets illicit trade

What it is: Small arms — pistols, rifles, assault weapons, grenades and explosives — are the working capital of terrorism, insurgency and organised crime in India. They enter through cross-border smuggling networks, are dropped by drones across the Punjab frontier, leak from conflict zones, and are produced by illegal arms-manufacturing hubs. Unlike heavy weapons, small arms are cheap, concealable, durable and easily transferred between criminal and terrorist hands, which is why controlling their circulation is central to internal security.

Why it matters: The availability of illicit weapons determines the lethality of every other threat: terrorists without guns are conspirators, with guns they are an insurgency. Proliferation sustains Maoist violence, funds itself through gun-running profits, and raises the cost of every police operation. Drone-based smuggling has added a new dimension — consignments now cross the border without any human carrier, defeating traditional interception methods built around catching couriers.

Key facts: The Arms Act of 1959, substantially amended in 2019 to increase punishments and tighten licensing, is India's core firearms law. Smuggling routes run across the Pakistan border — where drone drops of weapons have

become a regular BSF concern in Punjab — and across the Myanmar border into the Northeast. The UN Programme of Action on Small Arms provides the international framework for marking, tracing and controlling illicit weapons. Recovery of sophisticated weapons in Jammu and Kashmir and Maoist-affected areas repeatedly points to organised cross-border supply chains.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims asks the Arms Act's year and its 2019 amendment, and may test drone-drop incidents as current-affairs statements. Mains GS-III links arms proliferation to terrorism and Left-Wing Extremism, asking how smuggling networks sustain violence and what a response looks like — border surveillance, anti-drone systems, crackdowns on illegal manufacture, and international cooperation on tracing.

28. 28. Human Trafficking as a Security Concern

Key fact	Detail
Forms	Forced labour, sexual exploitation, child trafficking, organ trade and forced begging
Cross-border routes	Trafficking across the Nepal and Bangladesh borders, often disguised as migration or marriage
Core laws	Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956; trafficking offences now under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023
Global framework	The UN Palermo Protocol (2000) on trafficking in persons; Anti-Human Trafficking Units in districts

What it is: Human trafficking is the recruitment, transport and exploitation of people through force, fraud or coercion — for forced labour, sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, begging and organ trade. In India it has a cross-border dimension: victims are moved across the porous Nepal and Bangladesh borders, often disguised as ordinary migrants, brides or job-seekers. Beyond a human-rights crime, it is a security concern because trafficking networks share routes, forged-document pipelines and corrupt contacts with smugglers of drugs, arms and fake currency — and their profits can feed the same criminal economy.

Why it matters: Trafficking preys on the most vulnerable — poor women, children and migrants — and its cross-border character makes it an instrument that hostile networks can exploit for infiltration as well as profit. Border districts that cannot distinguish a trafficking victim from an economic migrant have a blind spot that organised crime uses freely. A state that fails to protect its most vulnerable citizens also fails a basic test of internal security: control over who crosses its borders and for what purpose.

Key facts: The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act of 1956 targets commercial sexual exploitation, while trafficking offences are now codified in the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita of 2023, which replaced the Indian Penal Code. India is a party to the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons (the Palermo Protocol, 2000). Anti-Human Trafficking Units have been set up in districts to improve investigation, and border-guarding forces coordinate with state police to intercept trafficking at crossing points.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims asks about the Palermo Protocol (2000), the ITPA's year, and trafficking provisions under the new criminal laws. Mains GS-III frames trafficking as a transnational organised-crime and border-management problem — porous frontiers, convergence with smuggling networks, victim rehabilitation — and asks for a response combining enforcement, cross-border cooperation and socio-economic prevention.

29. 29. Terror Financing: Channels and Methods

Key fact	Detail
Global mandate	UN Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001) obliges states to criminalise the financing of terrorism
Indian law	The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (repeatedly amended) criminalises terror funding; the NIA investigates
Typical channels	Hawala, charities and NGOs, trade-based transfers, cash couriers, crowdfunding and cryptocurrencies

State sponsorship	Cross-border support to terrorist groups remains the hardest channel to choke through domestic law alone
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What it is: Terror financing is the collection and movement of money that sustains terrorist organisations — paying for recruitment, training, weapons, travel and propaganda. Unlike money laundering, which disguises criminal proceeds, terror financing often moves small, apparently legal sums through charities, businesses, hawala networks and increasingly cryptocurrencies and online crowdfunding. Because the amounts can be modest and the channels look legitimate, it is detected through financial intelligence — suspicious transaction reports, not just border seizures.

Why it matters: Money is the oxygen of terrorism: cut the funding and attacks shrink in scale and frequency even if the ideology survives. For India, terror financing runs through cross-border hawala, fake-currency infusions, NGO and charity fronts, and state-sponsored pipelines into Jammu and Kashmir. Every major investigation — from the 26/11 funding trail to terror-funding cases in Kashmir — has shown that following the money exposes the network faster than following the operatives.

Key facts: UN Security Council Resolution 1373, adopted after the 9/11 attacks, made the criminalisation of terror financing a binding obligation on all states. In India, the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act of 1967 — amended in 2004, 2008, 2012 and 2019 — is the principal anti-terror law covering financing offences, and the National Investigation Agency investigates terror-funding cases with national ramifications. The Financial Intelligence Unit-India analyses suspicious transaction reports filed by banks and intermediaries, forming the financial-intelligence backbone of counter-terror financing.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims asks about UNSCR 1373, the UAPA's coverage of terror financing, and the roles of the NIA and FIU-India. Mains GS-III expects a structured answer on channels (hawala, charities, crypto, state sponsorship), why terror financing is hard to detect (small sums, legitimate fronts), and the way forward — financial intelligence, international cooperation through the FATF, and regulation of emerging payment technologies.

30. 30. Hawala and Informal Value Transfer Systems

Key fact	Detail
How it works	Money is paid to a local dealer and an equivalent sum is disbursed by a counterpart abroad — no funds physically cross borders
Legal status	Hawala is illegal in India under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999
Enforcement	The Enforcement Directorate investigates hawala under FEMA and the PMLA
Security risk	Untraceable, paperless transfers make hawala a preferred channel for terror financing and crime proceeds

What it is: Hawala is an informal value-transfer system based on trust between dealers: a person hands cash to a hawala operator in one city, and the operator's counterpart pays out the equivalent — minus a commission — to the intended recipient in another country. No money actually moves across the border; dealers settle balances later through trade, cash or reciprocal transfers. Operating for centuries across South Asia and the Middle East, hawala is fast, cheap and leaves almost no paper trail, which is precisely why legitimate migrant remittances and criminal money both flow through it.

Why it matters: Hawala is the financial dark matter of India's security threats: terror funding, drug proceeds, fake-currency payments and corruption money all move through channels that banks and regulators cannot see. Because it bypasses the formal financial system entirely, conventional anti-money-laundering tools — transaction monitoring, suspicious-activity reports — are blind to it. Choking hawala-linked terror financing is therefore one of the hardest tasks in India's counter-terrorism architecture.

Key facts: Hawala transactions violate the Foreign Exchange Management Act of 1999, which replaced the earlier FERA of 1973 and regulates foreign-exchange dealings in India. The Enforcement Directorate is the agency that investigates hawala operations, using FEMA for the foreign-exchange violation and the Prevention of Money

Laundering Act where criminal proceeds are involved. Terror-funding investigations in Jammu and Kashmir have repeatedly exposed hawala conduits, and the FATF has flagged informal value-transfer systems globally as a key terror-financing vulnerability.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims asks how hawala works (no physical cross-border movement of funds), its illegality under FEMA 1999, and the Enforcement Directorate's role. Mains GS-III uses hawala as the classic example of the enforcement challenge in terror financing — trust-based, paperless, culturally embedded — and asks for countermeasures: financial intelligence, regulating remittance channels, international cooperation and addressing the legitimate-remittance demand that sustains the system.

31. 31. Money Laundering and the PMLA Framework

Key fact	Detail
Core law	Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002 — in force from 2005; administered by the Enforcement Directorate
Three stages	Placement (introducing dirty money), layering (concealing through transactions), integration (re-entering as clean funds)
Financial intelligence	Financial Intelligence Unit-India (FIU-IND), under the Finance Ministry, receives suspicious transaction reports
Predicate offences	Laundering charges attach to proceeds of scheduled offences including drug trafficking, corruption and terror financing

What it is: Money laundering is the process of making illegally obtained money appear legitimate. It classically runs through three stages: placement, where criminal cash enters the financial system; layering, where it is moved through shell companies, trades and accounts to obscure its origin; and integration, where it re-emerges as apparently clean investment. India's answer is the Prevention of Money Laundering Act of 2002, which criminalises laundering the proceeds of a schedule of predicate offences, empowers the Enforcement Directorate to attach and confiscate tainted property, and obliges banks and intermediaries to report suspicious transactions.

Why it matters: Laundering is what lets crime pay: without it, drug lords, corrupt officials and terrorist financiers would be stuck with cash they cannot spend. For national security, the PMLA is the legal weapon that converts a terror-funding or drug-trafficking investigation into asset seizure — hitting the network's wealth, not just its operatives. Weak laundering controls also damage the formal economy by distorting property markets and business competition with infusions of black money.

Key facts: The PMLA was enacted in 2002 and brought into force in 2005; the Enforcement Directorate administers it and can provisionally attach property derived from crime. The Financial Intelligence Unit-India, functioning under the Ministry of Finance, is the national agency that receives, analyses and disseminates suspicious transaction reports from reporting entities. Laundering under the PMLA attaches to the proceeds of scheduled predicate offences — a list that has been progressively widened — making the Act the common enforcement thread across drug, corruption and terror-financing cases.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims asks the PMLA's year (2002, in force 2005), the three stages of laundering, the Enforcement Directorate's role and FIU-IND's parent ministry. Mains GS-III expects analysis of money laundering as the financial backbone of organised crime and terrorism, the strengths and controversies of the PMLA framework (stringent bail, burden of proof, attachment powers), and the way forward through better financial intelligence and international asset-recovery cooperation.

32. 32. FATF and India's Compliance

Key fact	Detail
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What it is	Financial Action Task Force — the global anti-money-laundering and counter-terror-financing standard-setter, set up in 1989
Standards	The 40 Recommendations form the global benchmark for AML/CFT laws and enforcement
Lists	"Grey list" (increased monitoring) and "black list" (high-risk jurisdictions) name non-compliant countries
India's position	India is a full FATF member; its mutual evaluation placed it in regular follow-up, the best outcome category

What it is: The Financial Action Task Force, established in 1989 by the G-7, is the intergovernmental body that sets global standards against money laundering and terrorist financing. Its 40 Recommendations are the benchmark against which every country's laws, financial supervision and enforcement are judged through peer-review "mutual evaluations." Countries with strategic deficiencies are placed under increased monitoring (the grey list) or called high-risk (the black list), which raises their cost of accessing the global financial system. India has been a full member since 2010 and participates actively in the FATF's regional body, the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering.

Why it matters: FATF listing is a powerful economic sanction without firing a shot: Pakistan's years on the grey list raised its borrowing costs and complicated its trade finance, demonstrating how financial-system pressure can discipline state behaviour on terror financing. For India, strong FATF compliance protects its own financial system's reputation, supports its diplomatic campaign against cross-border terror financing, and gives New Delhi standing to demand action against jurisdictions that harbour terrorist fundraisers.

Key facts: The FATF was created in 1989 and its 40 Recommendations are the global AML/CFT standard. Its grey list subjects countries to increased monitoring and its black list designates high-risk jurisdictions, with real economic consequences for listed states. India, a member since 2010, underwent its mutual evaluation with the outcome of regular follow-up — indicating a sound compliance framework. India has consistently used FATF platforms to press for action against terror-financing networks operating from across its western border.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims asks the FATF's founding year (1989), the meaning of the grey and black lists, and India's membership status. Mains GS-III expects the FATF as an instrument of financial diplomacy — how listing pressures states on terror financing, the Pakistan grey-list episode as illustration, and what India must do to sustain compliance: beneficial-ownership transparency, virtual-asset regulation and effective prosecution of laundering cases.

33. 33. Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICN)

Key fact	Detail
What it is	High-quality counterfeit Indian rupees printed abroad and smuggled in to fund terrorism and destabilise the economy
Entry routes	Smuggled across the Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan borders and through air and sea routes
Investigating agency	The NIA investigates FICN cases with cross-border and terror-funding links; a dedicated FICN coordination mechanism exists
Policy response	Demonetisation in November 2016 was partly justified as a strike against FICN stockpiles

What it is: Fake Indian Currency Notes are sophisticated counterfeits of Indian rupees produced outside the country and smuggled in through land borders, air passengers and sea routes. Unlike crude forgeries, high-quality FICN mimics security features closely enough to circulate widely before detection. The threat is twofold: FICN is a funding stream for terrorist and criminal networks, which exchange it for genuine currency, and at scale it corrodes confidence in the currency itself — a form of economic warfare.

Why it matters: FICN sits at the intersection of almost every internal-security threat: it is printed by hostile actors, smuggled through the same networks that move drugs and arms, laundered through hawala, and spent on terrorist operations. Each detected consignment is therefore both a crime and an intelligence lead into the wider terror-finance

network. Protecting the integrity of the currency is also a sovereignty issue — a state that cannot guarantee its own banknotes loses a basic attribute of economic authority.

Key facts: FICN consignments have been seized along the Nepal and Bangladesh borders and the western frontier, with investigations repeatedly tracing the printing and logistics to networks operating from across the border. The National Investigation Agency takes up FICN cases that have terror-funding or cross-border dimensions, and a dedicated coordination mechanism links central agencies, state police and border forces on counterfeit-currency intelligence. The November 2016 demonetisation was presented by the government partly as a measure to extinguish FICN stockpiles, and new-series notes introduced upgraded security features.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims asks the NIA's role in FICN cases, smuggling routes, and the 2016 demonetisation's stated FICN objective. Mains GS-III treats FICN as a case study in the crime-terror-economy nexus — cross-border printing, smuggling networks, hawala laundering, terror funding — and asks for a layered response: border interdiction, currency security features, financial intelligence and international cooperation against the source networks.

Part III: Cyber Security, Emerging Threats & Security Agencies

34. 34. Cyber Security: Threat Landscape for India

Key fact	Detail
Expanding attack surface	Digital India, UPI and e-governance have multiplied targets — from power grids to payment apps
Ransomware	Hospitals, municipal bodies and PSUs increasingly hit; double-extortion tactics now common
State-sponsored intrusions	Persistent targeting of defence PSUs, power utilities and government networks
CERT-In	National nodal incident-response agency (est. 2004); 6-hour breach-reporting mandate under 2022 directions

What it is: India's cyber threat landscape comprises the full spectrum of malicious activity directed at its digital assets — financially motivated cybercrime (phishing, UPI fraud, ransomware), espionage by foreign intelligence services, hacktivist defacements, and disruptive attacks on critical infrastructure. As one of the world's largest internet user bases with a rapidly digitising economy, India presents a vast attack surface spanning government networks, banks, telecom, energy and millions of first-time digital citizens.

Why it matters: Cyberattacks can paralyse power, banking and transport without a single soldier crossing the border — making cyber the cheapest asymmetric weapon against India. Reported intrusions into power-sector networks and the 2022 ransomware attack on AIIMS Delhi showed that hospitals and grids are in the crosshairs. With Digital India deepening dependence on digital systems, a major cyber incident could cause economic losses, public panic and erosion of trust in digital governance.

Key facts: CERT-In, established in 2004, is the national nodal agency for incident response and runs advisories plus the Cyber Swachhta Kendra botnet-cleaning programme. The IT Act, 2000 (amended 2008) is the primary cyber law. The National Cyber Security Policy (2013) set the first strategic framework; a National Cyber Security Strategy has since been drafted to update it. CERT-In's 2022 directions made six-hour incident reporting mandatory for service providers and companies.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims asks statement-based questions on CERT-In's mandate, NCIIPC, and IT Act provisions (Sections 66C, 66D, 69, 69A). Mains GS-III frames cyber security as a governance challenge — "discuss the emerging threats and India's institutional response" — expecting coverage of critical infrastructure, data protection, capacity gaps and a way forward built around coordination, indigenous technology and public awareness.

35. 35. Critical Information Infrastructure Protection and NCIIPC

Key fact	Detail
NCIIPC	Nodal agency for CII protection, created 2014 under Section 70A of the IT Act
CII sectors	Energy, transport, banking & finance, telecom, strategic & public enterprises, government
Section 70, IT Act	Lets government declare any computer resource a "protected system"; unauthorised access is punishable
Protected System Rules, 2018	Lay down information-security practices and procedures for declared protected systems

What it is: Critical Information Infrastructure (CII) refers to computer resources whose incapacitation or destruction would debilitate national security, the economy, public health or safety — power grids, banking networks, telecom, transport and strategic industries. The National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC), set up in 2014 under Section 70A of the IT Act, is the designated national nodal agency that identifies CII, issues security guidelines, audits preparedness and coordinates incident response for these sectors.

Why it matters: Modern India runs on interdependent digital systems — a cyberattack on the power grid can cascade into banking, hospitals and railways within hours. Adversaries prize CII because disrupting it delivers strategic coercion without war. Protecting CII is therefore the non-negotiable core of national cyber security, and its compromise during a crisis could multiply the damage of any conventional or hybrid conflict.

Key facts: NCIIPC is the designated nodal agency under Section 70A of the IT Act, while Section 70 empowers the government to declare protected systems. Its remit spans power and energy, banking and financial services, telecom, transport, strategic and public enterprises, and government networks. The Information Technology (Information Security Practices and Procedures for Protected System) Rules, 2018 prescribe the security baseline for declared systems. Sectoral coordination with CERT-In and intelligence agencies forms the operational backbone of CII defence.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims tests "which body protects CII" — the NCIIPC vs CERT-In distinction is a classic trap — and Section 70/70A mapping. Mains asks for a critical evaluation of CII protection: legacy operational-technology systems, public-private ownership gaps, shortage of skilled auditors — and a way forward through mandatory audits, indigenous security products, sectoral CERTs and regular crisis-simulation exercises.

36. 36. Cyber Warfare and State-Sponsored Attacks

Key fact	Detail
Cyber warfare	State-directed use of cyber operations to spy on, disrupt or degrade an adversary's systems
APT groups	Advanced Persistent Threats — long-dwell intrusions by state-linked actors in government and strategic networks
Stuxnet (2010)	Landmark state-sponsored cyber weapon that physically damaged Iranian nuclear centrifuges
UN GGE norms	Voluntary norms of responsible state behaviour in cyberspace, developed through UN expert groups

What it is: Cyber warfare is the use of digital attacks by — or on behalf of — states to spy on, disrupt, degrade or destroy an adversary's critical systems. Unlike ordinary cybercrime, state-sponsored operations deploy Advanced Persistent Threat (APT) groups that dwell inside target networks for months, exfiltrating defence, nuclear and policy data or pre-positioning malware for sabotage during a crisis. Attribution is deliberately difficult, giving attackers plausible deniability.

Why it matters: For India, state-sponsored cyber activity targets the commanding heights — power utilities, defence PSUs, nuclear installations and government communications. Reported intrusions into Indian power-sector networks in 2020 and the 2019 malware incident at the Kudankulam nuclear plant's administrative network (confirmed by NPCIL, with operational systems unaffected) underline the threat. In a future border crisis, cyber strikes could blind radar, freeze logistics and spread panic — a parallel battlefield India cannot ignore.

Key facts: The 2010 Stuxnet attack on Iran's Natanz facility proved cyber weapons can cause physical destruction. India has publicly attributed few incidents, but threat-intelligence reports have flagged sustained targeting of Indian critical sectors by state-linked groups. No binding global treaty governs cyber warfare; the UN Group of Governmental Experts has produced voluntary norms of responsible state behaviour, and the academic Tallinn Manual interprets how international law applies to cyber operations.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims may ask about Stuxnet or match agencies and terms to their functions. Mains GS-III expects analysis of cyber warfare as a dimension of hybrid conflict — attribution challenges, escalation risks, deterrence dilemmas — and India's response: offensive and defensive cyber capabilities, international norm-building, and the case for a dedicated cyber command structure.

37. 37. Data Protection and Privacy vs National Security

Key fact	Detail
Puttaswamy (2017)	Supreme Court recognised privacy as a fundamental right under Article 21
DPDP Act, 2023	India's data-protection law: consent-based processing, Data Protection Board, graded penalties
Srikrishna Committee (2018)	Expert committee whose report shaped India's data-protection framework
Section 69, IT Act	Empowers interception, monitoring and decryption in the interest of sovereignty and security

What it is: Data protection law regulates how personal data is collected and used, while national security requires the state to access communications and data to prevent terrorism, espionage and crime. The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 builds a consent-based regime with a Data Protection Board and penalties up to Rs 250 crore per contravention — but simultaneously exempts the state from key obligations for sovereignty, security and public order, placing privacy and security in permanent tension.

Why it matters: India is one of the world's largest generators of personal data, and its protection is both a citizen right (after Puttaswamy) and a strategic asset — bulk data in hostile hands enables profiling, influence operations and targeting. Yet over-broad surveillance exemptions can hollow out the very right the law promises, invite judicial pushback and erode public trust. Getting the balance right determines whether India's digital state is both secure and legitimate.

Key facts: The Justice B.N. Srikrishna Committee (2018) drafted the first comprehensive data-protection bill. The 2023 Act applies to digital personal data, mandates breach notification, and gives the state wide exemptions for national security. Section 69 of the IT Act separately empowers interception and decryption for security purposes under prescribed safeguards. The Supreme Court's 2018 Aadhaar judgment upheld the scheme while striking down mandatory private-sector linkage — a template for proportionality.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims tests Puttaswamy, the DPDP Act's key features, and Section 69 vs 69A distinctions. Mains GS-III frames the classic "privacy vs security" debate — surveillance reform, judicial oversight, data localisation — expecting a balanced argument anchored in proportionality, with global comparisons and a way forward through independent oversight and sunset clauses.

38. 38. Misinformation, Deepfakes and Social Media Regulation

Key fact	Detail
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IT Rules, 2021	Due-diligence framework for intermediaries; grievance officers and takedown timelines
SSMI threshold	Significant Social Media Intermediaries: platforms with 50 lakh+ registered Indian users face extra obligations
Deepfakes	AI-generated synthetic media enabling impersonation, fraud and election manipulation
PIB Fact Check	Government fact-checking unit; its expanded blocking role under the 2021 Rules faced judicial scrutiny

What it is: Misinformation — false content spread without necessarily malicious intent — and disinformation — deliberately fabricated content — now travel at platform speed, amplified by encrypted messaging and algorithmic feeds. Deepfakes, AI-generated audio-video impersonations, have made seeing no longer believing: fake clips of leaders, celebrities and officials can trigger communal tension, market panic or electoral manipulation within hours, outpacing traditional verification.

Why it matters: For India, viral rumours have repeatedly preceded mob violence, while hostile actors use coordinated inauthentic networks for influence operations around elections, border crises and communal fault lines. Deepfake-enabled fraud and non-consensual imagery add criminal and gendered dimensions. Because the information space shapes public order and democratic integrity, regulating it has become a first-order internal security task — complicated by free-speech protections under Article 19.

Key facts: The IT Rules, 2021 require Significant Social Media Intermediaries (50 lakh+ Indian users) to appoint India-based grievance, nodal and compliance officers and to enable traceability of the first originator of offending messages. Deepfake harms are addressed through impersonation and privacy provisions of the IT Act and the DPDP Act, alongside Election Commission advisories during polls. The government's attempt to empower a fact-check unit with blocking powers under the Rules was struck down by the Bombay High Court — a landmark on state power over online speech.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims asks about the IT Rules 2021 (SSMI obligations, grievance redressal, first-originator traceability) and safe-harbour concepts. Mains GS-III expects a nuanced essay on regulating misinformation without chilling speech — platform accountability, AI-detection tools, media literacy, and the judiciary's role as arbiter — with deepfakes as the contemporary hook.

39. 39. Emerging Technologies: AI, Drones and Security Implications

Key fact	Detail
Drone Rules, 2021	Liberalised civil-drone regime with the Digital Sky platform and no-permission-no-takeoff
Weaponised drones	Used for cross-border smuggling of arms and narcotics, notably along the western border
AI in security	Powers predictive policing, facial recognition and threat analytics — with bias and privacy risks
Counter-drone systems	DRDO-developed systems deployed to detect and neutralise hostile drones

What it is: Emerging technologies — artificial intelligence, unmanned aerial systems, quantum computing and autonomous weapons — are reshaping security faster than doctrine can adapt. AI enables both sharper defence (threat detection, intelligence fusion, predictive analytics) and sharper offence (deepfakes, autonomous targeting, cyberattacks at machine speed). Cheap commercial drones have democratised airpower, letting non-state actors surveil, smuggle and strike.

Why it matters: India faces drone-dropped arms and drugs across the western border, AI-generated disinformation during elections, and the prospect of autonomous weapons in future conflicts. At the same time, AI-driven surveillance raises constitutional concerns after Puttaswamy, and dependence on foreign technology stacks creates supply-chain vulnerabilities. Mastering these technologies indigenously — while governing their risks — is now central to comprehensive national power.

Key facts: The Drone Rules, 2021 replaced a restrictive regime with industry-friendly norms anchored in the Digital Sky platform. DRDO has developed indigenous counter-drone systems now deployed at sensitive sites. Globally, the debate on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems continues at the UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons without a binding treaty. India's AI strategy documents emphasise "AI for All" with responsible-AI principles, though a dedicated military-AI doctrine is still evolving.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims may ask about the Drone Rules, Digital Sky, or match technologies to applications. Mains GS-III loves this theme — "technology as a force multiplier and a threat vector" — expecting discussion of dual-use dilemmas, regulation of autonomous weapons, indigenous innovation (DRDO, start-up ecosystems) and ethical guardrails for AI in policing and warfare.

40. 40. Space as a Security Domain

Key fact	Detail
Mission Shakti (2019)	India's ASAT test made it the fourth country to demonstrate anti-satellite capability
Defence Space Agency	Tri-services agency (est. 2019) handling space warfare and satellite protection
Dual-use assets	Cartosat and RISAT-series satellites serve both civilian mapping and military surveillance
NavIC	India's indigenous regional navigation system with strategic and civilian applications

What it is: Space has become the ultimate high ground — modern militaries depend on satellites for communication, navigation, surveillance and missile guidance, making space systems both critical enablers and prime targets. Space security spans protecting one's own satellites (from jamming, dazzling, cyber intrusion and kinetic attack), developing counter-space capabilities, and managing orbital debris and norms that keep space usable.

Why it matters: India's adversaries are investing in counter-space weapons, and any degradation of Indian satellite networks during a conflict would blind surveillance, disrupt communications and degrade precision strike. Mission Shakti demonstrated deterrence, but debris and escalation risks demand restraint. With private players entering space and mega-constellations crowding orbits, India needs resilient architectures, space situational awareness and active diplomacy on norms.

Key facts: In March 2019 India conducted Mission Shakti, an anti-satellite missile test that destroyed a low-orbit satellite, becoming the fourth country with demonstrated ASAT capability. The Defence Space Agency and the Defence Space Research Organisation were created in 2019 to consolidate military space efforts. ISRO's Cartosat and RISAT series provide high-resolution imaging, while NavIC offers indigenous navigation. A long-pending Space Activities Bill aims to regulate India's growing commercial space sector.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims asks about Mission Shakti, NavIC, and agency acronyms (DSA, DSRO). Mains GS-III frames space as a security and technology-governance question — weaponisation vs peaceful uses, debris management, public-private roles — rewarding answers that balance deterrence with India's traditional advocacy of preventing an arms race in outer space.

41. 41. Biosecurity and Bioterrorism Preparedness

Key fact	Detail
BWC (1972)	Biological Weapons Convention bans bioweapons; India is a party, but it lacks a verification protocol
COVID-19 lesson	Exposed gaps in surveillance, medical supply chains and coordinated crisis response
IDSP	Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme — India's outbreak early-warning network
One Health	Integrated human-animal-environment health approach now central to pandemic preparedness

What it is: Biosecurity covers protection against biological threats — whether natural pandemics, accidental lab releases or deliberate bioterrorism. Bioterrorism is the use of pathogens or toxins (anthrax, plague, engineered viruses) to cause mass casualties, panic and economic disruption. Because biotechnology is dual-use and increasingly accessible, the barrier to biological attack is falling even as the consequences remain catastrophic.

Why it matters: COVID-19 showed how a biological event can kill millions, crash economies and strain state capacity — a deliberate attack could be worse, and attribution is nearly impossible. India's dense populations, vast livestock sector and busy borders make early detection critical. Biosecurity is also an economic-security issue: pharmaceutical supply chains, food systems and trade all hinge on biological resilience.

Key facts: India is a party to the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention, which prohibits bioweapons but has no inspection regime. The Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme provides district-level outbreak reporting, strengthened after COVID-19. India operates high-containment BSL-3 and BSL-4 laboratories, including at the National Institute of Virology, Pune. The One Health approach — linking human, animal and environmental health — now anchors national preparedness thinking, alongside NDMA's biological-disaster management framework.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims may ask about the BWC, One Health, or IDSP's purpose. Mains GS-III treats biosecurity as a non-traditional security challenge — expecting analysis of dual-use research governance, lab safety, surveillance capacity and international cooperation, with COVID-19 as the unavoidable case study and a way forward built on early warning and resilient health systems.

42. 42. Intelligence Agencies: IB, RAW and NTRO

Key fact	Detail
IB (1887)	India's oldest intelligence agency; domestic intelligence and counter-intelligence under the Home Ministry
RAW (1968)	External intelligence agency under the Cabinet Secretariat/PMO; created after the 1962 and 1965 wars
NTRO (2004)	Apex technical-intelligence agency (satellite, signals, cyber) serving all agencies
MAC	Multi Agency Centre — post-Kargil intelligence-sharing hub under the IB

What it is: India's intelligence architecture rests on three pillars. The Intelligence Bureau (IB), founded in 1887, handles internal intelligence and counter-intelligence — tracking terrorism, espionage and subversion inside India — under the Ministry of Home Affairs. The Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), created in 1968, collects foreign intelligence under the Prime Minister's Office. The National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO), set up in 2004, is the apex body for technical intelligence — satellite imagery, signals and cyber — serving the entire security establishment.

Why it matters: The Kargil conflict and the 26/11 Mumbai attacks both exposed intelligence failures — information existed but was not shared or acted upon. Effective intelligence is the first line of internal security: preventing attacks is infinitely cheaper than responding to them. Coordination among IB, RAW, NTRO, military intelligence and state police Special Branches determines whether dots get connected before — not after — a tragedy.

Key facts: RAW was carved out of the IB in 1968 following intelligence shortcomings in the 1962 and 1965 wars; its first chief was R.N. Kao. The Kargil Review Committee led to the Multi Agency Centre for intelligence fusion and the Joint Intelligence Committee under the National Security Council Secretariat. NTRO's mandate covers technical intelligence across domains, reducing dependence on foreign sources. Intelligence agencies in India function under executive authority without a dedicated parliamentary oversight statute — a long-debated reform.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims asks founding years, mandates and nodal ministries (IB-MHA, RAW-PMO/Cabinet Secretariat, NTRO-NSA) — classic match-the-pair material. Mains GS-III probes intelligence reform: coordination failures, the case for parliamentary oversight, balancing secrecy with accountability, and technology's growing role in intelligence collection.

43. 43. Central Armed Police Forces and Their Roles

Key fact	Detail
Seven CAPFs	AR, BSF, CISF, CRPF, ITBP, NSG and SSB — all under the Ministry of Home Affairs
CRPF	Largest CAPF; the lead force for internal security and counter-insurgency operations
BSF (1965)	Guards India's borders with Pakistan and Bangladesh
NSG (1984)	Elite counter-terrorism and hostage-rescue force; the "Black Cats"

What it is: The Central Armed Police Forces are seven uniformed forces under the Ministry of Home Affairs that form the backbone of India's internal security apparatus. Each has a distinct mandate: the BSF guards the Pakistan and Bangladesh borders; the ITBP (1962) holds the India-China frontier; the SSB (1963) watches the Nepal and Bhutan borders; the CRPF fights insurgency and handles internal disturbances; the CISF (1969) secures airports, metros and critical industry; the Assam Rifles (1835, the oldest) operates in the Northeast; and the NSG handles counter-terrorism and hostage rescue.

Why it matters: CAPFs are the state's first responders to every internal crisis — insurgency in Kashmir and the Northeast, Left-Wing Extremism, communal riots, border smuggling and elections in disturbed areas. Their deployment relieves the Army from internal duties, preserving it for external defence. With nearly a million personnel collectively, their welfare, modernisation and leadership directly affect India's internal stability.

Key facts: The CRPF, raised in 1939 as the Crown Representative's Police and renamed in 1949, is the world's largest paramilitary force and the lead counter-insurgency force. The BSF was raised in 1965 after the Kutch conflict. The NSG was created in 1984 following Operation Blue Star. CAPFs are led by IPS officers on deputation — a long-standing grievance of cadre officers demanding greater promotional avenues, periodically litigated up to the Supreme Court.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims loves founding years and mandate-matching (BSF–western borders, ITBP–China border, SSB–Nepal/Bhutan). Mains GS-III asks about CAPF modernisation, the IPS-deputation debate, deployment stress, and their role in the internal-external security balance — often linked to police reform and defence reform themes.

44. 44. NIA: Mandate and Performance

Key fact	Detail
NIA Act, 2008	Created the agency after the 26/11 Mumbai attacks; headquarters in New Delhi
Federal jurisdiction	Can investigate scheduled offences anywhere in India without state consent
Special courts	Dedicated NIA courts for speedy trial of terrorism cases
2019 amendment	Expanded scheduled offences and gave NIA extra-territorial jurisdiction over crimes against Indians abroad

What it is: The National Investigation Agency is India's first truly federal counter-terrorism investigative body, created by the NIA Act of December 2008 in the wake of the 26/11 Mumbai attacks. It investigates scheduled offences — terrorism, terror financing, and allied crimes — across state boundaries, taking over cases suo motu or on central government direction. Its cases are tried in designated Special Courts, and it can investigate offences committed against Indian citizens and interests abroad.

Why it matters: Terrorism ignores state borders, but policing in India is a state subject — before the NIA, inter-state terror cases depended on fragile state-centre coordination. The NIA plugs this gap with professional, specialised investigation, disrupting terror modules, financing networks and cross-border linkages. Its consistently high conviction rate has made it the institutional face of India's zero-tolerance counter-terrorism posture.

Key facts: The NIA Act was passed in December 2008, weeks after 26/11. Unlike the CBI, the NIA needs no state consent to operate — a deliberate design choice that has sparked federalism debates. The 2019 amendment widened its scheduled offences (adding cyber-terrorism, human trafficking and arms-related offences among others) and empowered it to probe attacks on Indians abroad. The agency reports one of the highest conviction rates among Indian investigative bodies, frequently cited above 90 per cent.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims asks the founding statute and year, headquarters, and NIA vs CBI distinctions (state consent). Mains GS-III frames the NIA within federalism and counter-terrorism — its mandate, performance, coordination with state ATS units, and whether India needs an NCTC-style coordinating body alongside it.

45. 45. NATGRID and Intelligence Coordination

Key fact	Detail
NATGRID	National Intelligence Grid — data-integration project conceived after 26/11 to connect agency databases
11 agencies, 21 providers	Links core security agencies with databases of banks, airlines, telecom and railways
Privacy debate	Bulk data access raises Puttaswamy-proportionality and oversight concerns
NCTC	Proposed National Counter Terrorism Centre — stalled by state opposition over federalism

What it is: NATGRID (National Intelligence Grid) is a counter-terrorism data-integration project that gives India's security agencies a single platform to access otherwise-siloed databases — immigration, banking, telecom, railways, airlines and more — to connect patterns across suspects, travel, finance and communications. Conceived after the 26/11 attacks exposed intelligence-sharing failures, it links central agencies with designated data providers so analysts can fuse information in near real time.

Why it matters: Modern terrorism is a data problem — attackers leave digital trails across travel bookings, money transfers and phone records, but no single agency sees the whole picture. NATGRID addresses the classic "failure to connect the dots." Yet bulk access to citizen data concentrates enormous power; without strong legal safeguards and oversight, it risks becoming a mass-surveillance architecture — the central tension of intelligence coordination in a democracy.

Key facts: NATGRID was approved in the aftermath of 26/11 and became operational in the early 2020s under a Chief Executive Officer. It connects about eleven central agencies with over twenty categories of data providers. Complementary coordination structures include the Multi Agency Centre under the IB and the Joint Intelligence Committee under the National Security Council Secretariat. The long-proposed National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) — meant to integrate intelligence and operations — remains stalled amid federalism objections from states.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims may ask NATGRID's purpose and nodal structure. Mains GS-III expects a balanced treatment — the operational case for data fusion versus privacy, oversight and federalism concerns — concluding with safeguards: judicial oversight, purpose limitation, audit trails and a clear statutory basis.

46. 46. Police Reforms and the Prakash Singh Directives

Key fact	Detail
Prakash Singh case (2006)	Supreme Court's landmark judgment issuing seven binding police-reform directives
Fixed tenures	Minimum two-year tenure for DGPs, SPs and SHOs to insulate policing from arbitrary transfers
Separation of functions	Investigation separated from law-and-order duties for professional probing
Police is a State subject	Under the Seventh Schedule — reforms need state legislatures to act

What it is: In Prakash Singh v. Union of India (2006), the Supreme Court — noting decades of unimplemented reform-committee reports — issued seven binding directives to insulate policing from political misuse: State Security Commissions to set policy, merit-based DGP selection with fixed two-year tenure, minimum tenures for field officers, separation of investigation from law-and-order, Police Establishment Boards for transfers and postings, Police Complaints Authorities at state and district levels, and a National Security Commission for central forces.

Why it matters: Police are the front line of internal security — counter-terrorism, riot control, intelligence collection and criminal investigation all begin at the thana. But politicised transfers, colonial-era structures and abysmal police-population ratios cripple effectiveness and public trust. Without reform, every other security institution inherits weak foundations: intelligence without investigation, and laws without enforcement.

Key facts: The seven directives remain the lodestar of police reform, though implementation across states has been patchy and diluted — several states passed laws that complied in letter more than spirit. The Model Police Act (2006), drafted by the Soli Sorabjee committee, offered a legislative template few states adopted fully. Policing is a State subject under the Seventh Schedule, so the Centre can nudge but not mandate. The Second Administrative Reforms Commission also devoted a report to public order and policing.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims asks the year (2006), the number of directives (seven), and that police is a State subject. Mains GS-III repeatedly asks "why police reforms remain elusive" — expecting the directives, implementation gaps, political incentives against reform, and a way forward through fixed tenures, functional separation, better training, technology and community policing.

47. 47. Defence Reforms: CDS, Theatre Commands and Agnipath

Key fact	Detail
CDS (2019)	Chief of Defence Staff created December 2019; heads the Department of Military Affairs
First CDS	General Bipin Rawat; the post integrates the three services and drives jointness
Theatre commands	Proposed integrated tri-service commands replacing single-service operational control
Agnipath (2022)	Short-service soldier scheme: 4-year tenure, about 25% retained; aims at a younger, leaner force

What it is: Defence reforms aim to convert three largely independent services into an integrated war-fighting machine. The Chief of Defence Staff — created in December 2019 as the government's single-point military adviser and head of the new Department of Military Affairs — drives jointness in procurement, training and operations. Integrated theatre commands would place army, navy and air force assets under unified commanders for defined theatres. The Agnipath scheme (June 2022) recruits soldiers ("Agniveers") for four-year terms, with about a quarter absorbed into the regular cadre.

Why it matters: Modern warfare is joint, technology-driven and fast — siloed services risk defeat in detail, as the Kargil Review Committee warned. Theatre commands promise unified planning against two-front threats; Agnipath promises a younger force profile and relief for the ballooning pension bill. Together they represent the most ambitious military restructuring since independence — and their success or failure will shape India's deterrence for decades.

Key facts: The CDS post, recommended since the Kargil Review Committee (1999), was announced in August 2019 and established that December alongside the Department of Military Affairs; General Bipin Rawat was the first CDS. Integrated theatre commands have been announced as the next reform step, with implementation underway. Agnipath recruits youth aged 17.5–23 for four years, with 25 per cent offered regular service — a scheme debated over training depth, regimental ethos and post-service prospects, alongside its fiscal and demographic logic.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims asks the CDS creation year, the DMA, and Agnipath's basic features (tenure, retention share). Mains GS-III expects critical analysis — jointness vs service autonomy, the politics of theatre commands, Agnipath's human-resource and strategic trade-offs — with the Kargil Review Committee to Shekatkar Committee lineage as the reform backstory.

48. 48. India's Counter-Terrorism Doctrine

Key fact	Detail
Zero tolerance	India's stated policy: no distinction between terrorists and their sponsors
2016 surgical strikes	Cross-LoC strikes after the Uri attack — a doctrinal shift toward punitive response
Balakot (2019)	Air strikes after Pulwama — extended the "new normal" of cross-border retaliation
UAPA	Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act — the core anti-terror law, amended to designate individuals as terrorists (2019)

What it is: India has no single published counter-terrorism doctrine; instead, an evolving doctrine-in-practice combines a declared zero-tolerance policy with layered instruments — intelligence-led prevention, specialised forces (NSG, NIA), stringent laws (UAPA), international diplomacy (terror-listing, FATF pressure), and, since 2016, overt cross-border punitive strikes. The through-line is imposing costs on state sponsors rather than absorbing attacks passively.

Why it matters: As a long-term victim of cross-border terrorism, India needs a doctrine that deters without triggering uncontrolled escalation with nuclear-armed neighbours. The post-Uri and post-Pulwama responses established a "new normal" of retaliation, but doctrine must also handle lone-wolf attacks, radicalisation and terror financing — where kinetic responses don't apply. A coherent doctrine aligns military, intelligence, legal and diplomatic tools toward the same goal.

Key facts: The 2016 surgical strikes across the Line of Control (after Uri) and the 2019 Balakot air strikes (after Pulwama) marked a shift from strategic restraint to punitive deterrence. The UAPA, amended in 2019 to allow designation of individuals as terrorists, is the principal legal instrument. Internationally, India has pushed for a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism and used FATF processes to pressure terror financing. The NIA's high conviction rate underpins the legal-deterrence pillar.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims asks about UAPA amendments, the NIA, and FATF basics. Mains GS-III frames counter-terrorism as strategy — "evaluate the evolution of India's response" — expecting the restraint-to-retaliation arc, the escalation-management dilemma, non-kinetic tools (financing, radicalisation, diplomacy), and a way forward through whole-of-government coordination.

49. 49. Disaster Management as a Security Dimension

Key fact	Detail
DM Act, 2005	Created the NDMA (chaired by the PM), SDMAs and the NDRF
Sendai Framework	Global 2015–2030 blueprint for disaster risk reduction that guides Indian policy
Operation Maitri (2015)	India's HADR response to the Nepal earthquake — disaster diplomacy in action
CDRI	Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, launched by India in 2019

What it is: Disaster management is increasingly treated as a security function because large-scale disasters — earthquakes, floods, cyclones, pandemics — can kill thousands, displace millions, cripple infrastructure and destabilise regions as surely as armed conflict. India's framework under the Disaster Management Act (2005) spans prevention, preparedness, response and recovery, led by the NDMA with the NDRF as the specialist response force and state authorities executing on the ground.

Why it matters: Disasters are threat multipliers — they strain state capacity, create governance vacuums that extremists exploit, and trigger migration and resource conflicts. Climate change is intensifying their frequency and scale. Conversely, disaster relief is strategic soft power: India's rapid HADR responses (Nepal 2015, Turkiye 2023's

Operation Dost) build regional goodwill that conventional diplomacy cannot buy, making disaster capability an instrument of national influence.

Key facts: The DM Act (2005) established a three-tier structure — NDMA at the centre (chaired by the Prime Minister), State DMAs, and District DMAs — with the NDRF as the dedicated response force. India aligns with the Sendai Framework (2015–2030) and the Prime Minister's ten-point agenda on disaster risk reduction. The Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), launched by India in 2019, exports resilient-infrastructure expertise globally. Armed forces remain the responder of last resort in mega-disasters.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims asks the DM Act year, NDMA's chairperson, and NDRF basics. Mains GS-III increasingly treats disasters as non-traditional security — expecting the security framing (threat multiplier, HADR diplomacy), institutional assessment (centre-state coordination, funding, community preparedness), and a way forward built on resilient infrastructure and early-warning systems.

50. 50. How to Write Internal Security Answers for Mains

Key fact	Detail
Structure	Define, then dimensions, then institutional response, then challenges, then way forward
Cite specifics	Agency names, Act years and sections, committee reports — precision scores marks
Link internal-external	Show cross-border linkages: every internal threat has an external dimension
Forward-looking close	End with reforms and capacity-building, not just criticism

What it is: Internal security answers in GS-III reward structured, multi-dimensional analysis over narrative description. The winning template: open with a crisp definition and a current data point or incident; unpack the issue across dimensions (threat landscape, institutional framework, legal provisions, challenges); evaluate India's response with specific agencies, Acts and committees; and close with a constructive way forward. Diagrams, flowcharts and tables compress information and signal clarity to the examiner.

Why it matters: Internal security is among the highest-weightage GS-III themes, recurring yearly in questions on terrorism, cyber security, border management and extremism. Because most aspirants write generic answers, precise institutional knowledge — NIA Act (2008), Prakash Singh directives (2006), NCIIPC vs CERT-In, UAPA amendments — is the differentiator between average and top-band scores. Technique converts the same knowledge into more marks.

Key facts: Examiners look for conceptual clarity (e.g., distinguishing radicalisation from terrorism), factual precision (years, sections, agency mandates), balanced analysis (acknowledging both state capacity and constraints), and contemporary relevance (recent incidents, reports, government initiatives). Common mark-losers: confusing agencies (IB vs RAW, NIA vs CBI), one-sided arguments, outdated facts, and conclusions that merely restate the problem instead of proposing solutions.

How UPSC tests it: This topic is meta-preparation rather than syllabus content — but it organises everything before it. Practice by converting each topic in these notes into a 150-word answer: one definition, three dimensions, two institutional facts, one way-forward line. Review previous years' GS-III papers to map how static concepts (federalism, police reform) combine with current affairs (a recent attack, a new law) — that fusion is where internal security questions live.

5 Revision Tips for Internal Security

1. **Learn the standard answer structure.** Threat, causes (historical, political, economic, external), government response, gaps, and way forward. This single skeleton fits LWE, insurgency, terrorism, cyber and border questions alike.

2. **Keep an agencies-and-Acts chart.** IB, RAW, NTRO and NIA with their mandates; the CAPFs with their deployment zones; UAPA, NSA, PMLA and AFSPA with key provisions. Prelims questions come straight from this chart.
3. **Balance security with rights.** The examiner rewards answers that acknowledge both the security imperative and constitutional safeguards — the AFSPA debate, data protection versus surveillance, and free speech versus misinformation control all demand this balance.
4. **Cite official doctrines and committees.** SAMADHAN, the Prakash Singh directives, the Second ARC on public order — naming these signals serious preparation and fetches marks in Mains.
5. **Revise with the tables in the final month.** Each quick-revision table on this page compresses a topic into its exam-testable core — exactly the density Prelims statements are built from.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is internal security a scoring area in Mains?

Yes. The questions are predictable and structured — causes, response, way forward — so well-organised answers score consistently. It is one of the highest return-on-effort areas in GS-III.

2. How much should I write about Pakistan and China in security answers?

Name the external dimension factually — cross-border terrorism, border disputes — but keep the focus on India's response and policy. The examiner tests analysis, not rhetoric.

3. Which book should I read for internal security?

A standard internal security text plus the relevant Second ARC reports on public order covers the syllabus. Our [booklist page](#) has the full subject-wise list with how-to-use notes.

4. Do I need to memorise all CAPFs and their roles?

Learn each force's primary mandate and deployment zone in one line — BSF on the Pakistan and Bangladesh borders, ITBP on the China border, CRPF on internal duties including LWE areas, CISF on installations, SSB on the Nepal and Bhutan borders, NSG on counter-terror, Assam Rifles in the North-East. That is enough for Prelims.

5. Are cyber security questions increasing?

Yes, steadily. CERT-In, NCIIPC, IT Act provisions, data protection and deepfake regulation are all active Prelims and Mains territory now — treat cyber as a full topic, not a footnote.

6. Can security topics help in the Essay paper?

Yes. Technology and security, the balance between liberty and security, and India's neighbourhood challenges are all strong essay themes — the frameworks on this page transfer directly.