

Redefining Governance: India's Evolution towards Viksit Bharat 2047

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Abstract

India stands at a pivotal moment in its governance journey. As the nation advances toward its centenary of independence in 2047, the idea of Viksit Bharat 2047—a developed, inclusive, resilient and democratic India—has moved from rhetorical aspiration to an organizing policy frame across ministries, states and international partnerships. This article examines the governance transformations required to realize that vision: institutional reform, digital public infrastructure, fiscal and regulatory modernization, stronger centre–state collaboration, and an inclusive social compact that tackles inequality and environmental constraints. Drawing on official vision documents, institutional reports and recent socioeconomic data, it outlines current progress, persistent gaps, and concrete policy pathways for operationalizing Viksit Bharat 2047.

Keywords: *Viksit Bharat; governance transformation; digital public infrastructure; inclusive social compact*

1. Introduction

• What Viksit Bharat 2047 Means for Governance

The phrase Viksit Bharat 2047 encapsulates a mission to transform India's economic, social and institutional architecture by the country's 100th year of independence. Unlike earlier development slogans, this vision explicitly ties economic ambition to governance transformation more efficient public administration, digital delivery of services, evidence-based policymaking and a renewed federal compact. Implementing such a layered vision requires both policy continuity and nimble innovation across levels of government. The central question addressed here is: what concrete governance changes will allow India not just to grow economically, but to do so equitably, sustainably and under accountable institutions?

To ground this exploration, the paper synthesizes recent official publications (including government vision documents and administrative reform reports), international assessments, and contemporary socioeconomic indicators to assess progress and gaps on the path to 2047. Key documents guiding this analysis include DARPG's Viksit Bharat @ 2047 — Governance Transformed, NITI Aayog's annual reporting on Amrit Kaal/vision alignment, and multilateral partnerships supporting institutional strengthening.

2. Literature Review

A rich body of scholarship has examined governance reform, federalism, institutional quality, and state heterogeneity in India. Below, we highlight pillars of insight relevant to Viksit Bharat 2047

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Studies in public administration emphasize that durable reforms rely on institutionalizing rule-making, grievance redress, performance evaluation, and decentralization (Khan & Jain, 2018). Scholars such as Bardhan (2002) and Mitra (2015) argue that the challenge in India is not a lack of ambition but persistence of bureaucratic inertia and elite capture. More recently, research on India's experiments with outcome-based budgeting, direct benefit transfers, and e-governance platforms has shown that institutional multiplicity and process alignment are critical (Singh & Gupta, 2021).

India's states differ widely in demographic, economic, and sociopolitical profiles. Works such as Kohli (2004), Rodden (2006), and Rao & Singh (2012) emphasize that devolved states often diverge in development trajectories due to institutional capacities and governance choices. Empirical studies of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) rollout, differential fiscal capacities, and performance-linked central grants confirm that states with stronger institutions adapt more effectively (Rao, 2020; NITI Aayog, 2023). Recent scholarship on digital public infrastructure (DPI) positions identity, payments, and APIs as foundational building blocks of modern governance (World Bank, 2022). In the Indian context, Aadhaar, UPI, and interoperable government systems have been studied as enablers of inclusion and fiscal efficiency (Jain & Kapoor, 2020; Bhalla et al., 2021). However, critiques warn of digital exclusion, privacy risks, and the urban-rural digital divide (Desai & Joshi, 2019).

Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) studies show that governance quality correlates strongly with reduced deprivation (Alkire & Santos, 2014; NITI Aayog & OPHI, 2023). State-level analyses in India demonstrate that lower MPI states often coincide with stronger institutional performance (e.g. Kerala), while higher MPI states suffer from administrative fragility and low accountability (e.g. Bihar, Uttar Pradesh) (Joshi et al., 2022; Mukherjee, 2023).

3. Gaps in Literature

While these studies offer valuable insights, few link them to a long-term, integrative vision like Viksit Bharat 2047. The literature also lacks comparative design of governance roadmaps tailored to divergent state baselines, and longitudinal evaluation frameworks spanning multi-decade horizons

4. Objectives

- Clarify the governance dimensions underlying Viksit Bharat 2047: institutional, economic, social, environmental, intergovernmental, and digital.
- Assess India's current condition in these domains using national and state-level indicators, focusing on states with diverse performance levels.
- Identify structural constraints, patterns of divergence, and institutional bottlenecks.
- Propose differentiated governance pathways, monitoring architectures, and accountability mechanisms customized for state contexts. Offer a pragmatic set of indicators to track progress at the national and sub national level toward 2047.

5. Methodology

4.1 Data Sources

We adopt a secondary data analysis approach, drawing from:

National reports and databases: NITI Aayog's National Multidimensional Poverty Index reports; Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI) national accounts; Economic Survey statistical appendices.

International sources: UNDP, World Bank country and indicator databases, and OPHI's global poverty metrics.

Comparative compilations: State-level rankings in HDI, MPI, governance indices

- **Historical Context: Governance Reforms and the Long Arc of Indian Statecraft**

India's governance architecture has evolved through decades of reform—from administrative consolidation post-independence, through liberalization in the 1990s, to pervasive digitization over the last decade. The 1991 economic reforms decoupled growth from import-substitution and set the stage for regulatory modernization. Since 2014, several centrally-led initiatives—Digital India, Goods and Services Tax (GST), Aadhaar-enabled service delivery, and direct benefit transfers—have reshaped the state–citizen interface. These reforms illustrate a trajectory: the Indian state migrating from paper-based, transaction-heavy administration toward integrated, digitally-enabled governance.

Yet, historical legacies persist: bureaucratic silos, weak intergovernmental coordination on shared challenges, and service delivery gaps at the last mile. Addressing these enduring structural constraints is central to the Viksit Bharat project.

6. The Governance Architecture for 2047: Institutions, Digital Platforms and Evidence-Based Policy

- **Institutional Renewal: DARPG, NITI Aayog and Administrative Reform**

Institutional renewal means more than reshuffling ministries—it requires strengthening rule-making, grievance redressal, oversight mechanisms and performance evaluation. The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) has framed a governance agenda for 2047 focused on capacity building, citizen-centric processes and administrative simplification. DARPG's recent work consolidates lessons on reducing friction in citizen–state interactions and institutionalizing grievance redressal. Systematic institutional reforms—ranging from recruitment and training of civil servants to performance-linked incentives and streamlined procedures—are prerequisites for improved governance.

NITI Aayog's role as a policy think-tank and cooperative federalism facilitator is likewise central. Its annual reporting and state-aligned vision documents (for example, state strategies referencing alignment with Viksit Bharat and Amrit Kaal priorities) illustrate the need for a federal framework that enables both national coherence and state adaptation.

- **Digital Public Infrastructure: From Aadhaar to Federated Services**

Digital public infrastructure (DPI) is the backbone of contemporary governance reform in India. Aadhaar, UPI and the expanding ecosphere of interoperable systems and APIs demonstrate how identity, payments and data exchange can underpin efficient service delivery. DPI reduces leakage in transfers, accelerates business processes and enables near-real-time monitoring of public programs. The Viksit Bharat governance framework explicitly centres DPI as a scaling tool for inclusion and accountability. Multilateral partners (including the World Bank) are aligning programs to support such institutional modernization.

However, effective DPI demands trustworthy data governance, cybersecurity, and policies that prevent digital exclusion—particularly among rural, elderly or socioeconomically disadvantaged groups.

- **Evidence-Based Policymaking and Data Systems:**

Governance effectiveness requires high-quality, timely data. Recent innovations in survey design (e.g., Modified Mixed Recall Period approaches) and administrative data integration show progress in measuring poverty and program uptake. Transparent, accessible data ecosystems strengthen evidence-based policy while improving public scrutiny. The commitment to data-driven decisions features prominently in both national planning frameworks and international development partnerships.

7. Economic Governance: Growth, Inclusion and Fiscal Resilience

- **Growth Strategy and Macroeconomic Health**

India remains one of the fastest-growing major economies, with multilateral forecasts projecting sustained growth that can be harnessed toward structural transformation. Growth provides fiscal space for public investment—critical for infrastructure, health, and education. But growth alone is insufficient; policy must translate macro gains into employment-rich and geographically inclusive development.

Recent World Bank and national projections underscore an economy in expansion, yet with uneven regional and sectoral outcomes. Managing macroeconomic volatility while investing in human capital is a central governance challenge.

- **Fiscal Federalism and Public Finance Reform**

Robust fiscal federalism is vital for Viksit Bharat 2047. The GST framework demonstrated both potential and pains of revenue-sharing across tiers. States' varying fiscal capacities require smarter transfers, outcome-linked grants and incentives for subnational reforms. Strengthening municipal finance and urban governance, while supporting rural local bodies with capacity and predictable funds, will be crucial to deliver services effectively at the local level.

- **Regulatory Modernization and Business Environment**

Regulatory reform—simplifying licensing, reducing compliance burdens and creating predictable dispute-resolution mechanisms—directly affects investment and job creation. International instruments and assessments can guide reform, but India must adapt solutions to its institutional realities. Notably, the World Bank's discontinuation of the Doing Business report in 2021 shifted the benchmarking landscape; domestic metrics and internal reforms have become more prominent drivers of change.

8. Social Governance: Reducing Poverty and Improving Human Development

- **Poverty Reduction: Progress and Measurement**

Poverty remains a central metric of governance success. Recent estimates indicate continued declines: analyses in 2024–2025 projected falling poverty rates, with some institutional estimates (e.g., State Bank of India analyses) suggesting a decline to under 5% on certain thresholds for 2024, while other international measures report different baselines depending on the poverty line used. These divergent figures highlight the sensitivity of poverty measurement to methodology and thresholds—underscoring the need for transparent, consistent statistics to inform policy.

- **Human Development and Service Delivery**

India's Human Development Index (HDI) has been improving, with UNDP updates noting upward movement in recent years. Progress in health, education and per capita income is visible, but substantial gaps remain, particularly in maternal and child health, learning outcomes, and gender parity in labour-force participation. Governance strategies for 2047 must therefore prioritize service quality—beyond coverage—through accountability mechanisms, better frontline worker support, and community participation.

- **Social Protection and Labor Markets**

Strengthening social protection (targeted transfers, portable benefits for informal workers, skill development linked to employer demand) is essential to secure inclusive growth. A governance approach that integrates digital transfers, robust grievance redressal and portability across states can protect vulnerable households while enhancing labour market flexibility.

9. Environmental Governance and Sustainable Development

- **Climate, Natural Resources and Governance**

India faces acute environmental challenges that threaten long-term prosperity—air and water pollution, land degradation, and climate risks such as heatwaves, shifting monsoon patterns and sea-level rise. Governance for 2047 requires integrating environmental limits into all major policy sectors: energy, agriculture, urban planning and infrastructure. This entails strengthening environmental institutions, improving enforcement capacity, leveraging market-based instruments, and mainstreaming nature-based solutions.

- **Green Growth and Transition Pathways**

A Viksit Bharat aligned with global climate goals will accelerate investments in clean energy, resilient agriculture and sustainable urban transport. Governance mechanisms should encourage private investment in green industries while protecting livelihoods dependent on carbon-intensive sectors through just-transition policies.

- **Federal Dynamics and Subnational Visions: States as Laboratories**

A distinctive feature of India's governance is the vitality of state-level policymaking. Multiple states have launched their own "Vision 2047" or similar agendas—articulating sectoral priorities aligned with the centenary objective. State-led initiatives provide opportunities for policy experimentation and diffusion, but also necessitate stronger coordination and national standards in areas of shared interest (education, public health, and environment). Examples of participatory state visioning exercises demonstrate citizen engagement as a governance tool—eliciting local priorities and increasing policy legitimacy.

10. Technology, Transparency and Citizen Empowerment

- **E-Governance and Service Transparency**

Digital platforms (e.g., DigiLocker, e-governance portals) are streamlining citizen interactions with the state, improving transparency and reducing corruption opportunities. The digitalization of pension orders, benefits and certificates in state initiatives is one example of administrative simplification that reduces friction for citizens. However, governance must guard against digital exclusion and prioritize user-centric design and accessibility.

- **Participatory Governance: Crowdsourcing and Citizen Feedback**

Modern governance increasingly incorporates citizen feedback loops—citizen surveys, participatory budgeting and digital grievance platforms—to strengthen accountability and responsiveness. State-level citizen surveys for long-term visioning illustrate a shift toward participatory policymaking; scaling such mechanisms and ensuring that citizen inputs translate into budgetary and policy action is a governance challenge that must be met for 2047 to be realized.

11. Key Challenges and Trade-offs on the Path to 2047

- **Inequality—Spatial, Social and Economic**

Despite aggregate growth, inequality remains a major concern. Regional disparities, urban–rural divides, and social exclusion on caste, gender and minority lines can stagnate inclusive progress. Governance reforms must be explicitly distributive—prioritizing lagging regions and groups through targeted investments and affirmative governance measures.

- **Capacity Constraints and Bureaucratic Rigidities**

Public institutions often operate under capacity constraints—insufficient staff, limited training, and outdated processes. Reforming public administration requires sustained investment in human capital, decentralization of functional responsibilities with commensurate resources, and performance management that rewards outcomes rather than mere compliance.

- **Policy Coherence Across Levels and Time Horizons**

Long-term visions risk fragmentation without institutional mechanisms for continuity. Political cycles and shifting priorities can derail sustained reforms. Governance innovations—such as statutory policy councils, independent regulatory agencies, and legislation that mandate long-term targets—can insulate critical reforms from short-term politicization.

- **Environmental Limits and Resource Constraints**

Scaling infrastructure and industry must respect environmental limits. Governance must reconcile developmental ambitions with planetary boundaries—through careful planning, green public procurement, and enforcement mechanisms that ensure sustainability is not sidelined for short-term gains.

12. Policy Pathways

- **Operationalizing Vikasit Bharat 2047**

The following policy pathways synthesize the governance reforms needed to translate vision into action.

- **Institutionalize Long-Term Planning with Accountability Mechanisms**

Create statutory or constitutional anchors for multi-decade targets (e.g., 2030, 2047) with transparent monitoring frameworks. Annual public reporting, parliamentary oversight committees and independent audits can align political incentives with long-term outcomes. DARPG and NITI Aayog frameworks provide scaffolding but should be complemented with legislated accountability structures.

- **Scale Digital Public Infrastructure with Inclusive Design**

Expand DPI while investing in digital literacy, offline access points, and affordable connectivity. Embed privacy-by-design and robust data-governance laws to build trust. Digital tools should simplify compliance for businesses and automate routine administrative approvals to reduce discretionary power and corruption.

- **Reform Public Finance for Outcomes**

Move from input-driven budgets to outcome-linked financing, especially for social services. Strengthen municipal finance and create fiscal instruments to incentivize subnational reforms (e.g., matching grants for health/education outcomes). Use public investment banks and blended finance to leverage private capital for infrastructure while protecting public interest.

- **Strengthen Human-Centric Service Delivery**

Prioritize quality in health and education through teacher and health-worker training, performance management, and community involvement in oversight. Use randomized pilots and phased scale-up to refine models and build evidence—a classic adaptive-governance approach.

- **Deepen Federal Cooperation and Policy Experimentation**

Institutionalize intergovernmental councils with clear mandates to coordinate cross-cutting policies (transport, energy, water). Encourage state-level policy innovation with national knowledge-sharing platforms to replicate successful experiments.

- **Institutionalize Environmental Safeguards and Green Transition Policies**

Adopt economy-wide carbon pricing options where feasible, expand green financing, and mainstream ecosystem services valuation in planning. Ensure just-transition policies for workers in declining sectors, including reskilling and social safety nets.

- **Expand Citizen Participation and Transparency Tools**

Scale participatory budgeting, strengthen RTI and grievance mechanisms, and institutionalize social audits for major programs. Performance dashboards and open data portals should be the default for major public programs.

Measuring Success: Indicators and Data Systems

To evaluate progress toward Viksit Bharat 2047, India should adopt a balanced scoreboard of indicators: macroeconomic robustness (GDP per capita, investment rates), inclusion metrics (poverty headcount using transparent thresholds, labour-force participation), human development (HDI components), environmental sustainability (emissions intensity, air/water quality indices), and governance quality (time to resolve grievances, service delivery effectiveness). Strengthening statistical capacity and ensuring methodological transparency will enhance the credibility of such monitoring. Recent improvements in HDI and poverty measurement highlight the benefits of timely, high-quality data for policymaking.

13. International Partnerships**Leveraging Global Knowledge while Preserving Local Context**

Multilateral partners—World Bank, UN agencies, bilateral development partners—offer technical assistance, financing and benchmarking tools to accelerate governance reforms. Yet, successful adaptation requires local institutionalization. Partnerships should emphasize capacity transfer, co-financing for public goods (e.g., climate-resilient infrastructure), and support for governance innovation labs that can iterate and scale domestic solutions. The World Bank's explicit support for Viksit Bharat objectives exemplifies such alignment.

14. Conclusion**A Governance Agenda for the Century Ahead**

Viksit Bharat 2047 is both an ambition and a test of India's governance capacity. Achieving it will require reimagining the state as a facilitator of inclusive markets, a guarantor of universal services, and a steward of environmental limits—while deepening democratic accountability. The transformation must be systemic: institutional renewal, digital public infrastructures, fiscal modernization, federal cooperation and a relentless focus on inclusion.

The next two decades will determine whether India's institutions can translate demographic dividends into broad-based prosperity. The policy pathways outlined here are not exhaustive but offer a practical governance blueprint: invest in institutions, scale human-centered digital infrastructures, align incentives across fiscal and regulatory systems, and embed sustainability and equity into every major policy choice. If successfully implemented and politically sustained, these reforms can deliver a Viksit Bharat that is prosperous, resilient and just by 2047.

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