InSight Bulletin: A Multidisciplinary Interlink International Research Journal
Peer Reviewed International, Open Access Journal.
ISSN : 3065-7857 / Website: https://ibrj.us / Volume-3, Issue-2 / February - 2026

Original Article

Viksit Bharat 2047: Political Governance, Inclusive Development, and Democratic Transformation

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Manuscript ID:
IBMIIRJ -2026-030252

Submitted: 10 Jan. 2026

Revised: 15 Jan. 2026

Accepted: 18 Feb. 2026

Published: 28 Feb. 2026

ISSN: 3065-7857

Volume-3

Issue-2

Pp. 253-261

February 2026

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OPEN ACCESS

Quick Response Code:

Web. https://ibrj.us

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.23154098

DOI Link:
https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23154098

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Abstract

The vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 represents India's aspiration to achieve comprehensive and sustainable development by the centenary of its independence. Realizing this vision requires transformative changes in political governance, inclusive development, and democratic institutions. This paper examines the institutional, political, economic, and social dimensions of Viksit Bharat 2047, with particular emphasis on federalism and Centre–State relations, electoral and political reforms, the rule of law, public administration, and digital governance. It further explores inclusive development through economic transformation, social inclusion, human development, rural–urban linkages, agricultural transformation, education, health, and social protection. The study also highlights the importance of democratic participation, civil society, media freedom, local governance, participatory budgeting, transparency, accountability, and digital democracy. Major challenges, including fiscal sustainability, geopolitical and security concerns, social diversity, implementation gaps, and administrative capacity, are examined. The paper proposes an integrated institutional and sectoral reform roadmap supported by adaptive governance, monitoring, evaluation, and citizen participation. It argues that the realization of Viksit Bharat 2047 depends not only on economic growth but also on equitable opportunities, accountable institutions, effective public service delivery, social cohesion, and meaningful democratic participation. A coordinated and inclusive governance framework can therefore provide the foundation for sustainable development, social justice, and democratic transformation by 2047.

Keywords: *Viksit Bharat 2047, Political Governance, Inclusive Development, Democratic Transformation, Federalism, Electoral Reforms, Rule of Law, Digital Governance, Social Inclusion, Local Governance, Citizen Participation, Sustainable Development.*

Introduction

India currently observes two significant milestones that provide opportunities for reflection on the political governance system and its democratic development. The year 2022 marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of independence, while the year 2047 will mark the centenary of independence. To achieve the vision for a viksit bharat (developed India) by the year 2047, significant transformations in political governance, inclusive development, and democratic deepening are needed. Without these transformations, India's aspiration to become a viksit bharat is unlikely to be realized. The framework of institutions, processes, policies, and laws for political governance currently in place was inherited from the British, making India unique among the developing economies. After seventy-five years of independence, citizens can evaluate the effectiveness of the political governance system in addressing India's pressing development challenges and building a viksit bharat. The efficacy of public policies in a democratic setting is intrinsically linked to the quality of political governance. Only an effective political governance system can ensure that public policies are made in the interest of the general populace as socio-economic development involves trade-offs between contending demands from different sections of society (Nair, 2017). The following aspects of political governance are key in determining the effectiveness of public policies: federalism/centre-state relations, electoral democracy, the rule of law, and public administration.

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How to cite this article:
Rakshase, K. N. (2026). Viksit Bharat 2047: Political Governance, Inclusive Development, and Democratic Transformation. InSight Bulletin: A Multidisciplinary Interlink International Research Journal, 3(2), 253–261. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23154098.

The Vision of Viksit Bharat 2047

To achieve Viksit Bharat by 2047, India must aspire to create a climate of stability and fulfillment. The ability to participate politically and collectively pursue equity and dignity underpins such a vision. In this context, "Viksit Bharat 2047" denotes a future India that draws on the country's strengths to provide practical governance, develop capabilities to have viable options, secure broader citizen ambition beyond basic needs, and foster institutions to promote collective agency and progress through diverse, interdependent, and participatory approaches. India has constitutionally committed to a rich framework suitable for participatory and pluralistic politics on par with the world's democratic frontiers, emphasizing dignity, equity, and capability and feeding into development such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) during the twenty-first century.

Realizing this vision calls for reinvigorating the political processes and societal inclusiveness underpinning it through a coherent programme of political governance reforms pursued in a sequence that fits India's socioeconomic and political complexity. Political governance encompasses interconnected mechanisms providing a diversity of options in a globalizing world. Furthermore, elections, political parties, questions of public trust, and interlocking political processes affect society's choices and possibilities in various ways. A focus on political governance thus supplies an important perspective on the kind of collective future that Viksit Bharat 2047 contemplates (Nair, 2017).

Political Governance: Institutions, Processes, and Accountability

Three features mark the working of the political governance system in India: framing and operationalising the federal framework, expanding democratic representation, and strengthening accountability to enhance legitimacy. The Constitution establishes a federal order with a unitary bias owing to India's history and needs. Constituent assemblies debated the federal nature, with some members arguing for unitary government to enable decision-making and speedy development given the heterogeneous nature of ndividuals, groups, castes, and cultures. The debate spilled over into the Powers Committee, which tried separating the different powers and failed. The Final Report of the Committee on the Constitution emphasises "the whole purpose of the Constitution was to establish a federation." Nevertheless, a unitary bias still persists. Centre-state relations are established along federal lines in Schedule VI of the Constitution—language, education, land, and certain social and welfare aspects fall under the State List, while the subjects under Union List pertain to all. The Parliament's control over money and fiscal/budgetary matters reinforces Centre-state relations and makes development and welfare an endless Centre-state tussle. Moreover, the establishment of state boundaries captures the diversity of language and culture. Three complementary inter-governmental mechanisms smoothen centre-state relations: the Inter-State Council (Article 263), the Finance Commission (Article 280), and the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council. The Constitution prescribes the setting up of the Inter-State Council, on the recommendation of the 1978 Sarkaria Commission, and its framework was elaborated by the 1988 M. M. Punchhi Commission. Nevertheless, the council has contributed little to the arena of concurrent subjects, systematising what should be coordinated among Centre and state governments.

1. Federal Structure and Centre-States Relations

India adopted a federal governance structure that combines a strong central authority with state-level powers. However, this system reveals significant unitary traits that become evident during political unrest, territorial disputes, and economic disparities. Consequently, centre–state relations require periodic reassessment, particularly regarding fiscal federalism, evolving political dynamics, and keen interest in state autonomy. A pivotal question is how much power should remain with the Centre and how much should devolve to the states. Authoritarian tendencies reveal an urgent need to reconfigure the structure to avoid inter- and intra-state tensions and achieve equilibrium. The arrangement of power distribution falls within the purview of a progressive federal structure underscoring India's unity yet preserving the diversity of its constituent states, as mandated by the Constitution. With statehood granted to Goa, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, and Jharkhand, and a union territory converted into a state, the debate on additional states has resurfaced. Smaller states have demonstrably improved governance, productivity, infrastructure, delivery systems, and accountability across several governance indicators (Ahmad Sofi, 2016). An essential agenda item is sustaining momentum through amendments or constitutional directives instead of a convoluted amendment process that hinders timely responses even when political consensus exists.

Amendments to centre–state intergovernmental mechanisms are necessary to avoid the inefficient adherence to memoranda of understanding adopted in the 1990s, a format that offered a façade of cooperation and shared objectives across both tiers. Plausible, achievable, and time-bound objectives are also lacking in the National Development Council adopted concurrently with the MOU format. Fiscal arrangements encumbered by growing expenditures on social development, subsidies, and free handouts, and declining investment rates remain unresolved, and the design and implementation of the goods and services tax have also demanded urgent attention. Intergovernmental relations among Centre, states, and local bodies are supplemented by strong third-party actors influencing the trajectory of interactions and on balance enhancing productivity, efficiency, accountability, and equity-participation indicators at all three levels of governance. Public-sector units designated under the public-sector price control mechanism and the newly designated strategic sectors remain outside the ambit of the GST, violating the intergovernmental bargain and threatening the multi-tier fiscal architecture and federal framework. The Inter-State Council has remained dormant due to overlapping sectors and the Commission's own limited terms of reference, while the National Development Council, which resided above state chief ministers, fancied the Centre fulfilling the role. The 137th Constitution amendment remains under consideration by the Parliament, and state public-service commissions remain impeded by persistent backlogs in commission selections and examination processes (Singh & Srinivasan, 2006).

2. Electoral Reforms and Representation

India's governance architecture—widely viewed as an elaborate mechanism to catalyze, steer, diffuse and consolidate transformative change—embeds the political process firmly within its framework. Political governance, as per Viksit Bharat 2047, hinges upon a renewed commitment to democratization, inclusion, representation and anti-corruption along with a turbulence-free electoral system that channels diverse aspirations and interests through fully credibly political parties. The ongoing turmoil in Indian political landscape enables the formulations of this new paradigm.

Moving beyond mere ambition or also lack of confidence—on the federal arrangement; recognition of party-system dynamics that warrant consideration of political representation as the prelude to good governance; the pre-eminent importance of institutional reform towards credible politics without which developmental transformation remains elusive; that each level of decision-making requires proportionate representation—Viksit Bharat 2047 propounds institutional and electoral reforms for which ground-level or people-centric feedback loops have yet to become institutionalized and find precedence. The socio-economic agenda remains unnecessarily complex. The resultant ceaseless flow of recruitable input creates institutional amnesias and significantly hinders societal access to faster sustainable prosperity.

3. Rule of Law, Justice Administration, and Anti-Corruption Measures

Law is fundamental to civilization and democracy; it enhances liberty and opportunities (Chakraborty, 2014). Justice is essential for national integration, peace, systemic trust, motivation, economic development, and balanced growth. The judiciary must be under public scrutiny and accountable for performance, delving with both criminality and socio-economic justice. Any peaceful country must follow and respect law but enforce it fearlessly. Rule of law means freedom of society, people, and the individual. In India, common people are disillusioned about rule of law and socio political justice because evasion of law is evident.

Cadre-based public service and independent and autonomous statutory/commercial ventures function diabolically. Bureaucracy, with many cohort systems, and legislative and executive systems are inefficient way-finder for public grievance resolution, whereas self-administrative and cooperative bodies could be rejuvenated. Civil society institutions must engage with the executive, legislative, and judiciary in Society-driven Enquiry for Southwest Empowerment and Development (SEED) formation. Judiciary apex is superior and timely; it addresses human rights violations, but the pervasive disparity of the judiciary hampers constitutional ethos.

4. Public Administrative Reforms and Digital Governance

Administrative reforms are essential for good governance, and they must keep in pace with social, financial, and technological changes. Governance refers to the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented). The design, structure, systems, and process of institutions, organizations, and administrative behavior are central to governance. In the last fourteen years of the twentieth century, the Central Government of India introduced a series of administrative reforms that included the paradox of a globalized economy, market-driven economic policy, and state intrusion into the governance of society. In order give effective delivery of services, the Government of India after 2000 focused on the 'Forward Looking Agenda of Administrative Reforms' that was aimed at speed of implementation, delivery of services to the common man, regaining of citizen's trust and credibility, enhancement of efficiency, etc. After a series of deliberations, the greater emphasis were laid down on service delivery, transparency, human resource management, and enabling Act-the relevant agents of reform were suggested for the implementation of the policy. In order to bring awareness of the Government programme to common man, the Government of India introduced 'e-governance' which has internationally been recognized as an important medium for reaching the people in the form of knowledge and information. E-governance is the use of information and communication technology to deliver government services to the citizens. E-governance promotes transparency, accountability, and efficiency. In order to supplement the policy of 'e-governance', the India Government has formulated various programmes for improvements of higher educational systems, establishment of Indian School of Business, the National Eligibility Test for Quality Assurance, Maintenance of 'National Assessment and Accreditation Council', establishment of the All India Councilof Technical Education, Re-orientation of Management Education, and Sustaining State Innovations & Reforms in Education (Jeet Singh, 2008).

Inclusive Development: Growth with Equity

Achieving the vision of a developed nation by 2047 through the 'Viksit Bharat 2047' roadmap rests critically on implementing an inclusive model of development that enhances human well-being and leaves no one behind. Inclusive development is defined as "Equity in Participation, Access to Resources and Opportunities by all sections of society—irrespective of Gender, Caste, Race, Religion, Economic and Social Status, and Location—without any Injustice, Inequality, Discrimination, and Exclusion" (Swamy, 2010). The Economic Survey 2021–22 projected a baseline gross domestic product (GDP) growth-rate trajectory of 8 to 8.5 percent per year for 2023–26, which, combined with anticipated productivity improvements, would increase the economy to a size of USD 12 trillion and GDP per capita of USD 8,200–8,500 by 2047 (Kumar Gupta, 2014). Growth would need to proceed alongside equity in access to education, health care, nutrition, and social protection to improve the quality of life for all citizens, especially marginalized groups and women. The transformation of agriculture and related value chains remains critical for strengthening rural livelihoods and building urban linkages within a dense rural-urban continuum. Investment in welfare assets, especially clean water supplies, sanitation, and housing, remains an urgent priority, along with a commitment to quality and inclusive public services in education and health. A large and growing population can also act as an asset by enhancing human capital, institutional reform, and policies for human development. Quality remains important, however, and measures of socio-economic and human development indicate that India lags behind, pointing to the need for urgent reforms across economic, social, and demographic dimensions. Achieving high growth that is low-carbon, resource-efficient, and climate-resilient would raise GDP to USD 8,700 to USD 9,260 per capita and INR 585,000 to 797,000 by 2047, while making adequate progress toward

mitigating environmental concerns. An ambitious, integrated, inclusive-development strategy is thus a critical element of the 'Viksit Bharat 2047' vision.

1. Economic Transformation and Sustainable Development

Through the lens of inclusive development as conceived in the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision, economic transformation proceeds in four mutually reinforcing areas: (i) generating the requisite economic momentum and structural transformation to achieve projected double-digit growth rates with attendant increases in productivity; (ii) integrating sustainability considerations throughout the push for transformative growth, with a view to mitigating the climate crisis; (iii) enhancing social inclusion by strengthening opportunities for participation in economic growth among marginalised groups; and (iv) fortifying rural–urban linkages to galvanise agricultural development and strengthen rural livelihoods while catalysing productive growth in towns and small cities. In the aggregate, these four areas help to construct and reinforce an operationally meaningful interpretation of the crucial notion of growth with equity (Nair, 2017).

2. Social Inclusion and Human Development

Persistent inequalities related to caste, religion, gender, and location inhibit social inclusion and human development. Caste-based exclusion remains particularly pronounced in access to land, credit, skill training, jobs, and financial market participation ((Rachel) Kurian & (David) Singh, 2017). Expanding people's access to quality infrastructure, public services, and social protection is crucial for enabling and enhancing livelihoods and skill development—including education, health, sanitation, housing, connectivity, and the digital economy.

Inequalities across socio-economic groups are reflected in Human Development Index (HDI) estimates by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for 2021. India's overall HDI value was 0.633, with a rank of 132 out of 191 countries. By region, the West and South, North-East, East, and North reported values of 0.711, 0.659, 0.628, and 0.615, respectively. By caste, Scheduled Tribe, Scheduled Caste, and Other Backward Classes had values of 0.519, 0.550, and 0.651 (compared with an overall index of 0.621 for OBCs by the UNDP), while Brahmins (0.787), Vaishyas (0.761), and Other upper castes (0.757) were much better off. On the Gender Development Index measure, Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes had respective values of 0.363 and 0.374, while Other upper castes, Brahmins, and Vaishyas reported values of 0.803, 0.703, and 0.628. All figures are lower than the national HDI (0.633).

3. Rural-Urban Linkages and Agricultural Transformation

India's rapid urbanization has created unprecedented opportunities for rural-urban linkages to deepen and emerge, with the potential to enhance agricultural transformation. Rural-urban linkages encompass the connections between urban and rural communities, involving flows of people, products, capital, social values, and various sectoral activities, such as agriculture and employment. Such linkages include labor markets, migration, services, resources, information, and institutional partnerships. They are crucial for poverty alleviation, economic development, and reducing disparity (Baffoe et al., 2021). Urban and rural areas are interlinked by agricultural value chains, food systems, ecosystem services, labor, natural resources, and transport, necessitating a holistic approach to sustainable development. Meeting rising food demand while conserving ecosystems requires sustainable rural development. Rural-urban linkages influence wealth creation, employment, regional governance, and sectoral competitiveness. Rural-urban linkages offer considerable promise for agricultural transformation. Under the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, several countries are striving to sustain rural-urban linkages to make local food systems resilient, reduce food insecurity, and foster inclusive economic growth. Yet, some states observe attempts to link agriculture with urban markets and economies remain inadequate and ineffective (Kumar et al., 2015). The current strategy of creating broad agricultural value chains and introducing new crops fails to ensure increased rural incomes. It does not contribute to a desired transformation in rural livelihoods or link urban and rural markets, value chains, training, or employment growth. Enhanced agricultural transformation requires more focused technical assistance and finance across clearly defined linkages between urban and rural areas, farm and non-farm enterprises, and agriculture and allied activities.

4. Education, Health, and Social Protection Systems

Post-independence India took numerous initiatives to enhance human capabilities through education, health, and social protection systems by investing in an expansive array of programs and approaches that blanketed various aspects of human development, namely, education, health, nutrition, social protection and security, skills training, vocational education, and allied, among others. Substantial public spending in education and health over the years had contributed significantly towards the accumulation of human assets, which are vital for overall economic growth and inclusive development. Sustainable economic development hinges upon the equitable growth of human capital, which has emerged as the pivot of India-transformative in the backdrop of its commitment to pursue Viksit Bharat Vision 2047 over the years. The Covid-19 pandemic has, however, accentuated the pressures on the vital social sector of education and health, prompting a rethink upon the prevailing systems of delivery (Aithal & Aithal, 2019).

Democratic Transformation: Participatory Politics and Civic Agency

Democratic societies must productively engage citizens in governance. Civic action promotes political agency, policy participation, and vulnerability to institutional responses. Civil societies, media initiatives, and venues for pluralism mobilize effective civic engagement (Williamson, 2011). Currently, civil society and media representation is uneven and concentrated in urban areas, limiting policy influence among marginalised groups. Democratic avenues at the local level have yet to gain traction after many years of local governance reforms. Nonetheless, greater emphasis on city management has substantially mobilised attention and response in urban regions. Recent innovations have explored community-level participation, budgetary inclusion,

and information-processing feedback loops toward improving collective effects on groups' actual condition. Participatory budgeting, specifically, remains scattered. Proposals exist to make usability, involvement, and application to local entities more systematic. Data governance structures, rights protection, and trust are vital for successful large-scale citizen engagement in the digital era. Emerging narratives tend to frame citizen action as suspect and partisan, undermining catalytic interactions that respond to governance improvement or infrastructure needs across wide-ranging levels of agency (Jeet Singh, 2008). Engagement through civil society, media initiatives, and pluralistic venues promotes effective citizenship and democratic agency. Pro-active involvement in policy formation places additional accountability on government actions. Moving beyond existing observations, instances of constituency-based governance reveal those systems' practical limitations. Ensuring a centred existence and capability—physical, realistic, and desired—to act remains fundamental. Policy assessments and position defiances can occur only within the capability to undertake such abilities. Pluralistic representation improves attention and responsiveness and boosts collective effects. Nevertheless, civic-action mobilization remains unevenly spread. Concentration around growth centres perpetuates historical economic behaviours. Rural spheres retain sizeable populations detached from participation in political recognition, selection, devolvement, declaration, and other levels. Supply interventions—aiding fiscal mapping, administration, policy reflection, and recognition processes—derive from incomprehensible governance. Large constituencies linger untouched by feed-loops, the remaining authorities remain unconnected, and the task remains alien to groups' management and decision-making circuits.

1. Civil Society, Media, and Freedom of Expression

Among the three components of democracy—political society, civil society, and the economy, which scholar G. William Domhoff has named as the 3 "complementary arenas" of democracy—Viksit Bharat 2047 emphasizes particularly the civic agency exercised through civil society organizations (CSOs) that help convey the diverse needs and aspirations of citizens to the political system (Saliou Camara, 2008). While India has been relatively successful in establishing a flourishing civil society space and the media landscape is among the most vibrant in the world, ongoing threats to freedom of expression, pluralism, and journalistic autonomy are already limiting the ability of both sectors to engage and influence public policy. Appreciable segments of the population feel that they lack equal opportunities for access and engagement, putting legitimacy and inclusivity of participatory governance at risk.

2. Local Governance and Community Participation

Decentralisation has remained at the centre of the vision articulated in the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution of India, which provided for the establishment of panchayati raj institutions (PRIs) in rural areas and urban local bodies (ULBs) in urban centres. These amendments provide a constitutional framework for ensuring greater participation of common citizens in decision-making processes related to resource allocation and accountability in public services. Local governments play a crucial role in mobilising local people, resources, and talents for planning and implementing development programmes that receive government funding. Empowerment through decentralisation is particularly important in a democratic republic such as India, where social, economic, and political inequalities still preclude equitable access to the benefits of development. At the same time, the Constitution provides for a three-tier system of local self-government (LSG). Panchayati raj institutions have been operating with limited functions such as water supply, drainage, and sanitation. These institutions remain dominated by a few elite castes and are controlled by panchayat samitis (blocks at the intermediate level), which results in inadequate representation of weaker sections such as women, scheduled castes, and scheduled tribes. Local governments also lack adequate funds for planning, implementation, and maintenance of water supply. The meeting of central and state-level officials in Thiruvananthapuram concluded that, despite the establishment of VECs for functional decentralisation and the delineation of six essential functions for their operation, these bodies still do not play a significant role in schooling (Govinda & Bandyopadhyay, 2010).

3. Transparency, Accountability, and Participatory Budgeting

Despite substantial investments in government openness, accountability, and participatory budgeting, Indian citizens remain dissatisfied with the quality of public services and other government actions. The dissatisfaction reflects deeper governance issues and a failure of participation initiatives to offer citizens practical and sustained opportunities to influence policies and budgets. Various initiatives over the past 30 years profess to open up decision-making to larger segments of the population, including participatory budgeting (PB) experiments. PB involves citizens in defining resources allocated to particular public goods and, more generally, in budget decision-making. Originally developed in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in the late 1980s, PB aimed to "redistribute the budget to meet the needs of poor populations, taking into account the needs of the underprivileged." The municipal program has inspired similar initiatives worldwide, including over 20 cities in India. PB is more than a technical instrument of budgetary governance; it signals a wider paradigm shift in the vision and modalities of governance—to reposition citizens as agents of collective action rather than clients of public policies. Collectively, these reforms also derive empowerment from civic engagement and collective action. Citizens are involved not merely as recipients but as agents in a mutual relationship with the public authority. Implementing PB requires extensive changes in the governance arrangements and broadening of public decisions in three dimensions: the coverage of participant groups and the type of decisions open to their influence; the extent of information provided for more informed choice alongside the resources at stake; and the degree to which preferences expressed are accommodated in the final decision (Franklin et al., 2013).

4. Democracy in the Digital Age: Data, Privacy, and Public Trust

The 2019 UN Human Rights Council resolution recognises that online access to information and the internet is a basic human right. The right to privacy is also enshrined in international human rights treaties. Further, digital technology has

transformed political participation, the relationship between citizens, civil society and political institutions, and has a profound impact on who governs, how and what principles are followed. Both publicly collected and individually owned data have extensive influences on elections, political discussions, public policies, political participation, social movements, and government administration. The problem of trust arises not only vis-a-vis citizens but also never before between citizens and political institutions. Recognising that the public generates vast amounts of public data over the course of digital interactions, a plethora of governmental actions have either led to breaches of privacy both explicitly and implicitly or even violated the very self-definition of democracy as the exercise of freely, publicly expressed opinions. Democracy cannot be expected to thrive until a transparent digital data policy is established. Privacy however does not reside simply in preventing governmental, corporate and other illegitimate intrusions into personal data because individuals monitor and track data on others. Legislative opportunities related to data systems reside outside the formal influence of decision makers. Any democratizing move within the digital realm will tend to be established subsequently if not systematically recreated during the social engagement phase rather than among the relatively few who have access to or understanding of either the technology or the data systems underlying its operation (Grossi et al., 2024).

Challenges, Risks, and Policy Trade-offs

The target year 2047 would mark a century of India's independence. Drawing upon the vision of contemporary thinkers, the NITI Aayog identifies the goal of Viksit Bharat—a developed nation that is able to provide a high standard of living to all its citizens—by this date. Such a nation would embody political governance based on the rule of law, inclusive and equitable growth, and an active citizenry empowered to hold the government to account. The attainment of Viksit Bharat 2047 would constitute a permanent transition towards social justice and human well-being.

Indeed, a notion—a vision—of what India ought to be in 2047 has begun to emerge. Contemporary thinkers reflect upon diverse aspects of the society of the future and sequentially upon political governance, inclusive development, and democratic transformation. Their ideas and the target year of Viksit Bharat 2047 are examined below.

— 'references': * 'cite_from': "Nair, 2017" 'cite_id': "3918d601-1e25-4b95-8daa-2c8d705cae3c"

1. Fiscal Sustainability and Resource Mobilization

Viksit Bharat 2047 requires increased revenues to maintain fiscal sustainability in relation to expenditure needs. India has maintained a stable public debt-to-GDP ratio below the 65% threshold specified in the 2013 Fiscal Responsibility Act (H. Buiter & Patel, 1995). Expenditure elasticities for sectors such as agriculture, education, health, and rural infrastructure have intensified post-pandemic alongside public debt and interest burdens on severely hampered urban services and infrastructure. Based on the urgent investment requirements for mobilizing and ensuring a sufficient service portfolio, especially for urban services aligning with subsidy limits established, there is ample scope for expansion with the extra revenues emerging from lower public debt in India.

Over past decades, revenue mobilization has failed to keep pace with expenditure needs. The overall tax-to-GDP ratio underwent a significant decline during the early decade of economic reforms, remaining in a narrow bandwidth of 18 to 20% of GDP for the last two decades and underperforming relative to peers both in terms of potential and actual—notably India's overall ratio remains nearly 5% lower than China's. The failure to raise adequate revenues, especially on perceived capital and periphery origins as well as potential, is attributable to a breakdown of effective medium-term revenue strategy for improving fiscal sustainability covering both capital and revenue accounts on a PP basis.

2. Geopolitical Environment and Security Considerations

The evolving geopolitical context and security considerations impact the realization of the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision. Predominant geopolitical instabilities in Indo-Pacific, South China Sea, and West Asia; growing influence of China; strategic challenges in Asia; and shifts in global power relations add to the complexity of the Indian milieu. Internal and external security concerns impede economic activities and deter investment. The new government must ensure a credible defense strategy and adequate capacity to provide a secure environment conducive to growth. This entails providing a roadmap for domestic defense production capability while establishing a robust defense-industrial base and a coherent Indian industrial and trade policy. Regional cooperation with other SAARC countries and dialogue with other stakeholders in the region, especially China, are essential for making South Asia peaceful, stable, prosperous, and multi-polar. Second, security and development strategies must be aligned with available fiscal resources and sustained in the long term without straining the economy or adversely impacting productivity. This requires prioritization of funding for defense and internal security within the overall security-budgeting exercise, through review of the levels of expenditure and sustainable changes in the procurement policy of the armed forces. Political consensus on security-policy priorities is essential to reducing deal volatility associated with changing government. Third, principal actors involved in external and internal security must make concerted efforts to speed up intelligence-gathering efforts and refine systems for quick dissemination and actionable intelligence through credible and efficient intelligence-gathering systems for timely deterrence. Fourth, security strategies must address determining the optimal degree of engagement with the outer world through co-operative security and collective measures, through a well-defined security-engagement matrix with select groups of states, internal balancing by providing levels of deterrence through conventional forces, alliances and alignments.

3. Social Cohesion and Managing Diversity

India has long been an exemplar of social and cultural diversity. This diversity manifests in various ways, including in the form of languages, dialects, customs, traditions, practices, lifestyles, economic systems, and even worldviews. Managing diverse communities and groups in an inclusive manner has accompanied the country's democratisation and modernisation as societal fragmentation increases due to governance challenges. Social cohesion thus remains a key aspect of governance for

ensuring equity and sustained development across the country. Addressing such challenges is possible through an inclusive approach to policies at various levels. An inclusive and respectful atmosphere engenders trust and faith in the political community as well as in the economic system among disparate people and groups, resulting in commitment and contribution to collective action and efforts for the common good. People develop a sense of belonging to a common polity that is responsive to all, as reflected in the phrase "Sab ka Saath, Sab ka Vikas" (Support for all, Development for all), rather than to certain groups that command priority at the expense of others, and this social consolidation becomes a facilitator of collective prosperity. Segregation and exclusion are thus detrimental not only to social justice but also to socio-economic progress and political cohesion (Sherraden, 2012). Inclusive development codifies a distinctively Indian approach and response to social cohesion (J., 2014). It seeks to weave together diverse communities into a larger, united, and participatory polity, thereby transforming the concept of citizenship to encompass people from different and disparate origins or backgrounds and of diverse groups and interests. Inclusive development implies an absence of any form of discrimination in terms of opportunities, resources, employment, entitlements, service delivery, and access to welfare provisions. It implies that access to welfare must be on the basis of need, rather than religion, ideology, caste, ethnicity, language, or other indicators, so that no one is left behind.

4. Implementation Gaps and Administrative Capacity

The ambitious vision for Viksit Bharat 2047 hinges on expediting inclusive development and enhancing democratic governance. Central to these aspirations are reforms and initiatives targeting key economic and social sectors, alongside measures aimed at strengthening public administration. Addressing multiple administrative, procedural, and institutional impediments to effective policy delivery is essential for improving the implementation of priority programmes and realizing the 2047 objectives. Without narrowing extensive implementation gaps, identifying the necessary complementary efforts and sequencing reforms remain challenging. Neither are official statistics nor secondary assessments of the quality and outcomes of public administration rigorous or comprehensive enough to inform perspectives definitively. However, various scholarly examinations of the motivations and capacities of officials within numerous specific sectors, alongside rough indirect indicators of effective governance, corroborate the view of significant obstacles to successful action. The time devoted by officials to unnecessary procedures and external engagements—partly correlated with implementation difficulties and often rising as general political capacity declines—remains substantial. Efforts to curtail these practices are under way, although regulations prohibiting acute responsibilities or sanctions for failures to provide essential inputs exist in some sectors. Simplifying complex guidelines and procedures that generate confusion and roundabout compliance demands further attenuates the capacity available for direct service delivery. Leaders' narrower ambitions in the wake of prolonged low investment and fiscal difficulties have inhibited essential growth-inducing or transformational initiatives; the expansion of capital auxiliary to enduring fixed costs such as salaries, utilities, or rents continues to block progress, including in lagging parameters like digitalisation and specialisation.

Pathways to Realizing 2047 Ambitions: Strategic Initiatives and Timelines

Realizing the Viksit Bharat 2047 Vision requires a comprehensive action plan aligned with the overarching goal of political governance, inclusive development, and democratic transformation. This section proposes a high-level roadmap consisting of—on a 5–10 year horizon as indicated—an institutional reforms roadmap with initiatives, sequencing, and milestones across the various parameters of integration (as identified above) that would enable their effective attainment and a detailed framework defining the specific objectives, priorities, timelines, resource needs, coverage, quality and sustainability considerations, outcome targets, and monitoring mechanisms for the five priority action sectors—economic transformation, social sectors, rural-urban linkages, education and skilling, and health care—previously outlined. The institutional reforms roadmap aims to ease the pursuit of economic or human development across other parameters of integration by signalling a sustained, balanced, and credible commitment to inclusive, equitable, and democratic governance—a key dimension of both the Viksit Bharat 2047 Vision and the 2047 Ambitions. Physical infrastructure, policy, and institutional connectivity can thus be seen as necessary enablers of, rather than objectives in their own right, even while meshing seamlessly with the inclusive growth imperative addressed through economic transformation and underlining the need for a multi-sectoral approach to all aspects of the 2047 Transformation. The other strategic initiative outlines an integrated set of sectoral action plans corresponding to the priorities identified in the context of the Political Governance, Inclusive Development, and Democratic Transformation themes as prerequisites to Viksit Bharat 2047, together with a proposal for monitoring and evaluation and an exploratory analysis of the role that digital guidance and governance can play in achieving the 2047 Ambitions. (Kumar & , 2024)

1. Institutional Reforms Roadmap

The vision, goals, and aspirations of Viksit Bharat 2047 profoundly shape the proposed pathways and strategic initiatives for bringing these ambitions to fruition by the centenary year of Independence. Addressing long-standing institutional deficits and reform imperatives occupies a central place in the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. The strategic focus is on institutional reforms across political governance, inclusive development, and democratic transformation. An initial proposal for a roadmap for institutional reforms is presented below, highlighting issues of political governance. The roadmap outlines a sequencing across three key dimensions of governance that emerge as top priorities: political governance, inclusive development, and democratic transformation. For each, strategic firm-oriented initiatives and specific pathways are delineated to achieve the priorities. Each initiative is complemented by an indicative timeline over which the transitions might take place and an estimate of the critical resource requirements, both financial and human, where applicable. Viksit Bharat 2047 aspires to achieve inclusive and participatory political governance that strengthens citizens' trust in the state and enhances the quality of policy-making and its effectiveness (Krushna Varma Varma, 2013). A functioning federal structure with a clear division of responsibilities between the national and state levels also remains crucial. The first priority is to implement the above-mentioned key electoral reforms to

enable the emergence of a multiparty competitive political system inclusive of underrepresented groups and vulnerable sections (Jeet Singh, 2008). The proposed initiatives warrant careful consideration of not only the constitutional and legal changes that would be needed, but also the political and administrative measures required to implement these reforms effectively and sustainably in the current context. Following the completion of political and electoral reforms to strengthen voice and representation, the focus would progressively shift to improving the quality of public administration, strengthening local government systems, and advancing citizen engagement and participation through innovative digital-solutions-based mechanisms. Transparent and accountable public finance management further builds trust and confidence between citizens and the state, with improvements to financial management information systems and participatory budget processes. Pursuing these pathways enables the establishment and simultaneous reinforcement of the conditions for sustainable economic development, inclusive social progress, and a participatory democratic polity.

2. Sectoral Action Plans and Milestones

To achieve Viksit Bharat aspirations, focused action is needed in three areas—economic transformation, strengthening social inclusion and human development, and public-finance sustainability. Timelines, resource requirements, and performance indicators can guide implementation. The comprehensive reform agenda covers most aspects of economic policy but is not sequenced or costed. Specific action plans can guide the first phase of implementation. Transforming the economy into a key engine of growth and providing decent employment opportunities is an explicit and underpinning goal. To achieve rapid, sustainable, and inclusive economic growth, the vision plan outlines an economic transformation strategy built around four pillars: building productive capabilities, rebalancing the economy toward manufacturing and services, promoting cooperative federalism through stronger rural-urban linkages, and catalyzing green economic transformation. Timely implementation is critical to realize the demands of the Viksit Bharat vision and ensure that Viksit Bharat in 2047 is not an extractive economy. While pathways for transforming the economy are established, further elaboration is needed to consolidate internal and external stability, especially given threats of global economic instability. Expenditure priorities for a strong fiscal consolidation plan remain to be spelled out, as do concrete action plans for other critical areas such as those related to the energy transition and health.

Four pathways can help improve social equity by tackling discrimination, poverty, and exclusion and can support the government's commitment to improving health, education, clean water and sanitation, rural electrification, and urban rejuvenation. As social protection covers only a fraction of workers, the focus must shift to providing work for the working-age population. Convergence in expenditure for both health and education between the Centre and states creates fiscal space for meeting the demands of vulnerable groups. The overall reach, universality, and quality of health and education services must be addressed for better social outcomes, as must the adequacy and predictability of social-protection measures.Fiscal sustainability must be restored to create fiscal space for development. The Centre's fiscal deficit is projected to decline to about 4.5% of GDP by 2025-26, in line with the revised fiscal consolidation path. To achieve this aim, revenue and non-essential current expenditure need to be carefully balanced. State-level fiscal consolidation is vital to restoring sustainable public finances at the macrolevel. Demands for capital expenditure and growing concerns about climate change and global warming mean that capital expenditure must, at the aggregate level, remain high.

3. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Adaptive Governance

Guided by the overarching Viksit Bharat 2047 framework, the strategy recognizes the significance of adaptive governance in monitoring and evaluating proposed initiatives for their relevance and effectiveness. It emphasizes the importance of timely and coordinated responses when the situational or context-related assumptions underlying project interventions change significantly, necessitating alterations in the project design. This practice ensures the programme remains aligned with the original objectives while achieving maximum impact (Jeet Singh, 2008). Adaptive governance promotes a continuous and systematic approach to project performance management and evaluation. It combines adaptive learning with iterative and incremental governance, focusing on governance processes to facilitate multi-stakeholder collaboration and coordination necessary for policy implementation.

Conclusion

Viksit Bharat 2047 highlights the challenge of translating SDG and G20-region aspirations into a credible and coherent achievable blueprint, set against the backdrop of a complex and dynamic political economy located at the intersection of multiple processes of change and transition in the domestic society and economy, in the geopolitically charged world, and of the tensions generated by the concomitant unfolding of the climate and digital revolutions. These need not only innovative thinking and strategic clarity but also the capacity to forcibly reconcile contending political perspectives and mobilize and align a myriad of diverse interests that are often, at least at first sight, in contradiction to one another. The risk of these superficial contradictions being obscured on the way to Viksit Bharat 2047 is ironically represented by the prospects of an electoral outcome in 2024 endorsing a single party domination of Indian democracy, an outcome that, although it is presented as the consolidation of the victory of the political project underpinned by the NDA, actually signals only the defeat of one of the contending sides, thereby undermining an essential condition for democracy – the formation of an opposition that is both credible and effectively representative of the social diversity of India. A clear illustration of the risk associated with undermining this fundamental aspect of democracy is provided by the consequent relative weakening of parliamentary governance despite the continuity of the NDA government. The effectiveness of Viksit Bharat 2047 will ultimately depend on how India navigates both the domestic and international political economy. The former requires skillful management of the transformational aspirations of the different regions and communities within the Indian state, while the latter demands a careful balancing of relations with the major global powers to safeguard security interests without compromising strategic autonomy. This balancing act, however, is gradually being

undertaken not by consciously articulated state strategy but by the geopolitics of great power alignments, India's own emergence as an alternative pole of economic growth and trade on the world stage, and the consequent surging attractiveness of the Indian market that is being exploited by all major investors and traders.

Acknowledgement
The author sincerely expresses gratitude to the Principal and management of Vitthalrao Patil Mahavidyalaya (Arts, Commerce and Science), Kale, Tal. Panhala, Dist. Kolhapur, for providing the necessary academic environment and institutional support for this study.

Financial support and sponsorship
Nil.

Conflicts of interest
The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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