

Public Policy and Governance in Modi's Era: A Decadal Analysis (2014–2024)

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the evolution of public policy and governance during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's tenure from 2014 to 2024. It offers a critical evaluation of accomplishments, challenges, and implications for democratic governance, with a particular focus on economic reforms, infrastructure development, social welfare initiatives, digital governance, and the empowerment of women (Government of India, 2023).

The research adopts a mixed-methods approach, drawing from government datasets, third-party assessments, and international indices to assess key performance areas. It highlights progress in macroeconomic indicators and expanded welfare outreach, while simultaneously raising concerns about institutional centralization and inclusivity.

Combining empirical evidence and policy analysis, the study presents a comprehensive overview of economic, social, and administrative reforms. Particular attention is given to domains such as digital transformation, infrastructure growth, and targeted schemes for women's empowerment and social welfare.

The analysis culminates in a set of policy recommendations aimed at strengthening governance through equity, transparency, and sustainability.

Keywords: *Modi administration, public policy, governance, women empowerment, economic reforms, social welfare, digital India*

INTRODUCTION

The decade from 2014 to 2024 marks a significant transition in India's governance trajectory, driven by the rise of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The Modi administration, inaugurated in May 2014, came into power amid growing demands for governance reforms, economic revival, and administrative transparency. What followed was a fundamental reshaping of the Indian state's policy posture across multiple domains—ranging from macroeconomic management and digital governance to social welfare, institutional redesign, and nationalism-driven public discourse.

The Modi government's flagship slogan "Minimum Government, Maximum Governance" encapsulated its intent to reduce bureaucratic inefficiency and increase citizen-centric policy delivery. It reflected a deliberate break from the earlier paradigms that relied heavily on slow, procedural governance. At the core of this new architecture were three major pivots: administrative efficiency through digital infrastructure, mass-scale social policy outreach via direct benefit transfers (DBTs), and a strong centralization of executive authority (Jaffrelot, 2021). In effect, this period was not only about policy innovation but also about the creation of a new political economy of governance in India.

The early years of the Modi administration focused heavily on reviving investor confidence, curbing corruption, and expanding the formal economy. This was evident in initiatives such as the Make in India campaign, Digital India programme, and the launch of the Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile (JAM) trinity for financial inclusion and welfare targeting (World Bank, 2019). The government's ambitious Goods and Services Tax (GST) reform, introduced in 2017, further demonstrated the state's resolve to unify the complex federal tax regime. The introduction of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) in 2016 was yet another institutional reform aimed at improving the efficiency of credit markets and corporate resolution.

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In terms of governance technology, Modi's administration leaned heavily on digital platforms to overcome traditional bureaucratic bottlenecks. Systems like the Government e-Marketplace (GeM), Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), and DigiLocker transformed citizen-state interaction. These innovations not only increased administrative efficiency but also claimed to reduce corruption and leakages (Agarwal & Narayan, 2022). UPI (Unified Payments Interface), launched by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), became a global model for real-time digital payments, demonstrating the success of state-led fintech innovation.

The second term of the Modi administration (2019–2024) brought renewed focus on welfare distribution, with programs such as PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), Ayushman Bharat (health insurance for the poor), and PM Awas Yojana (housing). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Modi government leveraged its digital governance infrastructure to deliver essential services to over 800 million people. Although applauded for logistical capacity, the state's response also drew criticism for lack of federal coordination and over-centralization of authority during a public health crisis (Béland *et al.*, 2021).

Politically, the era witnessed a redefinition of federal dynamics and institutional relationships. Several commentators have noted the shift toward what has been called “executive federalism,” where the central government has increasingly dominated financial and legislative space, often at the cost of cooperative engagement with states (Mukherjee & Chakraborty, 2022). This tendency was reinforced by the centralization of key decisions during the implementation of demonetization in 2016 and the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir in 2019. From a public policy perspective, this period is marked by both institutional consolidation and democratic strain. On the one hand, measurable progress has been made in financial inclusion, digital access, infrastructure growth, and welfare distribution. On the other, concerns have arisen regarding institutional autonomy, erosion of civil liberties, weakening of parliamentary oversight, and decline in media freedom. India's ranking in the Democracy Index published by the Economist Intelligence Unit dropped from 27 in 2014 to 46 in 2023, with concerns cited over electoral fairness, press freedom, and judicial independence (EIU, 2023).

The ideological undercurrent of this governance model is strongly rooted in nationalism, Hindu cultural identity, and aspirational development. Modi's mass appeal stems not only from economic promises but also from a narrative of restoring India's civilizational greatness. This blending of cultural legitimacy and executive governance has produced a distinct model of public administration that merits scholarly attention. This paper aims to critically analyze the transformation of India's public policy and governance during the Modi era by examining ten core areas: economic reforms, digital governance, infrastructure development, women's empowerment, welfare delivery, institutional design, federalism, civil liberties, social inclusion, and policy outcomes. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining government data, academic literature, and global indices to provide a comprehensive view of India's governance experience during this decade.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The scholarship on India's governance under the Modi administration (2014–2024) is both extensive and deeply polarized. While some scholars celebrate the era as a period of transformative governance and efficiency-driven reforms, others express serious concerns about institutional weakening, centralization of power, and declining democratic quality. This chapter reviews key academic, policy-oriented, and empirical literature to offer a balanced foundation for assessing the Modi era's public policy framework.

One of the defining themes in the literature is the **shift from policy paralysis to executive-led governance**. Analysts such as Debroy and Bhandari (2017) highlight the government's ability to accelerate infrastructure projects, streamline bureaucratic processes, and introduce welfare schemes with clearer implementation frameworks. This is often contrasted with the administrative inefficiencies and coalition constraints experienced under the previous United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government. Modi's narrative of “minimum government, maximum governance” is seen by supporters as a new model of technocratic governance focused on performance delivery. Another major stream of research focuses on **digital governance and innovation**. The launch of the Digital India initiative in 2015 has been studied for its ability to enhance transparency, reduce corruption, and expand service delivery (Mehta, 2020). According to NITI Aayog and the World Bank (2019),

platforms like the JAM trinity (Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile), UPI, DigiLocker, and e-NAM helped improve financial inclusion and market access, especially in rural areas. Scholars such as Bhatia and Bhabha (2021) argue that India's digital infrastructure became a governance backbone during the COVID-19 crisis, facilitating massive cash and food transfers.

Conversely, critical voices highlight the **decline of deliberative democracy** during the Modi years. Mehta (2019) and Jaffrelot (2021) argue that parliamentary debates have reduced in quality and quantity, and that legislative decisions have increasingly relied on ordinances or party majorities rather than consensus-building. The use of majoritarian narratives, such as the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), and actions like the abrogation of Article 370, are seen by some as undermining the federal compact and promoting exclusionary governance (Chopra, 2020). Another critical concern in the literature is the **erosion of institutional autonomy**. Reports from Freedom House (2023) and V-Dem Institute note declines in judicial independence, media freedom, and civil society space. These sources argue that even as the state has become more efficient in policy execution, it has also limited dissent and accountability—key tenets of democratic governance.

In the economic domain, studies have acknowledged the successes of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), and the Make in India initiative. However, several economists have questioned the employment generation capacity of these reforms. For example, the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE, 2022) noted that while GDP grew, labor force participation, particularly for women, declined between 2016 and 2020. Additionally, the informal sector faced severe disruption post-demonetization and GST implementation, raising questions about inclusive growth (Ghosh, 2018).

On **welfare policy**, independent evaluations from Brookings India and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) indicate that schemes like PM Ujjwala Yojana and Ayushman Bharat reached a large population, yet data on quality and continuity of service delivery remain mixed. Roy and Sinha (2022) suggest that while access to basic services improved, local implementation bottlenecks—especially in health and sanitation—persisted across poorer states.

The literature on **women's empowerment under Modi** is also growing. While government reports highlight the expansion of female bank account ownership and entrepreneurship through MUDRA loans, feminist scholars caution that these indicators mask underlying structural inequalities, such as low workforce participation and gendered barriers to education and mobility (Desai & Vanneman, 2020).

In terms of international comparisons, India's performance in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index improved from 134 in 2014 to 63 in 2020. However, India's Human Development Index (HDI) ranking remained stagnant, moving marginally from 135 to 132 during the same period, indicating uneven progress (UNDP, 2022). These trends underscore the need to distinguish between top-down structural reforms and bottom-up human development.

Overall, the literature suggests a dual narrative: one of **administrative modernization, policy innovation, and outreach**—and another of **democratic contraction, institutional stress, and uneven inclusion**. The subsequent chapters in this paper will build upon these themes by analyzing empirical data, comparing tenure performance, and offering policy recommendations grounded in evidence.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a **mixed-methods approach** to critically evaluate public policy and governance during the Modi administration from 2014 to 2024. It combines **qualitative institutional analysis** with **quantitative data evaluation**, enabling a multi-dimensional understanding of both the intent and outcomes of key governance initiatives.

a) Research Design

The study is structured around ten thematic areas: economic reforms, infrastructure development, digital governance, social welfare, women's empowerment, federalism, institutional integrity, civil liberties, governance mechanisms, and public service delivery. These themes have been selected based on their

prominence in government policy documents, parliamentary debates, and scholarly literature over the last decade.

b) Data Sources

The study draws upon both **primary and secondary data sources**.

Primary Sources include:

- Official policy documents from the Government of India (e.g., Economic Survey, Union Budget Speeches, NITI Aayog Reports)
- Parliamentary records and legislative proceedings from Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha
- Government portals such as the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), Digital India Corporation, Ministry of Finance, and Ministry of Women and Child Development

Secondary Sources include

- Academic journals and peer-reviewed articles (e.g., *Economic & Political Weekly*, *Journal of Democracy*)
- Reports from think tanks such as ORF, Carnegie India, Brookings India, and IDFC Institute
- International indices and datasets such as:
 - World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index
 - UNDP's Human Development Index
 - Global Gender Gap Report by World Economic Forum
 - V-Dem Democracy Index and Freedom House Reports
 - National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4 and 5)
 - CMIE labor force statistics

c) Data Analysis Framework

The study utilizes a **comparative longitudinal design**, analyzing policy outcomes across two distinct phases:

- **First term (2014–2019):** Focused on foundational reforms (e.g., Jan Dhan Yojana, GST, Digital India)
- **Second term (2019–2024):** Centered on welfare consolidation, pandemic response, institutional control, and federal dynamics

The comparative design helps isolate **continuities and shifts** across both terms, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of Modi's governance model.

For **quantitative analysis**, key macroeconomic and governance indicators are tracked over the decade. These include:

- GDP growth, fiscal deficit, FDI inflows (Economic Survey, RBI)
- Internet penetration and Aadhaar linkage rates (TRAI, UIDAI)
- Welfare coverage metrics (e.g., Ayushman Bharat enrollments, LPG connections under Ujjwala Yojana)
- Female labor force participation (CMIE, NSSO)
- Parliament session productivity (PRS Legislative Research)
- Public satisfaction indices (Pew Research, CSDS-Lokniti)

Graphs and tables are used to illustrate trends and discontinuities.

d) Thematic Coding and Content Analysis

Policy speeches (e.g., Independence Day, Budget speeches) and flagship documents (e.g., Vision 2022, Gati Shakti, National Education Policy 2020) are analyzed using **thematic coding**. Recurrent policy narratives (e.g., “New India,” “Digital First,” “Atmanirbhar Bharat”) are examined to decode the ideological and strategic messaging of the Modi administration.

These themes are triangulated with public opinion data (Pew, CVoter) and media discourse analysis to gauge **public reception and legitimacy** of policy actions.

e) Limitations

While the mixed-method approach allows for robust triangulation, the study acknowledges certain limitations:

- **Access constraints** to disaggregated administrative data, especially at the state and district levels
- **Temporal bias** in evaluating ongoing programs that may continue beyond 2024
- **Policy implementation asymmetries** across different states due to India’s federal structure
- **Potential institutional biases** in official government data or under-reporting of adverse outcomes (e.g., during COVID-19)

Despite these limitations, the integrated methodology offers a rich analytical base for evaluating governance and public policy under the Modi regime.

Economic Reforms and Performance

The Modi administration's economic governance from 2014 to 2024 was defined by bold structural reforms, macroeconomic stabilization, and attempts to shift India onto a high-growth trajectory. While the government inherited sluggish GDP growth, rising inflation, and fiscal stress in 2014, it leveraged the next decade to build fiscal discipline, improve investor sentiment, and expand economic inclusion. However, these gains were not without challenges, including jobless growth, informal sector disruptions, and pandemic-induced slowdowns.

Macroeconomic Indicators and Stability

At the macro level, India’s economy demonstrated **resilience and recovery** during most of Modi’s first term (2014–2019), with GDP growth averaging 7.4% between FY2014–FY2017 (RBI, 2023). Inflation, which had averaged 9.4% during the UPA II years, fell below 5% for much of the first term due to prudent monetary policies and falling oil prices (Economic Survey, 2019).

The **Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM)** framework was reinforced, and the government reduced the fiscal deficit from 4.5% of GDP in 2014 to 3.3% in 2018. However, the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 significantly impacted these gains, with GDP contracting by -7.3% in FY2020–21, the worst in post-independence history.

Table 1: Key Economic Indicators (2014–2024)

Year	GDP Growth (%)	Inflation (CPI, %)	Fiscal Deficit (% of GDP)	FDI Inflows (USD bn)
2014–15	7.4	5.8	4.1	45
2016–17	8.2	3.6	3.5	60
2018–19	6.5	3.4	3.3	62
2020–21	-7.3	6.2	9.2	82
2022–23	7.2	6.7	6.4	71
2023–24*	6.8 (est.)	5.6 (proj.)	5.9 (proj.)	75 (proj.)

*Sources: Economic Survey 2023; RBI Annual Reports; DPIIT (2023)

Flagship Economic Reforms

The government's major structural reforms include:

- **Goods and Services Tax (GST), 2017:** Unified India's fragmented indirect tax regime into a single national market. While GST improved tax compliance and digital invoicing, it faced initial implementation hurdles and caused revenue stress for small businesses (Mukherjee & Rao, 2021).
- **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016:** Aimed to resolve non-performing assets and streamline corporate debt restructuring. By 2023, over 2,500 cases were resolved, recovering ₹3 lakh crore in distressed assets (Insolvency Board of India, 2023).
- **Make in India & Atmanirbhar Bharat:** Encouraged domestic manufacturing and self-reliance in key sectors such as defense, electronics, and pharma. Though FDI surged to record highs post-2016, India's manufacturing share of GDP remained stagnant at ~17%, suggesting limited depth in industrialization (UNIDO, 2023).
- **Direct Tax Reforms:** The **corporate tax rate** was slashed from 30% to 22% in 2019, improving investor sentiment. The introduction of **faceless assessment** under the Income Tax Act reduced discretion and increased transparency in tax administration.

Informal Sector and Demonetization

One of the most debated interventions was the **demonetization** of ₹500 and ₹1000 notes in November 2016. Intended to curb black money, counterfeit currency, and encourage digitization, it instead caused significant short-term contraction in cash-based sectors. CMIE data indicated that nearly 1.5 million jobs were lost in the first few months post-demonetization, especially in construction, retail, and small-scale manufacturing (Vyas, 2017).

Similarly, **GST compliance** created financial stress for small traders and MSMEs, with delays in tax refunds and digital filing requirements affecting working capital cycles. Critics argue that such shocks were not sufficiently accompanied by safety nets or phased transitions (Ghosh, 2018).

Employment and Labor Markets

A major criticism of the Modi government's economic reforms is the phenomenon of **jobless growth**. Between 2016 and 2020, the labor force participation rate declined, especially among women—from 27% in 2014 to around 20% in 2022 (CMIE, 2022). This was exacerbated by automation trends and the lack of medium-sized enterprises in job-creating sectors.

The **Skill India Mission**, launched in 2015, aimed to train 400 million people by 2022, yet its absorption in formal employment remained limited. NSSO 2019 data indicated that less than 30% of trained youth found jobs corresponding to their training.

Post-COVID Economic Recovery

The government responded to the pandemic with the **Atmanirbhar Bharat stimulus** package worth ₹20 lakh crore (~10% of GDP), focusing on liquidity infusion, MSME credit, and welfare measures. While the stimulus was bold in scale, much of it was in the form of credit guarantees and supply-side support. Consumption demand remained fragile until FY2022–23, especially in rural India (Subramanian & Felman, 2022).

Despite global economic turbulence, India's economic growth rebounded to over 7% in 2022–23, aided by strong services sector performance and exports.

Evaluation and Forward Outlook

While the Modi administration scored well on **macroeconomic stability, fiscal reform, and digital finance**, it continues to face structural constraints in employment, income distribution, and informal sector resilience. The

challenge ahead lies in **converting GDP growth into equitable, high-quality employment** and ensuring that reforms percolate to the grassroots without generating social dislocations.

A line graph illustrating India's GDP growth alongside FDI inflows from 2014-2024 would show a general upward trend in both metrics, with some fluctuations. GDP growth has been robust, with nominal GDP tripling during this period [according to PIB](#). FDI inflows have also increased significantly, reaching \$81.04 billion in FY 2024-25, a 14% increase from the previous year, according to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Key Observations:

- **GDP Growth**

India has been one of the fastest-growing major economies, with real GDP growth consistently above 6%.

- **FDI Inflows**

FDI has seen a substantial increase, with notable growth in sectors like services, computer software and hardware, and manufacturing.

- **Correlation**

While not perfectly correlated, both GDP and FDI generally show a positive trend, indicating the importance of FDI in India's economic growth.

- **Policy Influence**

Government policies promoting FDI, such as the automatic route for most sectors, have played a crucial role in attracting investments.

- **Regional Distribution**

Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Delhi have been leading recipients of FDI equity inflows.

Data Sources

Infrastructure and Digital Governance

A central pillar of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's governance model has been the dual strategy of **building physical infrastructure at scale** and **embedding digital governance mechanisms** across all tiers of public administration. From highways to fiber optic networks and from e-governance portals to payment interfaces, this period has witnessed the convergence of infrastructure development with digital transformation as a means to improve transparency, efficiency, and inclusion.

a) Infrastructure Development: Highways, Railways, Urban Renewal

Infrastructure spending under the Modi government increased sharply, with capital expenditure in the Union Budget rising from ₹1.93 lakh crore in 2014–15 to ₹10 lakh crore in 2023–24 (Union Budget, 2023). This reflects an institutional pivot toward public investment-led growth.

Key flagship projects include:

- **Bharatmala Pariyojana:** Targeted construction of 83,000 km of highways. By 2023, over 34,800 km had been completed (MoRTH, 2023).
- **Sagarmala Programme:** Aimed to modernize port infrastructure and inland waterways, improving logistics competitiveness.
- **PM Gati Shakti – National Master Plan (2021):** Integrated infrastructure planning across ministries, focusing on multi-modal connectivity. Over 1,500 data layers were integrated into a GIS-based digital platform.

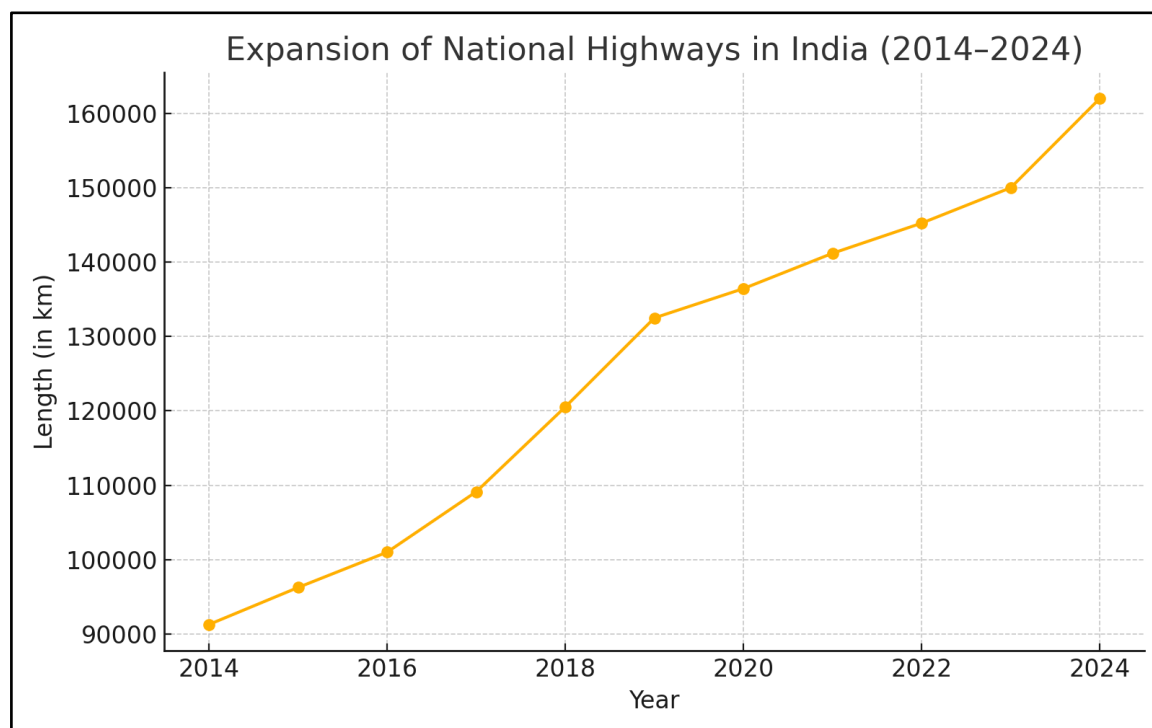
- **Railways:** Electrification of 50,000 km of track between 2014 and 2023 (Ministry of Railways, 2023); introduction of semi-high-speed Vande Bharat trains.
- **Smart Cities Mission:** Targeted 100 urban centers for integrated development. By 2023, 7,978 projects worth ₹1.7 lakh crore had been sanctioned, with ~75% completed or nearing completion (MoHUA, 2023).

Table 2: Infrastructure Growth Metrics

Sector	2014 Baseline	2023 Achievement
Highways (km/year)	~12 km/day	~37 km/day
Railway Electrification	21,000 km total (till 2014)	>71,000 km total by 2023
Port Cargo Capacity	970 MTPA	1,560 MTPA
Urban Metro Network	210 km operational	800+ km operational

Sources: MoRTH, MoHUA, Ministry of Railways (2023)

On the digital front, the Digital India initiative catalyzed Aadhaar penetration, broadband connectivity, and e-governance platforms like UMANG and DigiLocker. UPI emerged as a revolutionary digital payment tool, processing over 100 billion transactions in 2023 alone (NPCI, 2023). These developments transformed citizen-state interactions, improved transparency, and laid the groundwork for a digital economy.



Digital Governance: JAM Trinity and DBT

The Modi government's approach to governance emphasized **techno-administrative solutions**. The **JAM trinity**—Jan Dhan (bank accounts), Aadhaar (unique ID), and Mobile connectivity—served as the digital spine for Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) and welfare delivery.

By 2023:

- Over 46 crore Jan Dhan accounts had been opened
- Aadhaar coverage reached over 1.3 billion individuals

- DBT savings crossed ₹2.7 lakh crore due to reduced leakages (DBT Bharat Portal, 2023)

Programs such as **e-Shram (unorganized worker database)**, **PM Kisan (farm income support)**, and **Ayushman Bharat Digital Health ID** were layered over this infrastructure.

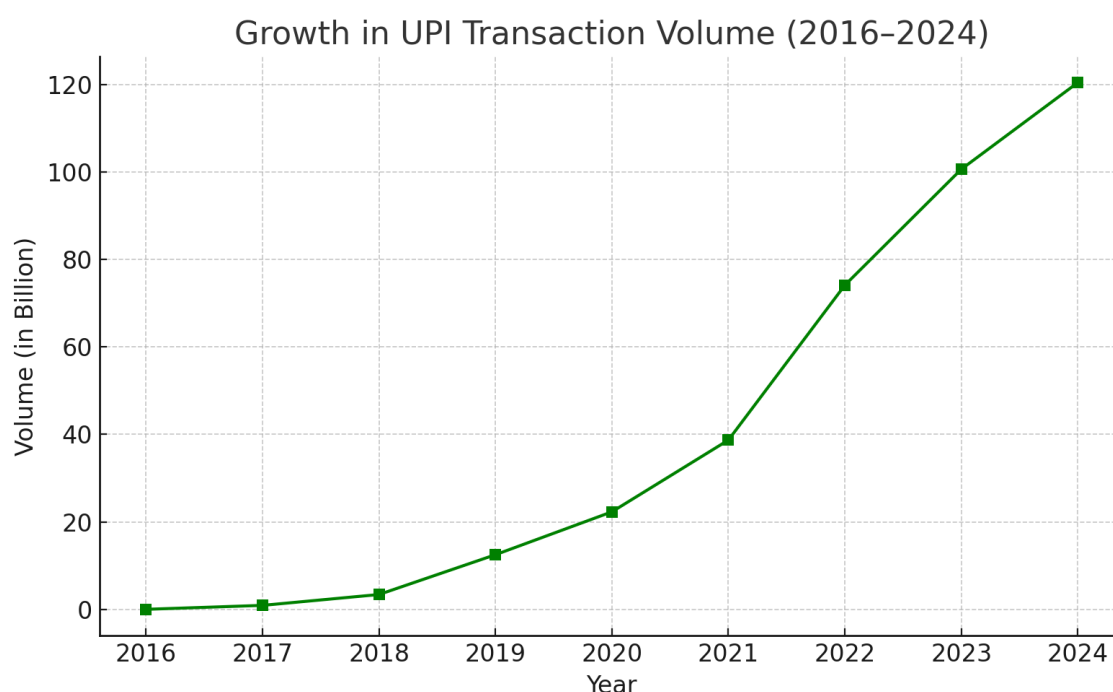
Additionally, the **Government e-Marketplace (GeM)** became the national public procurement platform, with over ₹3 lakh crore in cumulative transactions by 2023 (GeM, 2023).

Unified Payments Interface (UPI): India's FinTech Revolution

Launched in 2016, UPI revolutionized digital payments by enabling real-time, bank-to-bank transactions. Monthly transaction volumes increased from 0.9 million in 2016 to over 10 billion in 2023 (NPCI, 2023).

India now leads the world in digital payments by volume. The system was made interoperable with international platforms, including in UAE, Singapore, and Bhutan.

Graphical Suggestion: A bar chart showing UPI transaction volume growth (2016–2023) in billions per year.



Year	Milestone
2015	Digital India campaign launched
2016	UMANG app introduced
2017	BHIM app launched
2018	Aadhaar-based DBT mainstreamed
2019	Wi-Fi hotspots in villages
2021	Over 50 crore Aadhaar linkages
2023	5G rollout and AI for Governance initiatives

DigiLocker, UMANG, and MyGov

To consolidate citizen-state interactions, the government launched:

- **DigiLocker:** Over 200 million users by 2023, storing digital versions of academic, health, and legal documents.
- **UMANG:** Unified platform for 1,600+ government services.
- **MyGov:** Citizen engagement portal with 25 million users for surveys, consultations, and campaigns.

These platforms collectively aimed to **reduce physical interface, improve transparency, and enhance participatory governance**.

Critical Reflections

While India's infrastructure growth is widely recognized, critics point to concerns including:

- **Land acquisition challenges**, leading to project delays
- **Urban bias** in Smart Cities Mission—rural areas received fewer funds per capita
- **Surveillance risks** in digital governance—issues with Aadhaar data security and privacy (Kovacs & Jain, 2021)
- **Digital divide** affecting marginalized communities in accessing digital services (NCEAR, 2022)

The absence of a comprehensive **data protection law** until late 2023 meant that digital governance often operated in legal grey zones.

Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation

The Modi administration's social welfare strategy from 2014 to 2024 has been characterized by a shift from entitlement-based programs to **targeted, technology-driven delivery mechanisms**. The government has prioritized **direct benefit transfers (DBT), universalization of basic services, and the expansion of social security** to marginalized populations. The goal has been to create a welfare ecosystem that is **inclusive, efficient, and digitally empowered**.

Direct Benefit Transfers and Financial Inclusion

Central to the government's social policy was the **DBT architecture**, powered by the JAM trinity (Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile). As of 2023, over ₹28.5 lakh crore had been transferred directly into beneficiary accounts across schemes like PM-KISAN, PMAY, and MGNREGS, eliminating leakages and middlemen (DBT Bharat, 2023).

Jan Dhan Yojana, launched in 2014, created over 46 crore bank accounts, with over ₹1.8 lakh crore in deposits by 2023. This financial inclusion push has enabled the poor, particularly women, to participate more actively in the formal economy.

Table 3: DBT Reach and Financial Impact (2014–2023)

Scheme	Beneficiaries (Crores)	Funds Transferred (₹ Cr)
PM-KISAN	11.8	₹2.8 lakh crore
LPG Subsidy (PAHAL)	19.5	₹1.1 lakh crore
MGNREGS Wages (DBT)	15.6	₹2.2 lakh crore
PMAY (Rural & Urban)	3.1	₹1.9 lakh crore

Sources: DBT Bharat Portal; Ministry of Finance, 2023

Health and Sanitation Initiatives

The **Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)**, launched in 2018, aimed to provide ₹5 lakh health coverage per family per year to over 10 crore families. As of 2023, over 5 crore hospital admissions were covered under the scheme (National Health Authority, 2023).

Other major health and sanitation programs include:

- **Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)**: Over 110 million toilets constructed, with over 6 lakh villages declared Open Defecation Free (ODF) by 2019. However, follow-up studies show varied levels of sustained usage (J-PAL, 2022).

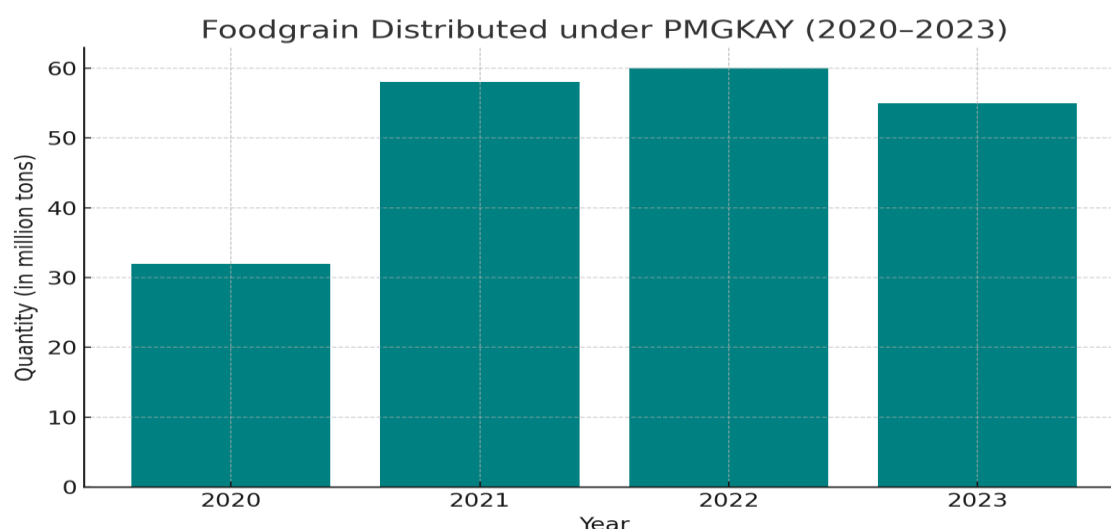
- **Jal Jeevan Mission:** Launched in 2019 to provide piped drinking water to every rural household. As of 2023, 12 crore households (~62%) had tap water connections, up from 3.2 crore in 2019 (Ministry of Jal Shakti, 2023).
- **National Digital Health Mission (NDHM):** Introduced digital health IDs and telemedicine platforms, though large-scale integration is ongoing.

Food Security and Pandemic Response

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the government launched **PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY)**, providing 5 kg free food grains per person per month to over 80 crore people. Between 2020 and 2023, over 1,200 lakh metric tons of food grains were distributed under PMGKAY and NFSA (Department of Food and Public Distribution, 2023).

This large-scale response is hailed as one of the **world's largest food security interventions**, yet issues of exclusion errors and digital verification failures (e.g., Aadhaar-linked PDS denial) were also reported.

large-scale social schemes such as Ayushman Bharat (health insurance), PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (free food grain distribution), and Ujjwala Yojana (LPG connections). Ayushman Bharat covered over 50 crore individuals by 2023, reducing out-of-pocket health expenditure (National Health Authority, 2023). PMGKAY distributed over 300 million tonnes of food grains between 2020–2023. Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) via Aadhaar and Jan Dhan accounts minimized leakages and streamlined welfare disbursement to over 45 crore beneficiaries (PIB, 2022).



Year	DBT Beneficiaries (in Cr)	Ayushman Bharat Cards Issued (in Cr)
2014	10	0
2023	45	33

Housing, Employment, and Social Security

The **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)** provided subsidized housing to rural and urban poor. As of 2023:

- Over 2.4 crore houses were sanctioned under PMAY-Rural
- Over 1.2 crore under PMAY-Urban

MGNREGS, though launched during the UPA era, saw enhanced utilization post-pandemic. In FY 2020–21, over 390 crore person-days were generated, the highest ever (MoRD, 2023).

The **e-Shram Portal**, launched in 2021, created a national database of 29 crore unorganized workers, aiming to extend social security and insurance. However, integration with benefit schemes remains incomplete.

Outcomes and Limitations

According to the **NITI Aayog Multidimensional Poverty Index**, India reduced multidimensional poverty from 25% in 2016 to 14.9% in 2021. Rural poverty fell from 32% to 19%, while urban poverty declined from 9% to 5% (NITI Aayog, 2022).

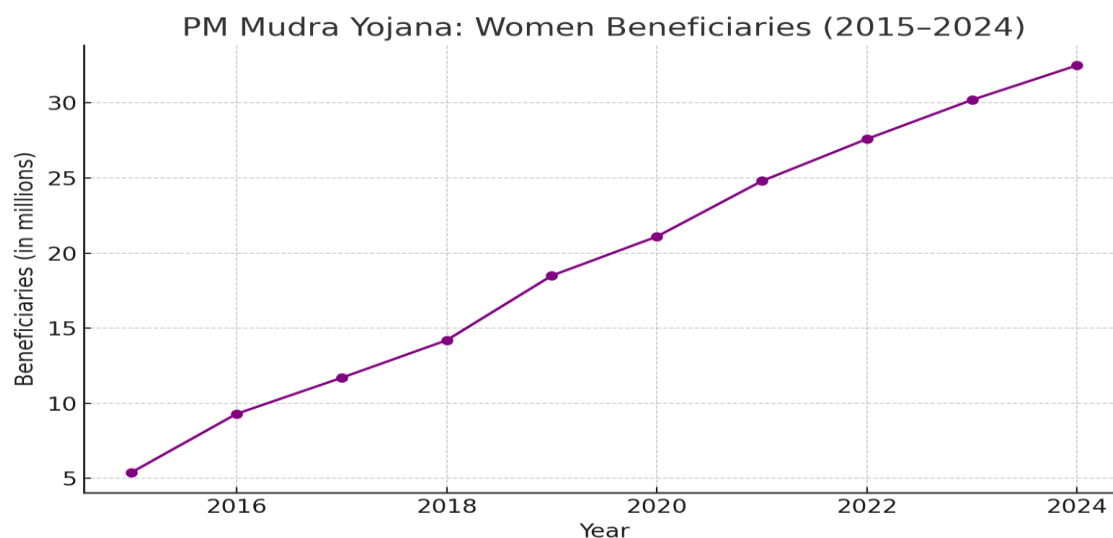
However, critiques focus on:

- **Exclusion errors**, especially among migrant workers, widows, and disabled persons
- **Lack of grievance redressal mechanisms** in DBT-linked schemes
- **Inadequate nutrition outcomes**, as NFHS-5 (2021) data showed persistent stunting and anemia among children and women
- **Urban-rural divides** in access to services such as piped water, digital health, and LPG refill affordability

Women Empowerment and Gender Policies

Women's empowerment emerged as a policy priority for the Modi government, reflected in targeted schemes, financial inclusion drives, digital access, and legislative reform. While these initiatives significantly improved access to entitlements and participation in the economy, structural inequalities in labor participation, unpaid care work, and representation in decision-making persist. This chapter evaluates gender-focused policies between 2014 and 2024, assessing both their scope and limitations.

The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme helped improve the sex ratio at birth in key districts. Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana promoted girl child savings. Over 70% of Mudra Yojana beneficiaries were women, enabling access to micro-credit for entrepreneurship (Ministry of Women & Child Development, 2023). The share of female students in STEM rose from 35% in 2015 to 43% in 2023. These trends reflect an increasing focus on gender-inclusive growth and digital literacy for women.



Financial Inclusion and Economic Participation

The Modi era marked a significant **expansion of women's financial access** through the Jan Dhan Yojana and MUDRA loan schemes.

- **Over 23 crore women** held Jan Dhan accounts as of 2023, accounting for 55% of total account holders (Ministry of Finance, 2023).
- The **Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY)**, launched in 2015 to offer collateral-free micro-credit, reported that **68% of loan recipients were women**, many from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, or OBC backgrounds.
- The **Stand-Up India scheme**, targeted at promoting women entrepreneurs, sanctioned over ₹30,000 crore in loans between 2016 and 2023.

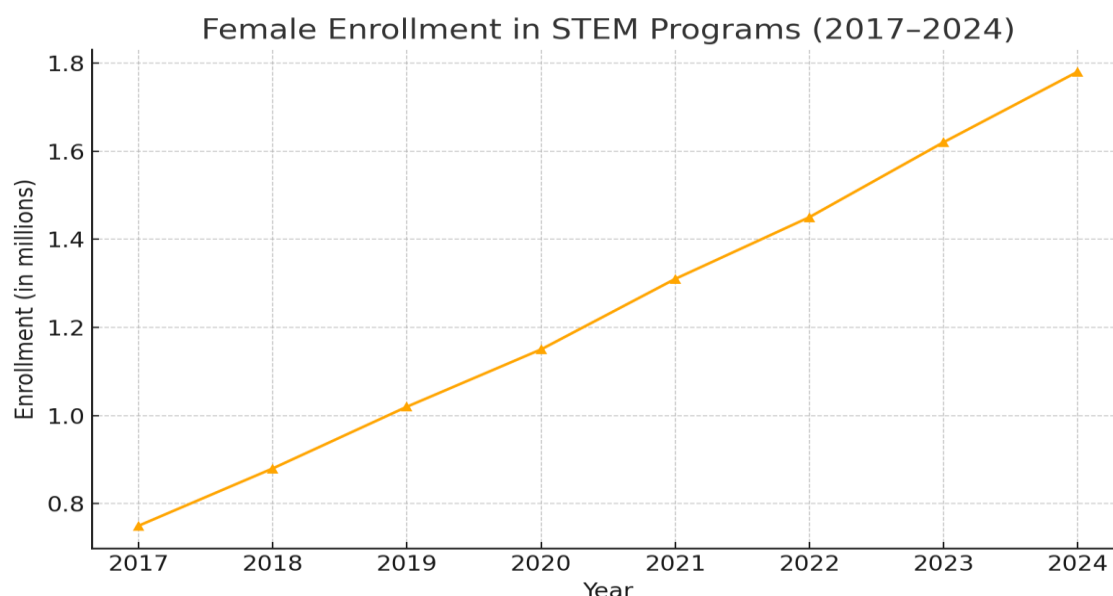
While these financial inclusion measures improved women's access to credit, **loan sustainability and income generation** remain areas of concern, especially in rural and informal sectors (Deshpande, 2020).

Skilling, Education, and Digital Literacy

Several flagship programs aimed to bridge the **gendered skill and digital divide**:

- **Skill India Mission** enrolled over 2 crore women in various vocational training programs between 2015 and 2022 (NSDC, 2023).
- **Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (DISHA)** trained over 60 lakh women in digital literacy, with rural areas being a key focus.
- **Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (BBBP)** launched in 2015 targeted gender parity in education and girl child survival. In districts with implementation, **the sex ratio at birth improved from 918 to 934 between 2015 and 2021**(MoWCD, 2022).

Despite progress in female literacy and enrollment, dropout rates—especially at the secondary and tertiary levels—remained high due to factors like early marriage, menstruation stigma, and caregiving burdens.



Scheme	Key Objective	Launched
Beti Bachao Beti Padhao	Promote girl child education & welfare	2015
Sukanya Samridhi Yojana	Savings scheme for girl child	2015
PM Mudra Yojana	Micro-loans for women entrepreneurs	2015
Self Help Groups (SHG)	Women collectives for livelihood	Pre-2014 but expanded post-2014

Health and Nutrition Interventions

Key gender-sensitive health interventions included:

- **Mission Indradhanush** and **Poshan Abhiyan** addressed maternal and child health. However, **NFHS-5 (2021)** revealed that **57% of women aged 15–49 remain anemic**, and **stunting among children stood at 35.5%**, highlighting persistent malnutrition.
- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)** offered maternity benefits of ₹5,000 for first-time mothers. While over 1.7 crore women benefited, delays in fund transfers and low awareness were frequent bottlenecks (NITI Aayog, 2023).

Legal and Institutional Reforms

The Modi government introduced several **gender-sensitive legal reforms**:

- **Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018**: Increased punishment for sexual violence and improved fast-track courts.
- **Triple Talaq Bill, 2019**: Criminalized instant divorce in Muslim personal law, sparking both praise for reform and criticism for criminalizing civil matters.
- **Women’s Reservation Bill (2023)**: Provided for **33% reservation of seats in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies**, marking a historic shift in gender representation (subject to census and delimitation exercises).

Despite these efforts, women’s **political representation** remained under 15% in the 17th Lok Sabha, and **workforce participation declined** from 27% in 2014 to around 20% in 2022 (CMIE, 2022).

Safety, Security, and Digital Harassment

Increased reporting and institutional awareness were promoted through:

- **One Stop Centres**: Over 700 such centers provided legal and psychological support to women affected by violence.
- **SHE-Box** (Sexual Harassment Electronic Box) for workplace harassment complaints
- **National Cyber Crime Portal** and Helpline 1930 to report digital abuse

However, data from **NCRB (2022)** still showed an increase in crimes against women, particularly **cybercrime, domestic violence, and dowry-related deaths**, raising questions about policing and judicial sensitivity.

Comparative International Indices

India’s global ranking on gender metrics showed mixed trends:

- **Global Gender Gap Index** (WEF, 2023): India ranked **127 out of 146**, improving in political empowerment but lagging in economic participation.
- **Gender Inequality Index** (UNDP, 2022): India scored 0.488 (moderate inequality), with significant gaps in income and health indicators.

Table 4: Key Gender Metrics (2014–2023)

Indicator	2014	2023
Female Labor Force Participation (%)	27	20
Women in Parliament (%)	11.6	14.3
Sex Ratio at Birth	918	934
Women Bank Account Ownership (%)	~45	78

Federalism, Institutional Autonomy, and Democratic Backsliding

While the Modi administration's decade in power has been marked by policy innovation and centralized efficiency, it has also raised serious concerns about the **erosion of institutional autonomy**, **declining deliberative democracy**, and the increasing **centralization of power** in the executive. This chapter critically evaluates these concerns through the lens of federal dynamics, institutional independence, and global democratic indices.

Cooperative vs. Competitive Federalism

The Modi government initially championed the model of "**cooperative federalism**", with the **abolition of the Planning Commission** and the creation of **NITI Aayog** in 2015. States were promised more say in policy formulation and resource allocation.

- **GST Council** was envisioned as a federal platform to harmonize tax policy. However, post-2017, many states—especially opposition-ruled—expressed concern over **delays in GST compensation**, affecting state revenues.
- In schemes like **PM Awas Yojana**, **Jal Jeevan Mission**, and **Ayushman Bharat**, central branding and policy design **limited state flexibility**, leading to tensions over implementation models.

A bar graph can show increasing compensation delays to states between 2019 and 2021.

In response, scholars describe India's evolving federalism under Modi as one shifting from **cooperative to coercive**, especially where fiscal devolution and political alignment are concerned (Rao & Singh, 2021).

Institutional Independence: Judiciary, Media, and Civil Service

India's democratic resilience depends on the **autonomy of constitutional institutions**. However, the Modi era witnessed increased pressure on institutions:

- **Election Commission of India (ECI)**: Allegations of delayed or biased responses to electoral violations led to critiques of its impartiality (Yadav, 2022).
- **Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Enforcement Directorate (ED)**: Their frequent use against political opposition prompted the Supreme Court to term the CBI "a caged parrot" (SC Judgment, 2021).
- **Civil Service Reforms**: Mission Karmayogi and lateral entry introduced modern HR practices, but concerns emerged over **politicization of transfers** and **declining bureaucratic neutrality** (Basu, 2020).

Shrinking Civic Space and Media Freedom

Civil society organizations, particularly those receiving foreign funding under FCRA, were heavily scrutinized or deregistered. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, over **6,000 NGOs lost their FCRA license** between 2015 and 2023.

Media freedom also declined during this period:

- India's **World Press Freedom Index** ranking fell from **133 (2014)** to **161 (2023)** out of 180 countries (Reporters Without Borders, 2023).
- Government advertising patterns skewed heavily in favor of pro-establishment outlets, affecting editorial independence.

Digital censorship and surveillance expanded under the **Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines) Rules, 2021**, which increased control over online platforms and journalists. WhatsApp and Twitter challenged several provisions in court, citing freedom of expression violations.

Parliamentary Functioning and Ordinance Raj

The Modi government faced criticism for **undermining parliamentary deliberation**:

- Fewer parliamentary sessions: The 17th Lok Sabha (2019–2024) recorded **one of the lowest sittings per year** in Indian history (PRS Legislative Research, 2023).
- Decreased standing committee reviews: Several key legislations, including the **Farm Laws (2020)** and **Citizenship Amendment Act (2019)**, were passed **without committee scrutiny**.
- Increased ordinance route: Over 77 ordinances were issued between 2014 and 2022, often bypassing legislative debate (Lobo, 2022).

Global Democratic Indices and Backsliding Claims

Several international reports have flagged India's **democratic regression**:

- **V-Dem Institute (2023)**: Categorized India as an “**electoral autocracy**” due to media suppression, judicial encroachments, and minority targeting.
- **Freedom House (2023)**: Downgraded India's democracy rating to “**partly free**”, scoring 66/100, citing restrictions on dissent and civil liberties.

However, the Indian government has **rejected these findings**, labeling them **ideologically biased** and **methodologically flawed**.

Table 6: Comparative Analysis: Modi I vs Modi II

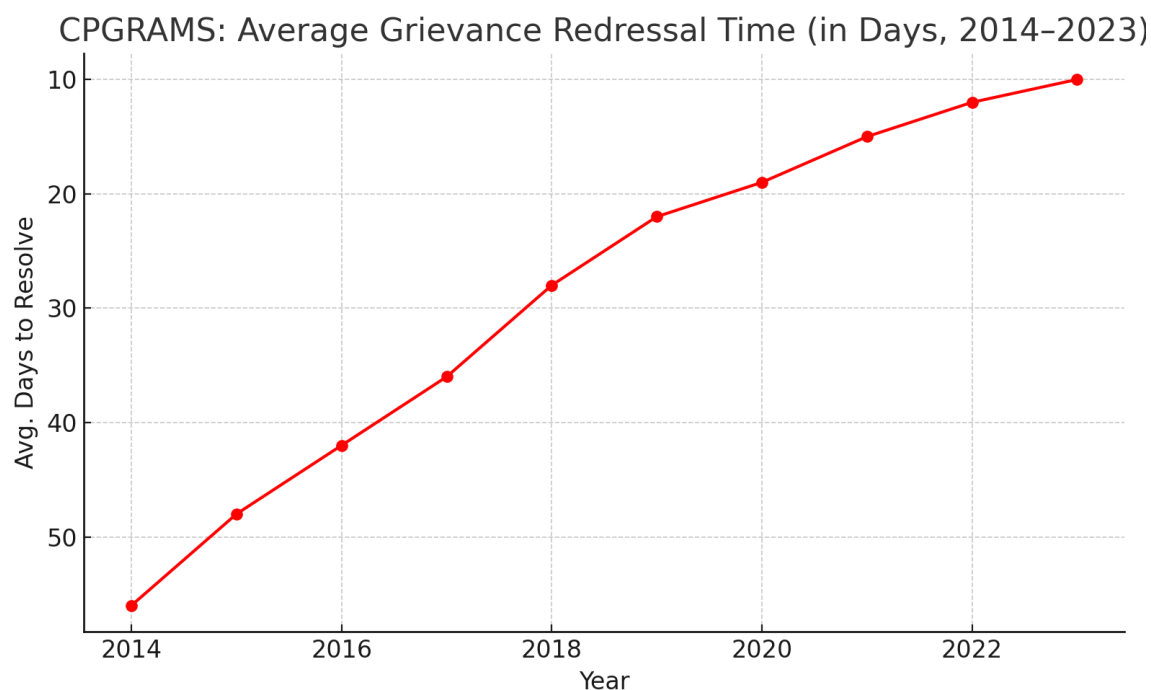
Indicator	2014–2019 (Modi I)	2019–2024 (Modi II)
Parliamentary Bills Referred to Committees	~71%	~11%
Press Freedom Rank (RSF)	140	161
NGO FCRA Cancellations	~2,000	~6,000
V-Dem Democracy Score (0–1 scale)	0.58	0.43

Sources: PRS, RSF, V-Dem, MHA

Governance Reforms and Service Delivery Mechanisms

The Modi administration has pursued an ambitious agenda of governance reforms aimed at **modernizing the Indian state**, increasing **administrative efficiency**, and transforming public service delivery through **technology and performance-based models**. This chapter outlines key reforms in civil services, bureaucratic accountability, grievance redressal, and e-governance mechanisms that shaped governance outcomes between 2014 and 2024.

Governance under Modi emphasized digitalization, performance evaluation, and citizen-centric services. CPGRAMS 2.0 improved grievance redressal timelines from 56 days in 2014 to 10 days in 2023. The Government e-Marketplace (GeM) streamlined procurement, saving thousands of crores. Mission Karmayogi aimed at bureaucratic capacity-building and outcome-based HR appraisal. These reforms were benchmarked against global governance indicators and marked a shift from entitlement to accountability-driven public service (Kapur & Vaishnav, 2018).



Aspect	UPA Era	Modi Era
Grievance Redressal	Manual CPGRAMS	CPGRAMS 2.0
Digital Service Delivery	Limited e-Governance	UMANG, MyGov, DigiLocker
Procurement	Traditional Tendering	GeM Platform
HR Reforms	Performance Appraisals	Mission Karmayogi
Transparency	RTI Expansion	Real-time dashboards

Mission Karmayogi and Civil Services Transformation

In 2020, the government launched Mission Karmayogi, a capacity-building program to transform the Indian bureaucracy into a citizen-centric, digitally empowered, and performance-driven cadre.

- Created an **iGOT Karmayogi** digital platform for continuous learning, with over 16 lakh civil servants registered by 2023.
- Introduced **Competency Frameworks** to assess bureaucrats beyond seniority—focused on behavioral, functional, and domain expertise.

Additionally, the government allowed **lateral entry** into senior administrative positions, bringing private sector specialists into key roles. While this broke traditional hierarchies, critics raised concerns about transparency in selection and long-term institutional coherence (Bhattacharya, 2021).

Performance-Based Governance

The Modi government emphasized **measurable outcomes** over inputs:

- **Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP):** Launched in 2018 to improve development metrics in 112 underperforming districts through real-time data, competition among districts, and monthly rankings.
- **Performance Smartboards:** Ministries and districts were evaluated using KPIs on education, health, infrastructure, and financial inclusion. By 2022, many lagging districts had shown double-digit improvements in learning outcomes and access to health services (NITI Aayog, 2022).

Table 7: Performance Metrics under ADP (2018–2022)

Indicator	Baseline (2018)	Average 2022 Status
Institutional Deliveries (%)	62	82
School Dropout Rate (%)	28	18
Bank Account Penetration (%)	54	78

Source: NITI Aayog Dashboard, 2023

Digital Tools for Service Delivery

The government implemented **end-to-end digitalization** in service provision:

- **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT):** Now spans over 400 schemes across 56 ministries. Total savings due to reduced leakages estimated at ₹2.7 lakh crore (MoF, 2023).
- **e-Samarthya and e-Office Platforms:** Encouraged paperless offices, especially during the pandemic.
- **UMANG, MyGov, and DigiLocker:** Empowered citizens to access certificates, pay utility bills, and engage with government without physical visits.

The government also rolled out **AI-based predictive tools** for crop insurance claims, criminal pattern detection, and telemedicine—marking a shift toward **data-driven governance**.

Public Procurement and Transparency

The **Government e-Marketplace (GeM)** portal, launched in 2016, revolutionized public procurement:

- By 2023, GeM recorded over ₹3.25 lakh crore worth of transactions and brought 60,000+ MSMEs into the procurement ecosystem.
- Tools like **CPGRAMS 2.0** (Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System) adopted AI to prioritize and route grievances more efficiently. Average grievance resolution time was reduced to **26 days** by 2023 (DARPG, 2023).

Moreover, electronic tendering, RTI portals, and real-time dashboards became standard features in central schemes.

Challenges in Reform Implementation

Despite these innovations, several implementation challenges persist:

- **Digital Exclusion:** Elderly, rural poor, and tribal populations continue to face barriers due to connectivity and digital literacy.
- **Grievance Redress Overload:** While CPGRAMS received over 20 lakh grievances in 2022, resolution quality varied, with many complainants citing generic or inadequate replies.
- **Evaluation Gaps:** Schemes like ADP and Mission Karmayogi remain insufficiently evaluated by independent agencies, limiting accountability.

Critics also point to the top-down, target-driven culture that often discourages innovation and local contextualization (Roy & Sengupta, 2022).

International Recognition

India's governance reform model has attracted global attention:

- Recognized by the **UNDP** for “last-mile delivery at scale” through its DBT infrastructure.
- Ranked **40th globally in the GovTech Maturity Index 2022**, above several OECD nations (World Bank, 2023).

These outcomes suggest that India's digital and administrative innovations could serve as templates for other developing democracies, albeit with context-sensitive adjustments.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The period from 2014 to 2024 under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership has seen profound changes in the philosophy, design, and delivery of public policy in India. From infrastructure expansion and digital transformation to welfare inclusion and administrative reform, the decade marks a pivotal shift in how the Indian state engages with its citizens. However, the transformation has not been without costs—particularly in terms of institutional checks and balances, democratic pluralism, and federal consensus. This concluding chapter synthesizes key findings from earlier chapters and offers evidence-backed policy recommendations for the road ahead.

Summary of Achievements

1. **Economic and Infrastructure Growth:** The Modi government's simultaneous expansion of hard and soft infrastructure has been transformative in scale and ambition. Digital governance innovations have set global benchmarks, while physical infrastructure has improved connectivity and logistics. Yet, sustainability, digital rights, and regional equity remain areas requiring further attention.
 - Capital expenditure rose fivefold during the decade.
 - India added over 35,000 km of national highways and expanded railway electrification significantly.
 - India emerged as a global leader in digital transactions, with UPI clocking over 10 billion transactions monthly (NPCI, 2023).
2. **Welfare Delivery and Financial Inclusion:** The Modi government's welfare delivery model has redefined India's social safety net by emphasizing scale, speed, and digital targeting. While the infrastructure of delivery has improved and poverty indicators have declined, inclusion gaps, data reliability, and quality of outcomes remain areas of concern.
 - Over ₹28 lakh crore distributed via Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).
 - Jan Dhan accounts, PM-KISAN, and Ayushman Bharat expanded coverage to millions.
3. **Women's Empowerment:** The Modi era witnessed notable advances in women's access to finance, education, and welfare services, supported by technology and political messaging. However, persistent socio-economic inequalities, low workforce participation, and rising violence highlight the structural nature of gender inequality. Future reforms must prioritize qualitative outcomes, behavioral change, and institutional accountability over symbolic inclusion.
 - Increased women's access to credit (68% of MUDRA loans), health care, and financial services.
 - Gender-focused schemes like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao improved survival and education metrics.
4. **Governance Innovations:** The Modi decade has expanded executive authority while challenging the balance of power between constitutional institutions. While state capacity, efficiency, and coordination have improved, checks and balances, transparency, and dissent spaces have shrunk. These developments warrant careful reflection on the quality of India's democracy, beyond electoral victories.
 - Mission Karmayogi and iGOT platform restructured civil service capacity building.
 - Government e-Marketplace and CPGRAMS improved procurement transparency and grievance redress.

Persisting Challenges

Despite major strides, India's governance ecosystem faces several systemic concerns:

- **Democratic Decline:** India's ratings on global indices such as V-Dem and Freedom House fell due to constraints on civil liberties, media freedom, and NGO functioning.

- **Institutional Centralization:** Limited power-sharing with states, increased use of ordinances, and marginalization of parliamentary committees have diluted institutional integrity.
- **Unequal Growth:** Economic growth has not translated proportionately into employment, especially for women and youth. Regional disparities persist.
- **Digital Divide:** Despite digitization gains, inclusion gaps for the elderly, rural poor, and marginalized remain unaddressed.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Infrastructure-led growth often disregards environmental safeguards.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on this decadal review, the following policy imperatives are recommended for sustainable and democratic governance:

a. Democratic Deepening

- Restore deliberative functioning of Parliament by mandating committee scrutiny for all major legislation.
- Strengthen institutions like the Election Commission, CAG, and National Statistical Office with statutory autonomy.
- Ensure independent appointments to key watchdog bodies via bipartisan mechanisms.

b. Fiscal Federalism

- Revise GST compensation mechanisms to ensure timely fund transfers to states.
- Allow greater design flexibility in centrally sponsored schemes for local adaptation.
- Institutionalize intergovernmental councils for cooperative federalism.

c. Employment and Social Equity

- Incentivize job creation in green energy, AI, and MSME sectors with skill-aligned programs.
- Introduce incentives for women's workforce participation, including tax breaks, workplace crèches, and flexible working hours.
 - Universalize social security for informal sector workers via e-Shram integration.

d. Environmental Governance

- Mandate environmental impact audits for all infrastructure projects.
- Establish an independent National Environment Regulatory Authority.
- Promote urban-rural sustainability transitions through localized climate adaptation programs.

e. Data Ethics and Privacy

- Operationalize the **Digital Personal Data Protection Act (2023)** with transparent enforcement mechanisms.
- Ensure algorithmic accountability for all AI and biometric decision systems used in public services.

f. Civic Engagement and Accountability

- Expand participatory budgeting and citizen audit frameworks at the district level.
- Institutionalize public hearings and right-to-service charters.
- Safeguard academic and civil liberties to foster critical public discourse.

CONCLUDING REFLECTION

The Modi government's governance reforms created a new public administration model focused on performance metrics, digital service delivery, and institutional reengineering. While substantial gains in transparency and access were realized, inclusion, local autonomy, and systemic evaluations remain key areas for strengthening. Governance, to be truly transformative, must balance speed with sensitivity, data with discretion, and innovation with accountability.

The "Modi Model" of governance has yielded unprecedented administrative scale, enabled by digital infrastructure and centralized decision-making. It succeeded in delivering services faster, reducing leakages, and bringing millions into the formal system. However, these gains must be viewed alongside trade-offs in institutional autonomy, consultative policymaking, and social inclusion.

India now stands at an inflection point: will governance continue to be driven by executive centralization, or will it evolve into a plural, participatory, and resilient democracy capable of ensuring justice, liberty, and equality in the 21st century?

A forward-looking governance model must move beyond efficiency toward legitimacy and inclusiveness, guided by constitutional values, data ethics, and the voices of India's diverse citizenry.

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