



[Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Vision India@2047](#)

is an opportunity to “invent” future India. It challenges governmental systems, industry, academia, and all other stakeholders to make India one of world’s top three economies by 2047, with best facilities available both in villages and cities. It envisages a land of abundance, happiness and harmony. The fundamental challenge is: how to plan for 25 years in a world changing at a dizzying pace?

How to handle the huge opportunities and potential threats unveiled by technology? How to create a resilient, dynamically flexible implementation system, for an increasingly VUCA world and a foggy future?

Any journey must begin with a clear vision of the destination. We need to visualize the world of 2047, with insights into the key drivers of change like technology, rapid urbanization, demographics etc. We need to travel in a time machine, as it were. Today, a virtual AI/ Big Data based time machine, called [Strategic Foresight](#), indeed makes it possible. It equips us to see the possible, plausible, probable futures for deciding our own desired future, factoring in the complex mosaic of everything that is relevant. We can then use backcasting (coming back from the future) to develop future-driven strategies to achieve this future, unlike the current system of forecasting (projecting the past into the future).

Assuming that multiple “futures” are possible, and that we have a choice in determining our own future, is a basic tenet of Strategic Foresight. Capturing all relevant data and trends with special emphasis on weak signals, through 360-degree horizon scanning, makes this possible. Leo Yip, Head of Civil Service, Singapore shares the following views in the governmental context : “Foresight helps us to see what the possible states of future are. Futures thinking helps us to understand how these states might unfold, and consequently how we ought to challenge our biases, blind spots and mind-sets. We then need to systematically translate these insights into strategies and policies, to take the necessary steps now to be prepared for the future.”

Making organizations “Agile” is the other key element of the proposed approach. [Agile](#) methodology is a type of project management process, mainly used for software development, where demands and solutions evolve through the collaborative effort of self-organizing and cross-functional teams and their customers. Many of the Government’s current initiatives relating to data driven administration, collaborative approach, digital governance etc. may be clubbed under a major umbrella initiative for “Process Reforms”, including introduction of “Agile Processes”

The Government of India and the State Governments will have to take the lead in integrating Foresight and Agile methodologies in their policy and strategy formulation processes. Strategic Foresight, built into the agile processes, will help the concerned Ministries/ Departments in better understanding the drivers of change and forces impacting their operations, creating alternate future scenarios, and choosing their preferred future as per their India@2047 Vision.

Backcasting techniques will then be used to develop effective strategies for actualizing the Vision.

Smart cities, so crucial for actualization of Vision India @2047, can be an example for harnessing the power of the above approach. Uttar Pradesh is already working on creating Vision @2047 for its major cities like Lucknow, Kanpur and Varanasi. I have suggested a conceptual framework to the State Government for this initiative. The 4-step framework comprises i) use of Strategic Foresight to create a macro visualization of trends and technologies defining 2047, ii) developing Vision@2047 for the city in this backdrop, iii) analyzing the Vision to identify the specific factors for which action needs to be initiated now e.g. zoning/ land use in Master Plan, fast forwarding of institutional development (health, education, agriculture, organizations) etc, and iv) preparing the city's Strategy & Action Plan 2022-27 on this basis.

Adoption of 'Foresight' & 'Agile' methodologies by business, academia and others also will further reinforce the Government's efforts towards actualization of Vision India@2047. In my talks to hundreds of chairpersons, board members, CEOs over the last few years, I have found them very excited about the exposure to the concept of Strategic Foresight and potential of exponential technologies. An IIT, with which I am currently associated, is actively working towards its vision of becoming a "future-driven institute". Leaders everywhere have to work with a "futurist" mindset.

We must create the future wisely, so that our children can live together happily. Every citizen of India@2047 must be able to transcend her own potential. We must all be partners in building a great nation, based on ethics, equity and justice. I believe, future-driven strategies, interwoven with exponential technologies, will go a long way in realisation of this dream.

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