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Government AI Policy Initiatives for Digital Forensics and Cyber Security in India: A Governance Perspective towards Viksit Bharat 2047

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Abstract: ***India's ambition to emerge as a global leader in Artificial Intelligence (AI) is supported by a range of strategic initiatives and governance frameworks aligned with the national vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. While these initiatives promote AI-driven innovation across multiple sectors, their relevance to digital forensics and cybersecurity has become increasingly critical in the context of rising cyber threats, digital crimes, and national security concerns. NITI Aayog's National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence (2018) serves as a foundational policy document, followed by targeted initiatives by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), CERT-In, the Ministry of Defence, and other agencies aimed at strengthening cyber resilience and secure digital governance. This paper undertakes a policy-level assessment of AI initiatives relevant to cyber security and digital forensics in India, examining their implementation status, governance mechanisms, and alignment with international benchmarks. Key findings indicate that AI-enabled cyber security programs have contributed to improved threat detection, incident response, and forensic preparedness within government systems. However, challenges persist in the form of fragmented implementation, shortages of skilled cyber forensic professionals, ethical and privacy concerns, and limited forensic infrastructure. The study contributes an integrated policy mapping of AI initiatives with direct implications for cyber threat management, digital evidence analysis, and national cyber resilience. It concludes that achieving the goals of Viksit Bharat 2047 requires a unified AI governance framework that strengthens digital forensics capabilities, ensures responsible cybersecurity practices, and supports secure, trustworthy digital transformation.***

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Digital Forensics, Cyber Security Governance, AI in Cybercrime Investigation, National Cyber Resilience, Viksit Bharat 2047

1. Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a game-changing technology with significant effects on social development, government, and economic growth. To capitalize on AI's promise for innovation and competitiveness, countries around the world are making significant investments in its research, infrastructure, and legislative frameworks. India is in a unique position to use AI for national development because of its sizable demographic dividend, expanding digital environment, and robust information technology sector. Acknowledging this potential, the Indian government has launched a number of strategic initiatives, chief among them being NITI Aayog's National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence (2018), which uses "AI for All" as a guiding principle. These programs are in line with Viksit Bharat 2047's long-term goal of making India a developed country by the time of its centennial.

AI's cross-cutting significance for equitable growth is shown in the policy focus on the technology that spans several industries, including defence, healthcare, education, urban governance, and agriculture. In order to guarantee that technology breakthroughs are not just inventive but also socially conscious, India has also placed a strong emphasis on ethical AI development, talent improvement, and international partnerships. Notwithstanding these initiatives, obstacles like inadequate infrastructure, a lack of skilled workers, regulatory worries, and unequal adoption continue to be major roadblocks to achieving AI's full potential.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a foundational technology in strengthening cyber security and digital forensics capabilities across nations. With the exponential growth of digital platforms, cloud infrastructure, and interconnected systems, governments face increasingly sophisticated cyber threats, including ransomware attacks, data breaches, cyber espionage, and critical infrastructure sabotage. AI-driven cyber security solutions—such as automated threat detection, anomaly analysis, malware classification, and incident response—are now essential for maintaining national cyber resilience.

Digital forensics, a critical component of cyber security, has also undergone significant transformation through AI. Machine learning algorithms enable rapid analysis of large volumes of digital evidence, including network logs, system metadata, and communication trails, thereby improving the speed and accuracy of cybercrime investigations. AI-assisted forensic tools are increasingly used for evidence correlation, intrusion reconstruction, and attribution of cyber incidents.

In the Indian context, the growing scale of digital governance initiatives, online public service delivery, and national digital infrastructure under programs such as Digital India has heightened the importance of robust cyber security and forensic readiness. Recognizing these challenges, the Government of India has initiated AI-enabled cyber security programs through agencies such as CERT-In, MeitY, and the Ministry of Defence. These initiatives align closely with the national vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, which emphasizes digital sovereignty, secure governance, and technological self-reliance.

Despite these efforts, the effective integration of AI into cyber security and digital forensics remains uneven due to policy

fragmentation, skills shortages, ethical concerns, and infrastructure constraints. This study therefore undertakes a policy-level assessment of AI initiatives relevant to cyber security and digital forensics in India, examining their implementation status, governance mechanisms, and alignment with the broader developmental objectives of Viksit Bharat 2047.

India's Viksit Bharat 2047 vision is a national agenda to transform the country into a developed, equitable, and sustainable nation by its 100th year of independence. Artificial intelligence (AI) is identified as a critical driver for achieving this ambitious goal, with government policy initiatives focusing on leveraging technology for economic growth, social inclusion, and global competitiveness (Rana, 2025; Yadav, 2025; Chhering, 2024; Saini, 2025).

- Viksit Bharat 2047: This initiative, led by the Indian government, aims to create a fully developed nation by 2047, emphasizing empowered citizens, a thriving economy, innovation, good governance, and global leadership (Chhering, 2024).
- Role of AI: AI is seen as a transformative force across vital sectors such as infrastructure, healthcare, education, and agriculture. Its integration is expected to accelerate economic prosperity, improve public services, and foster inclusive growth (Rana, 2025; Yadav, 2025).
- Policy Initiatives: Flagship programs like Digital India, Make in India, and Samarth Udyog 4.0 are designed to promote digital transformation, sustainable industrial growth, and technological innovation, aligning with both Viksit Bharat and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (Yadav, 2025; Saini, 2025).
- Education and Skills: Strengthening education and skill development, including digital literacy and industry-academia linkages, is central to preparing India's workforce for an AI-driven future (Hafzal et al., 2024).

2. Literature Review

A growing body of research examines India's government AI policy initiatives, their frameworks, sectoral applications, challenges, and the broader implications for governance and society.

India's AI policy landscape is anchored by the National Strategy for AI, developed by NITI Aayog, which envisions AI as a transformative tool for economic and social development. However, scholars note that this strategy requires further improvement to provide comprehensive, actionable guidance, especially regarding security, privacy, and governance (Chatterjee, 2020; Joshi, 2024; Bansal & Jain, 2023). The government's approach has evolved from early pilot projects to a more structured policy focus, with initiatives like IndiaAI.in, the portal and AIRAWAT cloud infrastructure, aiming to foster collaboration among government, industry, and academia (Joshi, 2024; Malik et al., 2020; Bajpai & Wadhwa, 2021).

Recent scholarship highlights the growing role of artificial intelligence in enhancing cybersecurity operations and digital forensic investigations. AI-driven intrusion detection systems, automated malware analysis, and predictive threat intelligence models are increasingly deployed to address the scale and complexity of modern cyber threats. Studies indicate that AI significantly improves the detection of advanced persistent threats (APTs) and zero-day vulnerabilities by identifying anomalous behaviour patterns across large datasets (Hisham et al., 2024; P.R. & O., 2024).

In the domain of digital forensics, AI enables efficient processing of digital evidence, including log files, network traffic, and communication metadata. Machine learning techniques assist forensic investigators in timeline reconstruction, evidence correlation, and attribution of cyber incidents. However, scholars caution that the opacity of algorithmic decision-making raises concerns regarding explainability, admissibility of AI-generated evidence, and chain-of-custody integrity (Marda, 2018; Chatterjee & N.S., 2021).

From a governance perspective, research emphasises the need for regulatory frameworks that balance national security interests with civil liberties. The absence of AI-specific cyber laws in India has been identified as a critical gap, particularly in relation to accountability for automated decisions, cross-border cybercrime investigations, and the ethical use of surveillance technologies (Bhalla et al., 2023; Joshi, 2024). Existing literature largely focuses on conceptual policy discussions, highlighting the need for consolidated evaluations of AI policy implementation in cybersecurity and digital forensics—an area this study seeks to address.

AI policy initiatives target key sectors such as healthcare, education, infrastructure, and public service delivery. In healthcare, AI is seen as a solution to workforce shortages and data quality issues, but policy and implementation remain at a nascent stage, with calls for more robust regulatory frameworks and stakeholder engagement (Chatterjee & Dohan, 2021; Bajpai & Wadhwa, 2021). In education, AI promises to personalize learning and bridge urban-rural divides, but progress is hampered by infrastructure gaps and digital literacy challenges (Singh & Jindal, 2024). AI is also being leveraged for social welfare schemes, though concerns about data privacy, transparency, and accountability persist (Verma et al., 2024).

Research consistently highlights several barriers to effective AI policy implementation:

Lack of comprehensive, sector-specific policies and regulatory frameworks (Chatterjee, 2020; Bansal & Jain, 2023; Chatterjee & Dohan, 2021; Marda, 2018)- Ethical, legal, and accountability concerns, including algorithmic bias and data privacy (Marda, 2018; P.R. & O., 2024; Verma et al., 2024; Hisham et al., 2024)- Infrastructure and digital divide, especially in rural areas (Singh & Jindal, 2024)- Limited public awareness and trust in AI systems (Verma et al., 2024)- Need for capacity building and skill development (Bansal & Jain, 2023; Singh & Jindal, 2024)## Governance, Ethics, and Accountability

Recent studies emphasize the importance of integrating ethical, legal, and social considerations into AI policy. There is a call for frameworks that address algorithmic accountability, transparency, and the unique socio-political context of India (Marda, 2018; P.R. & O., 2024; Hisham et

al., 2024). The literature also points to the need for interdisciplinary collaboration and public-private partnerships to ensure responsible and inclusive AI adoption (Paunov et al., 2019; Hisham et al., 2024).

Despite India's progress in AI policy development through initiatives such as the National Strategy for AI and the IndiaAI Mission, several critical research gaps persist in the context of digital forensics and cyber security governance. First, there is an absence of a comprehensive, sector-specific AI governance framework addressing cyber security risks, forensic accountability, and AI-assisted decision-making in cybercrime investigations. Existing studies largely focus on broad AI policy recommendations without evaluating the effectiveness of AI-enabled cyber security tools in real-world forensic environments.

Second, ethical and legal challenges associated with AI-driven digital forensics- such as explainability of algorithms, admissibility of AI-generated digital evidence, chain-of-custody integrity, and accountability for automated decisions—remain underexplored within the Indian legal and regulatory context. Third, there is limited empirical research assessing the readiness of Indian institutions, including law enforcement agencies and cyber security bodies, to deploy AI-based forensic solutions at scale.

Finally, gaps remain in understanding how AI policies address cyber capacity-building, forensic infrastructure development, and inter-agency coordination between CERT-In, law enforcement, and defence agencies. Addressing these gaps is essential for strengthening national cyber resilience and ensuring responsible AI adoption in support of the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision.

While India has announced ambitious AI policy initiatives, there is limited consolidated academic analysis on their actual progress, sectoral reach, and implementation effectiveness. Without such evaluation, it is challenging to measure the impact of these initiatives or identify gaps hindering India's AI-driven growth towards Viksit Bharat.

3. Methodology

The research is based entirely on secondary data collected from government reports, official policy documents, and industry publications. Key sources include NITI Aayog's National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence (2018), MeitY's AI Mission documents, Parliamentary Standing Committee reports, and publications by NASSCOM and DSCI. Data analysis involved content analysis of policy frameworks, comparative benchmarking with global AI models, and thematic coding to identify implementation gaps and strengths.

In addition to general AI policy documents, the study also considers cyber security governance sources, including CERT-In advisories, national cyber security guidelines, and policy reports related to cyber incident response and digital evidence management. This approach is appropriate for examining AI adoption in cyber security and digital forensics, as governance frameworks play a critical role in shaping institutional readiness, accountability mechanisms, and national cyber resilience.

4. Data Analysis

A policy mapping approach was used to analyze AI initiatives launched between 2018 and 2025 across multiple sectors. Particular focus was placed on initiatives relevant to cyber security and digital forensics, such as Cyber Surakshit Bharat, CERT-In programs, and defence-oriented AI research. The analysis assessed sectoral coverage, implementation status, and governance mechanisms.

5. Findings

Table 1: Mapping of AI Policy Initiatives

Policy/Initiative	Year Launched	Sectoral Focus	Key Features	Budget/Funding (₹)	Implementation Status (2025)	Source
National Strategy for AI (NITI Aayog)	2018	Multi-sector	AI for All framework, ethics guidelines	Multiple ministries	Roadmaps prepared; pilot projects initiated	NITI Aayog
RAISE Summit	2020	Multi-sector	Global summit, policy advocacy	N/A	Held annually; partnerships formed	MeitY
IndiaAI Mission	2021	AI ecosystem development	National AI Portal, datasets	₹7,000 crore	Approved; portal live	MeitY
National AI Portal	2020	Knowledge hub	Central AI repository	N/A	Live and updated	MeitY & NASSCOM
AI in Agriculture Pilots	2019	Agriculture	Crop advisory, yield prediction	Digital Agri Mission funds	Pilots in 3 states	Ministry of Agriculture
AI in Healthcare Projects	2019	Healthcare	Cancer screening, diagnostics	State health budgets	Deployed in select hospitals	MoHFW
Cyber Surakshit Bharat	2018	Cybersecurity	AI-based threat detection	₹90 crore	15 ministries covered	CERT-In
AI in Education – PM eVidya	2020	Education	Adaptive learning tools	Digital India budget	Pilots with CBSE, NCERT	MHRD
AI in Smart Cities	2018	Urban governance	Traffic, waste optimization	Smart Cities Mission budget	Implemented in 3 cities	MoHUA
DRDO AI Centre of Excellence	2019	Defence	Autonomous systems, surveillance	Defence R&D funding	Prototypes under testing	DRDO

The policy mapping indicates that while India's AI initiatives span multiple sectors, a limited but strategically important subset directly addresses cyber security and digital forensics. Programs such as Cyber Surakshit Bharat, CERT-In's AI-enabled threat monitoring initiatives, and defence-oriented AI research under DRDO contribute to enhanced cyber threat detection, incident response, and forensic preparedness across government systems. However, the concentration of AI initiatives in non-cyber sectors highlights the need for expanded policy focus on AI-driven cyber forensics, institutional capacity-building, and nationwide forensic infrastructure to effectively counter emerging cyber threats.

Chart 1: Timeline of Major AI Policy Initiatives**:**

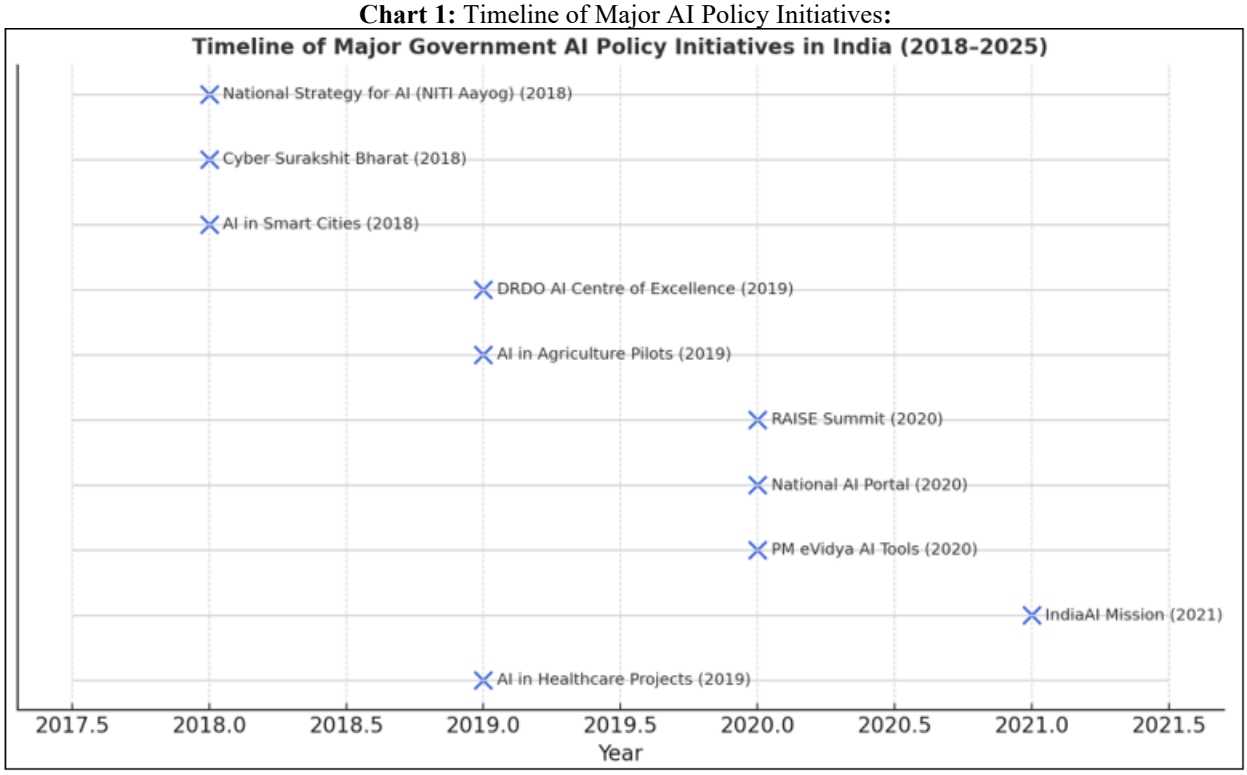
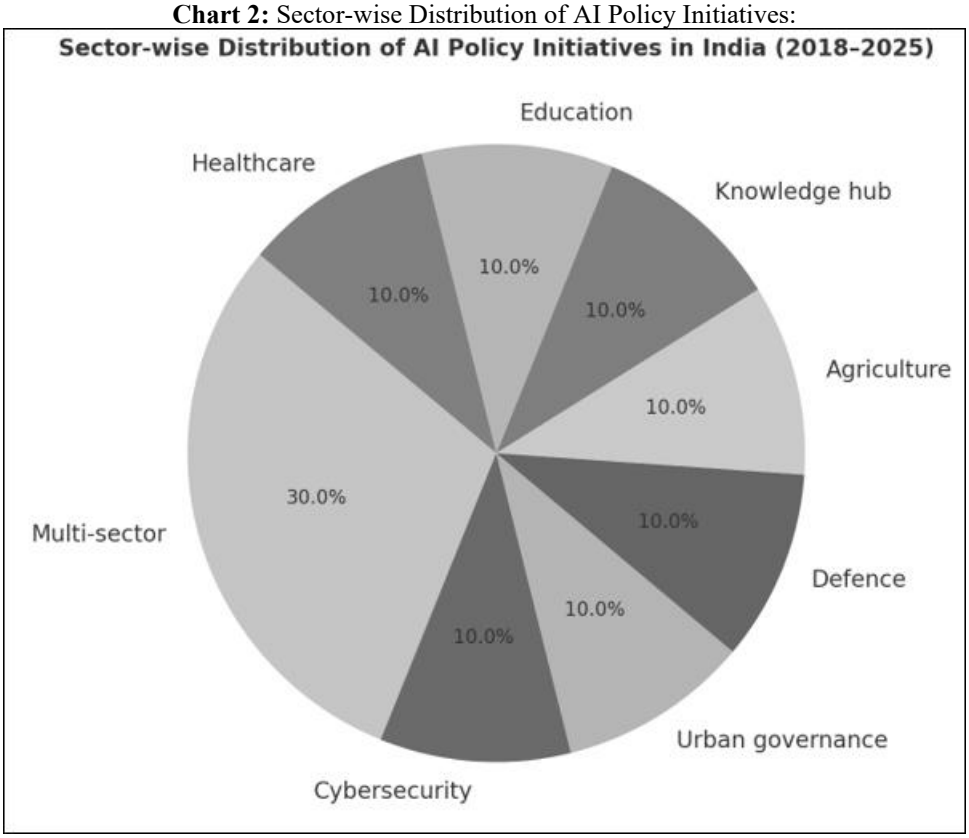


Chart 2: Sector-wise Distribution of AI Policy Initiatives:



The review highlights that India's AI policy ecosystem has matured significantly since the launch of the *National Strategy for AI (2018)*. Initiatives such as the Responsible AI guidelines (2021), the IndiaAI Mission (2023), and sectoral programs in healthcare, agriculture, and education indicate a strong commitment to positioning AI as a driver of inclusive development. However, most policies remain advisory rather than regulatory, reflecting India's preference for a soft governance model. While this approach allows flexibility and innovation, it risks inconsistency in implementation and weak enforcement of ethical safeguards.

The policy mapping reveals that several AI initiatives have direct implications for cyber security and digital forensics, particularly through programs led by MeitY, CERT-In, and defence agencies. Initiatives such as *Cyber Surakshit Bharat* and AI-enabled threat monitoring systems contribute to automated cyber threat detection and forensic preparedness across government networks. Defence-focused AI research through DRDO further strengthens cyber intelligence, surveillance, and national security capabilities. However, most cyber-focused AI initiatives remain at pilot or limited deployment stages, indicating the need for stronger policy coordination, infrastructure investment, and skilled forensic professionals to enable nationwide scalability

AI-enabled cyber security and digital forensics present both strategic opportunities and governance challenges for India. On one hand, AI enhances cyber resilience by enabling real-time threat detection, automated incident response, and efficient forensic investigations. On the other hand, the reliance on algorithmic systems introduces risks related to false positives, bias, lack of transparency, and accountability in cyber investigations.

A key governance concern is the explainability of AI-driven forensic tools. Digital evidence generated or analysed through opaque algorithms may face legal challenges regarding admissibility and reliability in judicial proceedings. Furthermore, AI-enabled surveillance and monitoring systems raise ethical questions related to privacy, proportionality, and misuse. These concerns are particularly relevant in the Indian context, where comprehensive AI-specific cyber legislation is still evolving.

Another challenge lies in institutional capacity. India faces a shortage of professionals trained at the intersection of AI, cybersecurity, and digital forensics. While policy initiatives emphasize innovation, limited investment in forensic labs, cyber ranges, and advanced training programs constrains effective implementation. Inter-ministerial fragmentation further weakens coordination between cybersecurity agencies, law enforcement, and policy bodies.

To achieve the goals of Viksit Bharat 2047, AI governance in cybersecurity must evolve from a fragmented, advisory model toward a coordinated framework that integrates technical capability, legal safeguards, ethical principles, and institutional accountability.

When compared with international benchmarks, important contrasts emerge. The European Union's AI Act demonstrates a rights-based, legally binding framework, with explicit prohibitions on harmful AI applications and stringent requirements for high-risk systems. The United States, in contrast, adopts a more decentralised and principle-driven approach through the *AI Bill of Rights*, emphasizing transparency and fairness but leaving compliance largely voluntary. China, meanwhile, prioritizes centralized state control, integrating AI into national security and economic strategies, and has already introduced binding algorithm regulations. India's policies are closer to the U.S. model, focusing on advisory frameworks and innovation promotion, but diverge in their emphasis on inclusivity, affordability, and AI for social good.

6. Conclusion

India has made notable progress in integrating Artificial Intelligence into its digital governance and national security framework through policy initiatives such as the National Strategy for AI, the Responsible AI guidelines, and the IndiaAI Mission. These efforts have laid the foundation for AI-enabled cybersecurity and digital forensic capabilities critical to safeguarding digital infrastructure and public trust.

However, the study finds that India's reliance on principle-based, non-binding governance frameworks limits effective enforcement in high-risk cyber domains. Challenges related to regulatory uncertainty, skill shortages, forensic infrastructure gaps, and ethical oversight continue to hinder large-scale adoption. Without a unified AI governance framework for cyber security and digital forensics, India risks fragmented implementation and vulnerability to emerging cyber threats.

Strengthening AI-driven cybersecurity and digital forensic capabilities is essential to achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. A secure and resilient digital ecosystem-supported by explainable AI systems, skilled cyber forensic professionals, and robust governance frameworks- will be critical for combating cybercrime, safeguarding national digital infrastructure, and enhancing public trust in digital governance. India's future AI strategy must therefore place cyber security and digital forensics at the core of its national development agenda.

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