



**Administrative Culture and Citizen Trust: Comparative Analysis of U.S.–Denmark disparities and their Implications for India**

Amarpreet Singh, Ph.D Research Scholar  
Department of Public Administration  
Punjabi University, Patiala (Punjab)  
Email-iamamarpreet@gmail.com

**Abstract**

Administrative ethics and political culture are pivotal in shaping the quality of governance within democratic systems. This research paper presents a comparative analysis of administrative ethics in Denmark and the USA, employing indicators such as the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) and levels of public trust. The study further extends this analysis to include India. Denmark is recognized as a global leader, characterized by high integrity and strong public confidence. Denmark is the only country in the world to have a data ethics council and the first country to establish science ethics committees and later the Ethical Council. In contrast, the USA demonstrates moderate ethical robustness, with notable concerns regarding political financing. However, India faces more significant challenges related to corruption and institutional enforcement. The inclusion of India provides a contrast between mature Western democracies and a large developing democracy, thereby highlighting differing capacities and reform trajectories. Through an examination of these contrasting democracies, the study identifies institutional trust, historical and administrative cultural factors that influence ethical behaviour among administrators and politicians. The discussion subsequently extends these comparative insights to the Indian context, particularly in relation to the Second Administrative Reforms Commission's recommendations on ethics in governance. The central thesis posited is that administrative ethics are profoundly shaped by the interplay between institutional design, civic culture and mechanisms of accountability. Building on these findings, the paper also emphasizes the potential of greater decentralization to reduce hierarchical corruption and the role of AI-based systems for fraud detection and risk mapping to strengthen oversight in public administration. These reform directions align with global best practices while addressing India's systemic vulnerabilities. The paper concludes with policy recommendations aimed at enhancing ethical governance in India through reforms in political funding, electoral adjudication, institutional independence, civic education and transparency. Strengthening RTI mechanisms and expanding proactive disclosure requirements are also essential to reinforcing public accountability.

**Keywords-** Political culture, Corruption, Public trust, Governance reform, Campaign finance.



## **Introduction**

More than twenty-three centuries ago, *Kautilya* observed that just as fish moving under water cannot possibly be found out either as drinking or not drinking water, so government servants employed in the government work cannot be found out (while) taking money (for themselves)<sup>1</sup>. This ancient insight underscores a perennial truth, corruption flourishes in environments characterized by secrecy and ambiguity. When public officials internalize principles such as integrity, transparency and a commitment to the public good, the potential for covert misconduct is significantly reduced. Robust ethical standards foster a culture in which officials are guided not solely by regulations and oversight but by a personal sense of moral responsibility. In the context of contemporary Indian politics, *Kautilya's* analogy remains remarkably pertinent. Today, government officials and political actors operate within extensive administrative systems, welfare schemes, procurement processes and regulatory frameworks where financial transactions are frequent and often lack transparency. Just as it is impossible to ascertain whether a fish in water is consuming the water, it can be equally challenging to detect instances of corruption, bribery or the misappropriation of public funds within the complex layers of bureaucratic procedures.

Administrative ethics encompasses the moral principles and accountability mechanisms that govern political actors within democratic systems. Ethical politics and Administration extends beyond individual character, being influenced by political culture, institutional design, regulatory frameworks and public expectations. In India, the discourse on administrative ethics has become increasingly urgent, driven by concerns over opaque funding, the criminalization of politics, delays in electoral adjudication and declining public trust. Concurrently, international experiences offer valuable insights. Comparative analysis of political cultures across democracies aids in identifying structural and cultural conditions that either promote ethical behaviour or facilitate unethical conduct. Such a comparative framework also highlights reforms that can be institutionally adapted to the Indian context.

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<sup>1</sup> Kautilya. (1992). *Examination of the conduct of government servants* (Chapter 9). In L. N. Rangarajan (Trans.), *The Arthashastra* (pp. 94). Penguin Books.



The United States operates as a large, presidential federal system characterized by adversarial politics, an extensive private-financing ecosystem and increasing polarization, all of which intricately influence ethical norms. The presidential system, as exemplified by the United States, is distinguished by a rigorous separation of powers among the executive, legislative and judicial branches. The U.S. President serves as both the head of state and the head of government, elected independently of the legislature and endowed with substantial authority in both domestic and international affairs. The system of checks and balances implemented through Congress, the judiciary and fixed terms of office serves to constrain potential executive overreach, thereby fostering stability and deliberate legislative processes<sup>2</sup>. In contrast, Denmark's parliamentary democracy is centered on the Folketing (Parliament), which is responsible for enacting laws, approving budgets, and overseeing governmental actions. The Danish Government operates through ministries that require parliamentary confidence, while independent courts exercise judicial authority and citizens elect representatives at various levels. The Danish Constitutional Act delineates the democratic organization, citizens' rights, and the distribution of power. Collectively, these two systems exemplify distinct models of democratic governance one predicated on the separation of powers and a robust executive, and the other grounded in parliamentary accountability and legislative supremacy<sup>3</sup>. Both nations demonstrate commendable performance on democratic metrics relative to global averages; however, they display notable disparities in levels of corruption, trust indicators, and institutional structures. By analysing their political cultures and ethical frameworks, India can identify potential reforms that align with its governance challenges and the ethics-related recommendations of the 2nd Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC). The table below on Comparative Political Corruption, Public Trust, and Governance Quality illustrates the current scenario.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.annenbergclassroom.org/glossary\\_term/presidential-system](https://www.annenbergclassroom.org/glossary_term/presidential-system)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.thedanishparliament.dk/en/democracy>



**Table No.1**  
**Comparative Political Corruption, Public Trust and Governance Quality**  
*(India, Denmark and the United States)<sup>4</sup>*

<b>Country</b>	<b>CPI 2024 (Score / 100)</b>	<b>CPI 2024 Rank (out of 180)</b>	<b>Trust in National Government/ Public Institutions</b>	<b>Liberal Democracy / Governance Quality</b>
<b>Denmark</b>	90	1	High public trust, strong institutions, transparency and rule of law well established	Ranked very clean, corruption rare in public sector
<b>United States</b>	65	28	Moderate/declining trust, federal system with decentralized enforcement	Strong institutions but campaign finance & lobbying create ethical vulnerabilities
<b>India</b>	38	96	Low institutional trust inferred from CPI and governance ratings	High perceived public sector corruption, enforcement gaps, systemic challenges

The table No. 1 provides a comparative analysis of political corruption and governance quality as measured by the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2024. Denmark occupies the top global position with a CPI score of 90, indicative of a highly transparent public sector. This elevated score is attributed to robust institutions, a well-established rule of law and substantial public trust, collectively fostering an environment conducive to ethical governance. Corruption is infrequent and transparency mechanisms ensure accountability across governmental functions. Conversely, the United States achieves a score of 65, ranking 28th, which suggests moderate levels of perceived corruption. Despite maintaining strong institutions and legal frameworks, challenges emerge from campaign finance, lobbying influence and a decentralized federal structure, which present opportunities for ethical vulnerabilities. India, in contrast, has a CPI score of 38, ranking 96th, indicating significant perceived corruption within the public sector. Low institutional trust, systemic enforcement gaps and governance challenges intensify ethical concerns. Compared to Denmark’s centralized and transparent systems, India’s

<sup>4</sup> Transparency International. (2024). Corruption perceptions index 2024. Transparency International. [https://files.transparencycdn.org/images/CPI2024\\_Report\\_Eng1.pdf](https://files.transparencycdn.org/images/CPI2024_Report_Eng1.pdf)



governance mechanisms struggle to ensure effective accountability. The U.S., despite possessing strong formal institutions, encounters ethical risks due to structural and cultural factors, such as partisan politics and private influence, which undermine informal ethical norms. Denmark's model illustrates how high public trust and strong oversight can mitigate corruption. India's low trust levels and enforcement challenges underscore the necessity for institutional reforms, transparency, and civic engagement. The comparison highlights the interplay between governance quality, public trust and perceived corruption. Strong institutions alone, as evidenced in the U.S., are insufficient without cultural and structural safeguards. Denmark's success demonstrates that ethical governance is both institutional and cultural. India can draw lessons from Denmark's emphasis on transparency while addressing vulnerabilities highlighted in the U.S. example. Overall, the table underscores that high public trust, robust enforcement, and transparent systems are critical to reducing corruption and enhancing governance effectiveness.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant as it provides a comparative analysis of administrative corruption and public trust in India, Denmark and the United States, emphasizing structural and cultural factors that influence ethical governance. It identifies deficiencies in India's institutional frameworks, including political financing, accountability and citizen trust. By drawing lessons from high-trust democracies like Denmark, the study offers insights for culturally appropriate and feasible anti-corruption reforms. The findings can inform policy interventions, digital governance initiatives and civic-education programs. Overall, the research underscores the importance of transparency, accountability and citizen engagement in strengthening India's democratic integrity.

### **Research Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative comparative research methodology, using secondary data, to examine how varying levels of public trust in government institutions. Variations in public trust, characterized by high levels in Denmark, moderate and declining levels in the United States and low levels in India, significantly influence patterns of political corruption and the quality of governance. The analysis employs sources such as the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2024 and scholarly evaluations of institutional trust to classify the



three countries into tiers based on trust-based governance and the strength of public institutions. Denmark exemplifies the high-trust model, characterized by strong institutional credibility, transparency practices and adherence to rule-of-law norms, which support low corruption levels. The United States represents a moderate-trust system, marked by robust formal institutions but weakened by polarization and ethical vulnerabilities in campaign finance. India illustrates a low-trust environment, where weak enforcement and citizen distrust in public institutions reinforce high perceived corruption. Through thematic comparison, the study identifies how institutional trust interacts with governance structures, political culture and accountability mechanisms. The framework employs trust as an analytical lens to compare institutional effectiveness, ethical behaviour and anti-corruption capacity across the three democracies.

### **Political Culture and Public Trust**

Political culture serves as the normative foundation upon which political ethics are constructed. Denmark's political culture is distinguished by high levels of generalized trust, egalitarian social norms, and a robust tradition of transparency in public administration. Danish citizens exhibit substantial trust in public institutions, including the judiciary, law enforcement, welfare agencies, and political leadership. This trust operates as a self-reinforcing mechanism: high trust fosters compliance and ethical conduct among officials, and ethical conduct, in turn, perpetuates trust. Danish society imposes significant cultural penalties on nepotism, conflicts of interest, and corrupt practices, rendering unethical political behaviour socially and politically costly<sup>5</sup>.

In contrast, the political culture of the United States is grounded in individual liberty, pluralism, scepticism of centralized power, and adversarial political competition. While these characteristics support vibrant democratic participation and institutional autonomy, they also foster a political environment conducive to polarization. Public trust in national institutions in the United States has markedly declined over the past decade, affecting confidence in Congress, the judiciary and governmental agencies<sup>6</sup>. Political competition increasingly assumes a zero-sum nature, which can undermine informal ethical safeguards. In such a context, political actors

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<sup>5</sup> Johnson, E. A., Salvatore, R. D., & Spierenburg, P. (2012). *Explaining the emergence of social trust: Denmark and Germany*. *Historical Social Research*, 37(3), Article No. 141.

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/262082657>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Whither\\_America\\_1115\\_web.pdf](https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Whither_America_1115_web.pdf)



may be more inclined to employ ethically questionable strategies if they advance partisan objectives. These cultural differences significantly influence ethical behaviour. Whereas Denmark's high-trust culture inherently supports ethical political conduct, the United States' polarized and low-trust environment presents challenges that cannot be addressed by cultural norms alone and instead rely heavily on formal institutional regulation.

### **Institutional Design and Accountability Mechanisms**

According to the 'Preventing Corruption and Promoting Integrity in Central Governments (Top Executive Functions) and Law Enforcement Agencies: Evaluation Report' indicates that Denmark, while benefiting from a long-standing culture of trust and low levels of corruption, has developed gaps in formal preventive structures, particularly concerning top executive officials, due to this reliance on trust. Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) recommends the establishment of a more robust and coherent integrity framework, incorporating clearer regulations, enhanced transparency and systematic oversight to ensure ethical conduct among government leaders. Concurrently, Denmark's recent reforms in policing, including improved vetting processes, ethical guidelines and independent complaints mechanisms, demonstrate significant progress in safeguarding integrity within law enforcement<sup>7</sup>. In conclusion, the report emphasizes that Denmark's strong reputation for honesty can be further strengthened by complementing its trust-based model with robust, codified safeguards, thereby ensuring continued public confidence and resilience against corruption risks. In contrast to Denmark, where ethical oversight is centralized and less politicized, accountability in the United States is often adversarial and subject to partisan interpretations. Investigations into political misconduct may be perceived as partisan attacks, diminishing their legitimacy in the public's view. Consequently, despite strong institutions, the U.S. system encounters challenges in consistently enforcing ethical norms

### **Political Finance and Influence**

The primary distinction between the political ethics of the United States and Denmark resides in their respective political-finance systems. Denmark employs a hybrid model in which

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<sup>7</sup> Group of States against Corruption (2019). Preventing corruption and promoting integrity in central governments (top executive functions) and law enforcement agencies: Evaluation report – Denmark\* (GrecoEval5Rep(2018)8). Council of Europe. [[https://www.coe.int/en/web/greco/evaluations\\_round\\_5](https://www.coe.int/en/web/greco/evaluations_round_5)]([https://www.coe.int/en/web/greco/evaluations\\_round\\_5](https://www.coe.int/en/web/greco/evaluations_round_5))



political parties receive significant public funding in conjunction with private donations, yet stringent transparency requirements are enforced and large anonymous donations are restricted. Norms of disclosure and cultural expectations ensure that parties uphold public credibility. Due to the limited and closely monitored nature of private financing, opportunities for quid pro quo exchanges are minimized<sup>8</sup>. Conversely, the American political-finance landscape is among the costliest and intricate globally. Campaigns are predominantly funded through private means, and the emergence of Political Action Committees (PACs), Super PACs and dark-money organizations has heightened private influence. Although disclosure requirements are in place, loopholes in the reporting of independent expenditures permit substantial sums of money to impact elections without direct accountability. Judicial rulings such as "Citizens United v. FEC" have entrenched the role of corporate and private money, rendering political influence a market-driven domain. This structural dependence on private funding engenders ethical vulnerabilities. Politicians may experience electoral pressure to align with the interests of major donors, and even legal political spending may foster perceptions of undue influence. Denmark's model exemplifies how transparency and moderate public financing mitigate ethical conflicts; the American model illustrates how ethical dilemmas can emerge even within robustly democratic frameworks when funding is insufficiently regulated.

United States campaign-finance legislation governs the financial contributions that individuals, organizations and political committees may make to candidates and political parties. It also delineates the entities permitted to donate and defines what constitutes an in-kind contribution. Over the past century, these regulations have undergone significant evolution, marked by four distinct periods, the pre-FECA era, the FECA era (1974–2002), the BCRA era (2002–2010), and the post–Citizens United era. The Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) introduced limits on spending and contributions and established the Federal Election Commission. However, subsequent Supreme Court decisions invalidated restrictions on candidate spending and self-financing. The proliferation of "soft money" and loosely regulated advocacy groups in the 1990s prompted the enactment of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA)<sup>9</sup>, which prohibited soft-money donations and imposed restrictions on electioneering advertisements. The Citizens United (2010) and McCutcheon (2014) decisions further eroded

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<sup>8</sup><https://europam.eu/?module=country-profile&country=Denmark-EUROPAM>

<sup>9</sup> [United States campaign-finance laws | Political Donations, PACs & FEC | Britannica](#)



key limitations, thereby expanding the political spending rights of corporations, unions, and individuals.

### **Historic Roots of Danish Probity**

Denmark's current low levels of corruption stand in contrast to principal–agent theories, which predict enduring corruption within public organizations. Historically, the separation of public and private finances in the 17th century contributed to the reduction of corrupt practices. This was achieved as the monarchy replaced aristocrats with bourgeois bureaucrats and criminalized the act of gift-giving to officials in 1676. Nevertheless, corruption persisted due to the continued mingling of public and private funds in practice, the lack of secure salaries for civil servants, and weak oversight mechanisms. Significant reforms were implemented in the 19th century, including the mandatory requirement of legal education, the expansion of merit-based recruitment, improved salaries, and the introduction of systematic control and sanctions, such as imprisonment<sup>10</sup>. These reforms elevated moral standards, increased the risks associated with corruption, and strengthened professional identity. Meritocracy emerged as a crucial factor in reducing corruption, aligning with contemporary research that demonstrates a strong correlation between merit-based public administration and low corruption levels. Rothstein's "big bang" theory posits that rapid, comprehensive reforms—often instigated by external threats—can alter societal norms. Ultimately, the fight against corruption necessitates a shared trust that others are not engaging in bribery and an understanding of how behaviour is influenced by cultural and communicative systems, rather than solely by rational cost-benefit analyses.

### **The Price of Deregulation and Dark Money in U.S. Politics**

Political corruption, defined as the misuse of public office for private benefit, adversely affects ordinary Americans by distorting policy, undermining public services and eroding trust in governmental institutions. Historically, corruption has precipitated crises from the Gilded Age to the 2008 financial collapse, illustrating how deregulation and the influence of wealth can destabilize society. In contemporary times, corruption has been exacerbated by detrimental Supreme Court rulings such as *Citizens United*, which permitted unlimited political spending

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<sup>10</sup> Corruption in unlikely places: the case of Denmark seen through Luhmann's system theory. (2024). *Onati Socio-Legal Series*, 14(5), 1272–1295. <https://doi.org/10.35295/OSLS.IISL.1858>



and narrowed the legal definition of corruption. The erosion of norms and increasing cynicism have further normalized unethical conduct. Recent administrations from both political parties have encountered scandals, however, President Trump's conflation of political authority with personal business interests represents an unprecedented escalation. Donors now obtain extraordinary access, influence, and even pardons, while officials across governmental branches enrich themselves through conflicts of interest, insider trading, or extravagant gifts. Concurrently, watchdog agencies and ethical safeguards have been weakened or dismantled. To mitigate corruption, the public must demand accountability, and Congress must reinstate regulatory measures, strengthen ethics laws, reform campaign finance regulations, and pursue comprehensive structural reforms to restore trust in democratic institutions and return power to the populace<sup>11</sup>.

### **Implications for India**

Corruption within the public sector remains a significant and enduring governance challenge in India, adversely impacting administrative efficiency, public trust and economic development. Despite the existence of robust legal frameworks, such as the Prevention of Corruption Act and institutional bodies like the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) and *Lokpal*, enforcement is often inconsistent and slow. Corruption manifests at various levels of government, ranging from minor bureaucratic delays to high-level policy manipulation, thereby undermining service delivery in sectors such as land administration, welfare distribution, policing, taxation and infrastructure procurement. A primary factor contributing to this issue is the coexistence of complex regulations and discretionary powers, which foster opportunities for rent-seeking behaviour. Furthermore, low transparency in public decision-making, weak internal controls and insufficient protection for whistle-blowers exacerbate the problem. Political interference in investigations and transfers further disrupts accountability systems. Although digital reforms, such as Aadhaar-enabled services, e-procurement and land registration digitization in states like Haryana and Punjab, have reduced some opportunities for bribery, gaps in implementation and digital literacy limit their effectiveness. Additionally, high levels of election-related expenditure and opaque political funding create incentives for corruption within public administration. Public

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<sup>11</sup> Danetz, L. J., & Petry, E. (2025, August 11). What is political corruption and what can we do about it? Brennan Center for Justice. <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/what-political-corruption-and-what-can-we-do-about-it>



perception surveys consistently indicate declining trust in government institutions, reflecting frustration with slow grievance redressal and impunity for powerful actors. Corruption increases the cost of doing business, discourages investment and reinforces socio-economic inequalities. The table below, Corruption Cases Registered in Central Ministries by CBI (2017–2021) delineates the prevalence of corruption within public institutions.

**Table 2**  
**Corruption Cases Registered in Central Ministries by CBI (2017–2021)<sup>12</sup>**

<b>Year</b>	<b>No. of Cases Registered</b>	<b>No. of Departments Involved</b>
<b>2017</b>	210	26
<b>2018</b>	158	26
<b>2019</b>	141	17
<b>2020</b>	95	21
<b>2021</b>	111	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>715</b>	<b>111</b>

Table 2 delineates the annual incidence of corruption cases registered by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) against employees in various central government ministries and departments from 2017 to 2021. The data reveals a total of 715 cases over this five-year period, involving 111 distinct departments, underscoring the persistent and widespread nature of corruption within the Union government. In 2017, the number of cases peaked at 210, involving 26 departments, indicating significant detection or reporting activity during that year. This figure decreased to 158 cases in 2018, although the number of departments involved remained constant, suggesting that corruption was distributed across similar institutional spaces despite a reduction in total cases. In 2019, the number of cases further declined to 141, concentrated in only 17 departments, which may suggest targeted action or improved oversight in certain ministries. The years 2020 and 2021 recorded a moderate number of cases—95 and 111, respectively—across 21 departments each year. The slight increase in 2021 could reflect heightened post-pandemic scrutiny, improved internal vigilance, or enhanced reporting

<sup>12</sup> Open Government Data Platform India. (2022, September 9). *Year-wise cases of corruption against central government employees working in 45 departments, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) from 2017 to 2021.* <https://www.data.gov.in/resource/year-wise-cases-corruption-against-central-government-employees-working-45-departments-make>



mechanisms. Throughout the five-year period, corruption is shown to affect a broad array of departments, not confined to a specific sector, highlighting structural governance and oversight challenges within central ministries. The table indicates that while the number of corruption cases fluctuated annually, corruption within central ministries remained a systemic concern across multiple departments. The involvement of 111 departments over five years suggests that vulnerabilities persist across administrative structures. Although the decline in cases after 2017 might imply improved monitoring or preventive measures, the continued registration of cases each year indicates that significant reforms in transparency, digital monitoring, internal vigilance, and accountability mechanisms are still required. Strengthening institutional integrity and adopting preventive measures such as digital workflows, periodic audits, and stronger disciplinary frameworks are essential to mitigate corruption within central government ministries.

The political ethics landscape in India has been influenced by factors such as the criminalization of politics, opaque funding mechanisms, electoral delays, patronage networks, and inconsistent enforcement. The experiences of Denmark and the United States offer valuable insights into how institutional reforms and cultural shifts can enhance ethical governance in India. The 2nd Administrative Reforms Commission (2nd ARC) has already proposed reforms, including state funding of elections, strengthened disclosure norms, the establishment of special electoral tribunals, and institutional insulation for oversight bodies. The comparative findings support many of these recommendations. The recommendations of the 2nd Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) on Ethics in Governance exhibit significant parallels with the systems in Denmark and the United States, both renowned for their robust democratic principles and stringent ethical safeguards.

Denmark's model of public funding and transparency illustrates that reducing reliance on private financial sources can mitigate unethical influence. The United States demonstrates how weak disclosure requirements and costly elections can create distortions even in well-established democracies. Furthermore, Denmark's strong tradition of administrative openness and public audits underscores the importance of continuous oversight. Indian institutions such as the *Lokpal*, Vigilance Commissions and the Election Commission can be fortified with clearer mandates, greater independence and expedited enforcement processes. The U.S. experience highlights the risks associated with politicized enforcement. India must develop



mechanisms to ensure neutrality, including more transparent appointment processes for regulators and constitutional office holders. India can also draw lessons from Denmark's high-trust culture, transparent institutions foster public trust, which in turn encourages ethical behaviour. Therefore, India must invest in civic education, media literacy and ethical training for public servants. The Right to Information Act, a crucial component of India's transparency framework, must be revitalized and safeguarded against dilution.

### **Suggestions**

The following suggestions are proposed to gain public trust in India: implement administrative reforms enhancing transparency, accountability, and efficiency in governance. Strengthening ethical standards, independent institutions, and citizen-centric service delivery is also recommended to foster confidence in public administration.

1. Enhance transparency and anti-corruption frameworks by ensuring unrestricted access to governmental data, enforcing stringent conflict-of-interest regulations, implementing comprehensive digital procurement systems and increasing transparency across all non-critical departments to mitigate discretionary authority and concealed decision-making processes.
2. Advance decentralization by empowering local governments with sufficient financial resources, autonomy in revenue collection and administrative independence, thereby reducing reliance on state or central transfers. This approach aims to diminish hierarchical corruption and expedite decision-making processes.
3. Professionalize the bureaucracy by introducing specialist cadres in key sectors, expanding lateral entry based on demonstrated expertise and ensuring fixed tenures to facilitate the development of domain knowledge, reduce frequent transfers and enhance policy consistency.
4. Foster a high-trust, integrity-based administrative culture by streamlining procedures to minimize bureaucratic obstacles, establishing feedback and grievance-redressal mechanisms, creating ethics councils within ministries and improving working conditions to deter minor corruption.
5. Establish fully independent anti-corruption institutions by granting the Lokpal and Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) complete functional and financial autonomy,



- ensuring transparent and merit-based appointment processes, and safeguarding these institutions from political interference.
6. Enhance civic education and public awareness by integrating ethics, constitutional values and civic responsibility into curricula at all higher-education institutions and conducting nationwide media campaigns to encourage citizen vigilance and participation.
  7. Incorporate ethics and integrity into the school curriculum, utilizing real-life narratives that emphasize the long-term success of ethical individuals and the legal and social repercussions faced by unethical or corrupt individuals to cultivate moral awareness from an early age.
  8. Strengthen transparency and the Right to Information (RTI) Act by expanding proactive disclosure requirements, digitizing all government contracts and expenditures, and ensuring full protection for whistle-blowers and RTI activists to foster a culture of openness.
  9. Utilize artificial intelligence for data-pattern analysis, enabling governments to automatically detect unusual financial transactions, anomalies in procurement, suspicious vendor patterns and potential fraud in welfare and subsidy programs across integrated databases.
  10. Implement predictive risk mapping with machine learning, utilizing historical records, behavioural patterns and administrative data to identify high-risk departments, regions, or officials, thereby allowing for preventive measures to be taken before corruption occurs.

## Way Forward

India stands to gain significant insights into political ethics and anti-corruption governance by examining the experiences of Denmark and the United States. Denmark exemplifies the effectiveness of robust institutional transparency, routine public audits and a high-trust civic culture. Its stringent disclosure norms, open access to public records and impartial enforcement create an environment where corruption is both difficult to conceal and socially unacceptable. India could benefit from adopting Denmark's practices of centralized digital transparency, clear conflict-of-interest regulations and a professionalized public administration insulated from political influence. Denmark further illustrates that cultivating



public trust through consistent institutional fairness significantly diminishes opportunities for corruption. From the United States, India can learn the importance of independent oversight bodies, investigative journalism and judicial autonomy in maintaining accountability. Additionally, India can draw lessons from the administrative reforms of both countries—such as decentralization, performance-based governance, specialized civil services, strong watchdog institutions and data-driven decision-making to build a more transparent, efficient and integrity-driven public administration.

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