Shaping the Emerging World

India and the Multilateral Order

Waheguru Pal Singh Sidhu
Pratap Bhanu Mehta
Bruce Jones

Editors

Contents

TANVI MADAN

6

What in the World Is India Able to Do?
India's State Capacity for Multilateralism

Introduction

As India aspires to move from a rule-taker to a rule-maker or at least a rule-shaper role in the multilateral order, the main question being asked is, "What will India do"? Perhaps an equally relevant question is, "What is India able to do?" This question is directly related to India's state capacity, which this chapter defines as a state's ability to develop and implement policy.

This chapter begins with a look at why capacity matters, as well as an assessment of the people and ideas available to the Indian state that could help it to shape the multilateral order. Discussions about the state's ability to operate and to exercise influence in the external realm often start—and sometimes end—with the numbers question. The factoid most often quoted is that India and Singapore have about the same number of foreign service officers.[1] Capacity, however, also involves other components that are often overlooked.

The chapter lays out four such elements that are affecting the ability of Indian policymakers to formulate and implement policy broadly related to the external arena: the changing nature of policy issues; domestic politics; the media and public opinion; and the corporate sector's increasing international interests and involvement. The chapter then provides examples of how these elements have affected the Indian government's ability to act on some multilateral questions, examining multilateral trade negotiations in particular. It also looks briefly at their impact on climate change negotiations, as well as a few other multilateral issues. Finally, it suggests some ways in which the capacity-related challenges to India's effective participation in the multilateral order can be mitigated.

People and Ideas

There continue to be calls at home and abroad for India to do more to shape and enforce global rules, norms, and institutions.[2] Yet there is a realization that India does not necessarily have the numbers and expertise to do so, especially in its Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)—the ministry that often takes the lead on these questions or at least plays a starring role. Various observers have noted that India's foreign service and the ministry's budget are "remarkably small," especially when compared with those of other countries.[3]

The MEA's capacity—personnel and budget—to conduct external relations was a concern of the Indian leadership from the early days of independence.[4] However, historically, compared to other developing countries, India had "relatively more advanced diplomatic resources"[5]—this capacity was indeed one reason why the country could play an international role perhaps disproportionate to its capabilities. The Indian state today has significant capacity to develop and formulate external policy in terms of individuals, idea generation, and institutions. However, now it is this capacity that is disproportionate to its capabilities and the role to which India aspires. With economic growth, the MEA's resource situation has improved considerably, but budget constraints and personnel shortages continue to be a problem—one that is likely to get more acute as India's international footprint grows.

For some of India's interlocutors, the Indian situation turns on its head Henry Kissinger's apocryphal question about engaging Europe, "Who do I call if I want to speak to Europe?"[6] The problem reflected in that question was that too many actors were involved with not enough clarity about who was in charge. In India's case, foreign officials express the opposite problem: not enough counterparts with whom to engage.[7] A European diplomat, for example, commented that, when engaging Indian counterparts, "We may have 10 people on our team, but the Indian side comprises just one or two persons."[8] A Southeast Asian diplomat noted a related problem: not enough high-level personnel to participate consistently and effectively in regional dialogues.[9]

Many foreign officials note the high quality of the Indian officials with whom they interact in bilateral and multilateral settings.[10] However, as the scale and kind of activities that India is seeking and expected to be involved in at the bilateral, regional, and multilateral levels expand, the availability of expertise has also become a concern. Most MEA officials, like many of their counterparts in other ministries, are generalists by recruitment and training.[11] There are questions about their ability to meet effectively the demands of dealing with counterparts on a range of complex issues that require specialized

knowledge and skills. Rotations or deputations—one way of involving those from other ministries with specialized knowledge—are an option, but this option is only exercised to a limited extent. The National Security Council Secretariat and some ministries do bring on specialists through lateral entry (perhaps the most famous being Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in the 1970s, first as adviser to the Ministry of Foreign Trade, then as chief economic adviser and secretary in the Finance Ministry), but this is a road rarely taken, especially in the MEA.[12] Lacking the expertise and time, most ministries have limited research and long-term planning capabilities. The government does "outsource" some research and analyses to industry groups, think tanks, universities, and even consultancies. However, the think tanks and universities researching foreign policy are "underdeveloped" and "short of resources."[13] Moreover, with limited access to officials and lack of information about the policymaking process, many experts at these organizations feel hamstrung.[14]

Why do limited numbers and expertise—or capacity more broadly—matter? First, inadequate capacity can limit the range of issues—geographic and functional—on which already stretched officials can focus. Second, it can lead to a concentration on day-to-day imperatives, a tactical or parochial focus, and, as Malone notes, case-by-case policy formulation. This leaves little time for identifying priorities, assessing trade-offs, or engaging in strategic thinking or long-term planning. Third, the quality of the work undertaken by overburdened officials can suffer. Fourth, it can decrease the time or inclination to engage with and mobilize other stakeholders. Fifth, it can put officials in reactive mode, with little time or incentive to take the initiative. Sixth, it can affect other countries' perceptions of whether India is a country with which they can effectively engage in a sustained manner.[15] They might question not just India's willingness to engage—and the quality of that engagement—but also its ability to meet the commitments it makes.[16] Capacity limitations can also negatively affect India's ability to nurture bilateral relationships with key actors—relationships that can help or hinder the country's prospects and leverage in the multilateral realm. Seventh, inadequate capacity can impede progress in bilateral, regional, or multilateral relations if foreign officials hesitate to act for fear of overloading the Indian system.[17]

On the multilateral stage, the numbers and expertise problems are exacerbated by "the sheer number of institutions." Add to these the informal networks that are playing an increasing role in setting norms and standards.[18] In some multilateral settings, there is "significant asymmetry" between the capacity of India and that of other countries, which can circumscribe India's role.[19] Indian officials can find themselves at a disadvantage when faced with

other delegations that have specialists from different fields, limiting their ability to contribute to policy formulation.[20] A recent Finance Ministry paper on trade negotiations acknowledging this problem noted that in order to be able to "set [its] own agenda and make others . . . react instead of [India] reacting as has been the case till now," the government would need to undertake in-depth advanced study of various issues, as well as involve trade policy experts in the negotiations to a greater degree.[21] Saran also outlines the potentially negative impact of the "major shortage of capacity, both in terms of human resources and available expertise," on India's ability to play an effective role in a forum like the G-20, for example, whose agenda seems to be getting broader and deeper.[22] On the flip side, when India has available expertise, it can play an effective and significant role in multilateral settings—as Kapur points out in his contribution to this volume, this has been the case in multilateral financial negotiations and institutions.[23]

"New" Factors Affecting Policymaking Capacity

Complicating the capacity situation are a few additional factors that have affected and will continue to affect the ability of the Indian state to formulate and implement external policy. Two points should be kept in mind about these factors: first, their role and impact are not new, but India's policymakers have to grapple with them to a greater extent than ever before; second, they are not exclusive to India.

The Blurring of Horizontal and Vertical Policymaking Lines

Today, there is a blurring of both horizontal and vertical policymaking lines. In terms of the former, there are few policy issues that do not span foreign and domestic jurisdictions. As Sunil Khilnani points out, global developments, institutions, and regimes affect domestic interests and options.[24] Similarly, domestic interests and capabilities affect foreign policy. In addition, while foreign policy might "rarely" be a factor in domestic political and electoral calculations,[25] domestic political calculations are definitely a factor in foreign policy calculations. Within India, the lines between the "central" and "state" lists are also increasingly fading, with many issues falling, in practice at least, in the "concurrent" list. As for the vertical lines, there are few—if any—issues that do not "cut across [functional] domains."[26]

The horizontal and vertical policymaking lines are especially blurred on issues of multilateral interest: nuclear policy, climate change, trade, maritime security, cyber security, and resource security (food, energy, water).[27] These

issues cut across the domestic and international spaces and involve the inter-
ests and jurisdictions of multiple government agencies (including the military
services). The capacity of the Indian state to engage effectively on any of these
issues in the multilateral realm will be affected by each of these agencies' pref-
erences as well as the lead agency's ability to factor them into policymaking.
Often the lead agency is the MEA, where a former minister of state notes that
even intra-agency coordination continues to be a challenge, further hinder-
ing interagency communication and coordination.[28]

On the one hand, if the lead agency ignores other relevant actors and
their preferences and does not communicate or coordinate policy with them,
this will negatively affect the quality of India's multilateral engagement as
well as its ability to make sustainable commitments or deliver on them. In
addition, external actors can take advantage of interagency differences and
turf wars—especially if they play out publicly—to undercut India's negoti-
ating position and leverage. On the other hand, coordination not only can
help the government assess priorities and trade-offs better but also can
strengthen Indian policymakers' hands vis-à-vis those of their interlocutors.
Devesh Kapur's chapter in this volume, for example, outlines how India's
participation in international regimes to control illicit finance has benefited
from such coordination.[29]

Permanent or temporary venues for communication and coordination,
such as the Groups or Empowered Groups of Ministers, the Committee of
Secretaries, cabinet committees, and a range of issue-specific bodies (like the
Energy Coordination Committee, the Trade and Economic Relations Com-
mittee, or the Council on Climate Change) exist in India and bring together
some of the stakeholders.[30] However, communication and coordination are
often ad hoc, informal, and concentrated at the senior levels.

There are numerous examples of the consequences of unresolved intera-
gency differences. They delayed the establishment of a single agency to oversee
and coordinate India's growing overseas development assistance programs.[31]
Such differences in the energy policymaking space in India led to questions in
the mid-2000s from energy and foreign policy officials in other countries
about who in India was taking the lead in formulating and implementing
India's international energy activities. Indian energy companies on their part
complained about the negative impact that the lack of interagency coordina-
tion was having on their ability to secure assets and resources abroad.[32] In
another instance, different perspectives of the MEA and the Ministry of Home
Affairs have led to delays in issuing research visas for foreign scholars and
students, affecting, according to a foreign secretary, India's ability to "build

constituencies" abroad.[33] Differences have also reportedly stalled the addition and promotion of personnel in the MEA, affecting the crucial numbers and expertise questions mentioned above.[34]

Coalition Politics, Surging States, and Oppositions That Oppose

A debate exists on the extent of the influence of domestic politics on those handling India's external relations and especially on decisionmaking. As Rudra Chaudhuri notes, however, politics has played a role in limiting executive capacity and "more than a marginal role in shaping policy outcomes."[35]

What some have called "political fragmentation" has especially affected the capacity of the Indian state to make external policy.[36] This is playing out in three dimensions. First, fragmentation has meant that the Congress Party no longer dominates at the center, and no "national" party is likely to do so in the near future. The party in power has to deal with a vocal opposition—one that often sees its role as literally opposing the government's foreign and domestic policies, even those it might have supported when in power. Second, coalition governments and coalition politics more broadly have an impact on policymaking capacity. Feigenbaum has written about the time and effort that coalition management requires, restricting available capacity to develop policy. He also notes the substantive policy constraints that members of a ruling coalition can impose. Both aspects, he argues, increase the difficulty of "mov[ing] big ideas and big policies through the Indian system."[37]

The rise of regional parties, in particular, has concerned some observers who argue that their presence in coalitions at the center can lead to the privileging of parochial concerns and interests, consigning external and strategic considerations to the dust heap.[38] However, given the blurring of horizontal policymaking lines—something that is evident to regional parties who seek power and influence at both the state and central levels[39]—even regional parties can and do have preferences with regard to foreign policy and multilateral issues and organizations that need to be considered. Coalition politics means that these interests and preferences—as well as those of nonregional coalition members—matter and that these actors can affect state capacity.[40] Even if they do not have an active view, they can serve as a brake on policy.

A third dimension is the evolving center-state dynamic. While still a fairly centralized country, the changing role of states in India, their engagement with the global economy, their influence at the center, and state governments' authority and responsibility for implementing key policies mean that state

preferences can also have an impact on capacity. Foreign officials have recognized the role of the states, visiting them and meeting state officials.[41] Indian chief ministers, in turn, have made clear that they have interests—largely economic—abroad, for example, with visits to China, Israel, and the United States. They have also been vocal on issues like foreign direct investment, a national counterterrorism center, and a goods and services tax—each of which has the potential to affect India's relations with other countries or its capacity to act in multilateral negotiations or organizations.

Domestic politics affected policymaking capacity on "foreign" questions even before the current coalition era. Chaudhuri has noted the impact of domestic politics on Indian decisionmakers during and after the 1962 Sino-Indian War.[42] Mukherji has examined the effect of domestic politics on decisions on trade and economic liberalization in the aftermath of Indira Gandhi's 1966 decision to devalue the rupee.[43] Domestic political dynamics also contributed significantly to Gandhi's decision to alter her stance on multilateral negotiations on Vietnam.[44] Observers have also noted the impact of domestic political factors on the Indian government's capacity to make policy toward Sri Lanka as well as West Asia.[45] More recently, the effect of domestic politics—coalition politics and the center-state dynamic—on the government's decisionmaking capacity was perhaps most prominently evident in constraining the ability of the central government to strike a deal with Bangladesh on the sharing of water from the river Teesta.[46]

However, fragmentation does not have to mean lack of capacity to take the initiative in the external realm—between 1989 and 1998, India had seven coalition governments, but this was also a period of some policy departures and innovations.

The Media and Public Opinion

Most observers acknowledge that the media environment in which Indian policymakers are operating has undergone a major transformation. Along with a vibrant print media, there are hundreds of television channels—some dedicated to news, others that include news programming.[47] In addition, there is the increasing use of social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter and technologies like mobile phones and the Internet. Overall, the distribution of news is mobile and real time or "instant," and government action is under constant scrutiny.[48] These technologies have also exacerbated the state's multiple-audience problem. Furthermore, along with the changed scale and nature of the media, there has also been a change, as Sanjaya Baru has noted,

in the media's funding model—organizations are less dependent than before on the government (though not necessarily entirely independent from their private sector owners).[49]

This changed environment has had an impact on both the influence and effectiveness of government. The media play various roles. Basu has outlined three: observer, participant, and catalyst.[50] Raja Mohan has added another—venue—noting, "The media has become the principal theatre for intellectual and policy contestation on the direction of Indian foreign policy."[51] Opposition parties have used media and public pressure to attack the government's bilateral and multilateral polices on the grounds that it is giving up national sovereignty or strategic autonomy. Further, the media can not only reflect but also exacerbate political differences.[52] When he was defense minister, George Fernandes accused the media of "stoking partisan fires."[53] In addition, various government stakeholders or coalition members use the media to push their preferred policy or personal interests, which can deepen internal differences.[54]

Through these roles, the media have put the "brake" on some new initiatives and played "facilitator" on others.[55] They have affected the policy options available to government, including on multilateral relations and issues.[56] They can also shape other countries' views of government policy, which when inaccurately represented can cause problems for the government. The media have also helped to set the terms of the public debate, although government officials complain that the search for ratings and the dearth of journalists who specialize in foreign policy mean that these debates are often not very sophisticated. Finally, the media play a significant role in shaping public opinion.[57]

An oft-heard contention is that public opinion does not matter in foreign policy. This is not really borne out by Indian history. While perhaps less influential on foreign policy questions, there is little doubt that public opinion can have an impact—even if that effect is primarily through its impact on the domestic political debate on foreign policy questions.[58] Public opinion has affected state capacity by ruling out certain avenues: perhaps most prominently in 1959–62 on the China-India border question.[59] More recently, the media, reflecting and shaping public opinion, pushed the government to act on issues, such as the alleged killing of two Indian fishermen by Italian marines, that potentially have repercussions for multilateral efforts to combat piracy.[60] The impact of this factor on trade and climate change policies is discussed below.

The Corporate Sector

As the Indian economy and its corporate sector—both the private sector and state-owned companies—have grown and globalized, so have the sector's interests in foreign policy.[61] As their footprint has expanded—Indian companies' outward investment has grown significantly, both in scale and geographically[62]—Indian businesses' interest in multilateral policy has also grown. Affected by global economic standards and rules to a greater extent than in the past, the sector has strong preferences about the decisions made in this realm, including on market access and visa regimes.[63] Thus it has an interest in the Indian government playing a part in rule making or at least rule shaping. It also has an interest in specific issues. Indian companies like Reliance and ONGC, for example, have a deep interest in developments vis-à-vis Iran in the U.S. Congress, at the United Nations (UN) Security Council, and in the European Union. Moreover, with their success, domestic and international clout, and access to the media (and sometimes ownership of them), overall these companies can make their voices heard.[64]

Corporations are playing different roles in India's external relations. First, they are stakeholders with an interest in influencing foreign relations and policy. Second, they are constituents wanting the government to help them to secure resources, technology, capital, expertise, investments, and markets abroad as well as to protect their interests there. Third, they are assets, whose investments and partnerships in some countries have created opportunities for the pursuit of broader Indian interests there. Nirupama Rao, India's ambassador to the United States, for example, recently called Indian business "both a cheerleader and a star player" in that relationship.[65] They also can be liabilities if their activities abroad create complications for India's foreign policy. Fourth, they are providers of expertise, with a crucial role in the development of policy on issues like energy and cyber security. Finally, they have played a role in implementation, performing some functions that traditionally are undertaken by diplomats or perhaps think tanks: public diplomacy, convening, economic diplomacy, information collection, and analysis. Through public diplomacy and public relations activities, the corporate sector has also shaped debate and opinion both in India and abroad.[66]

While the Indian government has used corporations instrumentally in the past—for example, getting private sector leaders to make the case in the United States for aid to India in the 1950s[67]—the scale of this activity has increased tremendously. The government often works with the two major Indian chambers of commerce—the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)

and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI)—in what it calls "public-private partnerships." With offices in Australia, China, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Singapore, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States, these organizations help the government to publicize brand India, attract investment, undertake bilateral or multilateral dialogues, serve as "listening posts," and even write policy papers and provide advice.[68]

The corporate sector has enhanced Indian state capacity to develop and implement foreign policy, especially in its implementation role. However, it can also have a negative impact on that capacity at times. The perception of India—especially public perception—in other countries, for example, can be negatively affected by the activities of Indian companies. A senior MEA official acknowledged this challenge a few years ago, noting the government's efforts to urge public and private sector companies operating in Africa not just to pursue their corporate interests but also to contribute to local development.[69] Recently, the potential complications that corporate activity can create for the Indian state were evident over the question of the Indian company GMR's contract to build an airport in the Maldives.[70]

Impact on Multilateral Realm

Each of the elements mentioned above can have an effect on state capacity to make and implement policy related to the multilateral realm. The impact of these elements has, for instance, been evident in the multilateral trade and climate negotiations as well as in policy related to Iran and the South China Sea disputes.

Trade Negotiations

The elements mentioned above have affected Indian state capacity in multilateral trade negotiations. They have had an impact on the ability of the lead Indian ministry—commerce and industry—to develop and implement multilateral trade policy. This was evident during the Doha Development Round negotiations of the World Trade Organization (WTO), which began in late 2001. The negotiations collapsed in July 2008 over differences between the developed and developing countries on issues like market access and agricultural subsidies. Many abroad held Kamal Nath, the Indian commerce minister, responsible for the breakdown.[71] From the Indian negotiators' perspective, they had to factor in the views of different ministries, domestic political interests, as well as the preferences of the corporate sector. The experience left a

sense that "complex multilateral agreements" just required too much domestic "consensus-building."[72] Indeed, many countries seem to have come to this conclusion, preferring instead to seek bilateral or regional preferential trading agreements.[73]

The Indian negotiating stance during the Doha Round had to take into account various domestic interest groups: given the range of stakeholders and activities they affect, the trade negotiations required input and buy-in from numerous ministries in addition to Nath's own, including the foreign, finance, agriculture, rural development, and communications and information technology ministries. It also required the state to factor in the interests of state governments, farmers, and the corporate sector (both the manufacturing and services sector). These various interests, along with domestic politics and public opinion, affected the state's capacity and flexibility to negotiate—and interest in negotiating—a deal. The fact that "no deal" was an acceptable option—or even a preferred option because of domestic politics and public opinion—affected everyone's capacity to get a deal done.[74]

The impact of domestic politics on India's stance was evident to India's interlocutors. At an early stage of the round, India's commerce and industry minister, Murasoli Maran, bluntly told his Egyptian counterpart, "Look, in the domestic politics of India, it is in my political interest that this thing fails."[75] A few years later, Nath told his interlocutors that a bad deal (anything that seemed like it was sacrificing the interests of farmers) would be detrimental to his party's political chances.[76] The Congress-led coalition government had come to power arguing that the previous Bharatiya Janata Party–led coalition had put in policies that benefited India's urban middle classes and the services sector, but ignored the interests of the rural population—many believed that argument was the basis of its victory.[77] The final set of negotiations in July 2008 took place just after the Congress Party faced a no-confidence vote and before elections in 2009. Thus it was hardly surprising that the government was factoring in politics. Nath observed that while his actions during the trade negotiations were not a major concern of voters, he benefited politically from the position he took during trade negotiations.[78] Indeed, at home he highlighted his stance, which many abroad held responsible for the collapse of the negotiations, and was feted for it.[79]

State-level politicians made sure their voices were heard at the center as well. Using the megaphone that the media provided, in advance of the Doha Round, the Madhya Pradesh deputy chief minister Subhash Yadav raised the possibility that the central government would succumb to pressure and lower agricultural subsidies, stating that this would be disastrous for small Indian

farmers.[80] Also, in 2001 Punjab chief minister Parkash Singh Badal, a member of the ruling National Democratic Alliance coalition at the center, noted his state's fear of the WTO.[81] A few years later, with a different coalition in power at the center, he went further, asserting that the agreements the Indian government had made during another negotiation "will sound the death knell of [the] farm sector."[82] Just before the Indian delegation left for the July 2008 talks, the Kerala chief minister V. S. Achuthanandan released his letter to the prime minister asserting that a WTO agreement would harm Indian farmers and manufacturers, and it was better not to reach any agreement.[83]

Before 1991, Indian industry had actively campaigned against trade liberalization through the WTO. That approach changed somewhat with the reforms of 1991, but industry continued to have strong views on other issues being discussed during trade negotiations.[84] It was active in the lead-up to the Doha Round and not hesitant to express its preferences publicly.[85] In the early stages of the Doha Round, an industry group publicly urged the government not to negotiate on investments, expressing its concerns to the commerce minister (Arun Jaitley) about being "exposed to international competition" prematurely.[86] However, as Indian companies—especially, but not solely, in the services sector—grew and globalized, their interests changed. Overall, they continued to make their views heard on issues like intellectual property rights, access to markets, industrial tariffs, and labor standards, although, as different sectors evolved in different ways, some cleavages became evident in the last stages of the negotiations.[87]

Climate Negotiations

The way "new" factors mentioned above can have an impact on the Indian government's multilateral climate policymaking capacity was evident during the run-up to the Copenhagen summit in December 2009, when countries gathered for global climate negotiations. Earlier that year, differences among India's negotiating team had become apparent after the prime minister endorsed a multilateral statement aiming to limit global temperature increase to 2° Celsius.

These differences became even more evident in the fall of 2009. Remarks made by Jairam Ramesh, the Indian minister of environment and forests, in China and a letter he wrote to the prime minister that was leaked to the press outlined a proposal to alter India's traditional stance on climate negotiations and suggested a different position vis-à-vis the developed and G-77 countries than India had traditionally taken. The letter also laid out the option of accepting some emission cuts.[88] Abroad the note was seen as suggesting

negotiating flexibility and elicited approval. At home, there was a feeling that Ramesh not only had changed Indian policy substantively without consulting other stakeholders but also had weakened the country's negotiating position.

The prime minister's climate change envoy reiterated publicly that India's main challenge at the summit would indeed be countering any "attempt by rich countries to . . . remove the distinction between developed and developing." Some suggested that this challenge had just become more acute because of Ramesh's proposal. Two of India's climate policy negotiators indicated that they would withdraw from the negotiating team if the Indian position reflected the approach outlined in the memo. Some members of the government reportedly were also unhappy with the minister's proposal. Opposition parties took to the airwaves to accuse the government of weakening India's negotiating position. State chief ministers expressed concern about the government's stance and its impact on economic development. Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi criticized the insufficiency of the role given to state governments in the policy process on this question. Some environmentalists and the business community also criticized the proposal. The minister found himself having to provide an explanation in Parliament, denying that he had suggested legally binding emission reduction targets and qualifying some of his proposals. Other negotiators later noted that all this had indeed negatively affected India's negotiating position in Copenhagen.[89]

Other Areas

The four elements—the involvement of various government agencies, domestic politics, media and public opinion, and the corporate sector—have affected Indian state capacity to formulate and implement policy on other multilateral questions as well. For example, when Indian policymakers had to decide whether or not to vote against Iran at the International Atomic Energy Agency, they had to factor in domestic politics, public and media reaction, as well as Indian companies' investments in and exports to Iran. With ramifications for energy security concerns, the health of the Indian economy and India's relations with several countries, including the United States, the decision and India's policymaking space were also affected by the interests of multiple ministries. Some of these elements also played a role in the Indian debate and decision on whether or not to participate in the United States–led multilateral coalition's "armed intervention" in Iraq in 2003.[90]

Even if one looks beyond traditional multilateral activities and forums toward "new" multilateral issues, these various elements will affect India's

state capacity. The issue of freedom of navigation and the South China Sea dispute, for example, involves not only India's relations with various countries and regional organizations but also multiple ministries— foreign, finance, petroleum and natural gas, defense—as well as the Indian military and state-owned companies. With various entities making public statements about the dispute, policymakers will likely have to factor in domestic politics and the media and public opinion when making decisions on this issue as well.

The Way Ahead

The building of robust state capacity to act externally does not always precede the acquisition of power or an increase in external activity. As Daniel Markey and C. Raja Mohan point out, in the United States much of the institutional and intellectual infrastructure of foreign and security policymaking was put in place after the need for it was felt as the U.S. footprint and its interests expanded.[91] Perhaps necessity will lead the Indian state to strengthen its capacity to make external policy broadly and multilateral policy particularly. However, India may not have the luxury of time. While external observers note with surprise how much the Indian state has achieved with limited capacity,[92] India cannot continue to rely on *jugaad* (improvising solutions in the context of limited resources) alone. Without effective state capacity, it will miss opportunities, especially in shaping the multilateral order, and have a difficult time tackling challenges that come its way.

Numbers matter and, despite the proliferation of stakeholders, the state will remain the key actor in developing and implementing India's external policy. The government needs to find a way to overcome resistance and hire additional skilled personnel to develop, conduct, and implement policy. These increased numbers will help to ease the burden on current officials. Some specialized recruitment and a revised training program should be considered, as should mid-career training and increased rotations through different ministries. The government can also supplement career officials with experts brought in through a lateral entry process. This is not a silver bullet, but it can be a crucial component of increasing state capacity as long as it is used to bring in qualified specialists on a meritocratic basis.

The government can also reach outside to organizations—think tanks, universities, corporations, and industry groups—that can provide expertise and enhance state capacity to develop, explain, and implement policy. The corporate sector can also provide tools and expertise to aid the government, and the government should continue to collaborate with this sector. However,

it needs to find the right business-government partnership balance; overreliance on business can lead to corporate interests taking precedence over other interests, perhaps more strategically important ones. As Indian policy research institutions become more effective, the government should consider reaching out to them for certain activities instead.

These research institutions—think tanks and universities—need to be brought into the process on a more systematic basis. They need funding—from the state and from other sources—but in a manner that protects the integrity and independence of their work. In addition, giving researchers access to policymakers and allowing them to learn more about the policy process will give them a better understanding of policymakers' constraints and increase their ability to produce feasible policy advice. Experts at these institutions, for their part, have to engage not just with each other but with the media, private sector, and government. They have to make their analyses and recommendations feasible and communicate them in an accessible way. They need to fill in the capacity gaps, especially providing work that government officials do not have the time or expertise to undertake: for example, in-depth policy-relevant research as well as contingency, scenario, and long-term policy planning. Through programs designed to prepare students and junior scholars for a multidisciplinary, multilateral policy world, they also need to train a new generation of experts to work on and in external policymaking.

As far as the "new" factors mentioned above, their potentially negative impact can be limited with effective planning, consultation, and coordination. Managed well, each of these factors can indeed be leveraged, enhancing Indian state capacity. The media, for example, can be a useful tool to explain policy, anticipate and address criticism, pressure opposition parties, solicit views, and shape the policy debate. This requires the government to engage actively, consistently, and directly with the media and via social media platforms. The hesitation to speak publicly on certain multilateral issues—which can be sensitive and complex—and to insulate policymaking on them from public discussion is understandable, given that that they can benefit from less visibility. But the state cannot depend on these issues remaining low-key. If it does not engage with the media and in the public debate (or at least prepare to do so), others will fill the vacuum and instead shape the state's options and capacity to act. If the government shapes and harnesses public opinion, it can strengthen its own hand vis-à-vis other stakeholders—internal and external. This engagement, however, cannot just be reactive. It has to be an integral part of policymaking, from the formulation stage itself.

Consultation with various stakeholders should also be an integral part of the policy process from the onset—rather than an afterthought. Both internal and external consultations are important. It is better to deal with any differences through the policy-formulating process, rather than leave them to the end to sort out. On the one hand, if not dealt with, these differences can seriously impair the ability to implement policy. On the other hand, getting other stakeholders to buy in to policy can enhance state capacity. There are often hesitations about bringing additional stakeholders into the process—because of reduction of influence and questions about whether their inclusion will hurt more than help or be at all effective in limiting the role of some of the elements mentioned above. However, if the process of consultation is institutionalized and consistent, the state has a better chance of making and implementing policy effectively. Indian governments have shown an ability to build political constituencies and coalitions; they now have to work on building policy ones.

Policy coordination is also crucial. It allows priorities to be identified and trade-offs to be considered. Better-coordinated policy at home also translates well abroad. The state cannot effectively play a global "chess grandmasters' game, where each move will have to be mindful of several other pieces on the board and the game is played as part of a long strategic interaction,"[93] if it cannot keep track of the pieces. Interagency coordination needs to be institutionalized and not left to personal initiative and networks. Coordination mechanisms need to be established at different levels and not just at the senior ones.

Taking the steps outlined above to build state capacity will not be easy because of internal resistance and inertia, but it is an effort worth making, with long-term payoffs for India's multilateral interests and influence.

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