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## **Administrative Reforms and their Impact on Foreign Policy Efficiency: An Indian Perspective**

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**DOI : <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19544669>**

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### **ARTICLE DETAILS**

#### **Research Paper**

**Accepted:** 29-03-2026

**Published:** 10-04-2026

#### **Keywords:**

*Administrative Reforms,  
Foreign policy efficiency,  
State capacity, E-  
governance, Bureaucracy*

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### **ABSTRACT**

Administrative reforms are heavily analyzed in regard to internal governance, though their implications would also significantly affect the foreign policy regime. In this context of India's administrative reforms, we examine the theoretical idea that the execution of foreign policy becomes more efficient. This exploration would also be instrumental in highlighting a pragmatic intuition which the success in foreign policy relies significantly on the administrative stature of the state itself. The research paper is grounded on state capacity theory for looking at the manner in which administrative efficacy correlates with the outcomes of foreign policy. It treats, through analysis, different periods of administrative reforms within India, right from the initial shifts in post-independence restructuring to changes faced by economic liberalization and most recent e-governance. The implications of reform have informed good coordination, accountability, and openness, all of which have enabled quick global exposure and improved credibility in respect of India. The research paper identifies some enduring structural impediments such as bureaucratic inflexibility, fragmentation of organizations, and the disconnect between the creation of policies and their implementation that impede the full expression of the potential of India's foreign policy. The research reveals that administrative reforms



have generally improved the effectiveness of foreign policy, but their effectiveness has been inconsistent. To better coordinate various institutions of the government, to develop specialized capacity and expertise, and to be flexible in the administration of foreign policy is necessary to support India's global aspirations with regard to capacity to execute those aspirations. Foreign policy effectiveness, ultimately, reflects the strength and adaptability of the administrative system of a country.

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## 1. Introduction

Strategic leaders in foreign affairs make critical strategic choices about how to govern and interact with other countries, but they do not make these decisions on their own; they are assisted by the foreign service and other diplomats as well as through the political executive's articulation of national interests to the world. Many scholars, however, argue that this view of foreign policy fails to adequately define the totality of foreign policy. Moreover, the implementation of foreign policy is heavily dependent both on administratively implemented bureaucratic mechanisms by which decisions are made as well as the degree to which nations are able to effectively implement those decisions using the mechanisms by which they implement their bureaucracy. Thus, the extent to which a nation is able to effectively implement its foreign policy is directly correlated to the administrative systems used to coordinate and to respond with those systems in implementing foreign policies.

Post-independence, India has implemented multiple reform of the administration focusing on better governance, increased accountability, and reduced bureaucratic inefficiency. The Administrative Reforms Commissions' recommendations, the impact of liberalization to promote economic growth (1991), and various other projects or initiatives on administrative reform e.g. digital governance have changed the nature of the administration in India. Collectively, they have been linked to creating transparent, citizen-focused and responsive institutions to changing domestic and international demands.

Even though there have been many advances in both types of reforms, there seems to be very little research into how those improvements relate to the effectiveness of a nation's foreign policy. Currently available research is primarily focused on investigating either reform of the internal execution of government (i.e., domestic governance) or the execution of a nation's foreign policy (i.e., foreign policy), with few connecting the two types of reform. This absence creates a significant gap in the understanding



of how well a country may implement and conduct its external interactions given its intra-governmental administrative ability.

The focus of this research is on the relationship between administrative reform and the effectiveness of foreign policy in India. Through this research, we will show that foreign policy is not an independent concept but rather an extension of domestic governance systems. We will consider how administrative reform affects coordination, responsiveness and implementation, which will give us a complete view of how governance capacity affects India's position in the world.

## **2. Objectives of the Study**

1. To study how administrative reforms have changed over time.
2. To analyze how effective an administrator is with regard to their ability in creating a successful foreign policy.
3. To evaluate the effect of administrative reform on improving coordination, responsiveness and transparency, for developing a successful foreign policy.
4. To find out what are the structural or institutional factors affecting how foreign policy is implemented.
5. To offer possible measures for improving the administrative capacity to achieve a desired outcome through a foreign policy.

## **3. Statement of the Problem**

India has a solid strategic position in the world and an expanding level of global power; however, it frequently encounters difficulties in executing its foreign policies. This is due primarily to an inability to link the development of policy with its implementation, with the resultant gap arising from the impact of inefficient administration on policy creation and execution.

## **4. Research Gap**

Academic writing about reforming the government (administrative reforms) often discusses local governance, service delivery, and government success. Similarly, when writing about foreign policy, writers tend to write about methods of conducting foreign relations through strategy, diplomacy, and other international relations. However, much of the literature documenting foreign relations does not discuss how reforming administrative processes (government management) impacts foreign relations.

There is relatively little literature discussing



- (1) integrating reforming administration with examining foreign policy;
- (2) measuring the effects of administration in the area of diplomacy;
- (3) the influence of local capacity governance on international relations; or
- (4) conducting a micro-analysis of people working within governments to reform the administrative process or how those administrative processes affect foreign relations (e.g. foreign policy).

In this report, the authors will have demonstrated the connection between administrative capacity and foreign policy efficiency in India.

## 5. Research Methodology

This research is drawn entirely from the analysis of other people's works; this project will utilize qualitative and analytical designs and will attempt to explore the link or connection between Indian administrative reforms and the effectiveness of foreign policy through an in-depth review of current secondary literature (existing literature), policy papers, and institution reports.

### 5.1 Method of Analysis

The study of implies

**Descriptive analysis** to trace the evolution of administrative reforms

**Analytical approach** to examine the linkage between administrative capacity and foreign policy outcomes

**Comparative interpretation** of case-based examples to understand practical implications.

The analysis is primarily conceptual. Focusing on identifying patterns, relationships, and institutional dynamics than statistical measurement

### 5.2 Limitation of the Study

The study depends on previously published research because it does not gather new research findings.

The results of the study exist as interpretations which depend on the extent of accessible information.

The absence of numerical proof restricts the assessment of results.



## 6. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

### 6.1 State Capacity Theory

This study examines the concept of State Capacity Theory. State Capacity Theory (SCT) asserts that the more capacity a state possesses, the greater its ability to achieve both domestic and international objectives, and that state capacity is a function of an administrative institution's strength, efficiency, and adaptability. The capacity of a state is more than just having a policy or a strategic intent; it is the institutional capability to implement effectively on the basis of decisions made, to coordinate with other sectors, and to respond to the dynamic challenges presented by the environment. Therefore, foreign policy outcomes can be considered extensions of domestic administrative capacity.

The two most essential and central concepts underlying this framework are "administrative efficiency," which is the extent to which the public institutions within government can bring into effect their decisions effectively in a timely, coherent, and effective manner (notably with respect to procedures, coordination among departments, accountability for actions taken, responsive to the needs of citizens, and the use of technology in government); and the second concept is "foreign policy efficiency," which refers to the ability of a nation-state to develop, communicate, and execute its international goals and objectives in an effective manner (i.e., developing, communicating, executing and achieving the goals and objectives of its international policy). This is measurable by the ability to conduct diplomatic negotiations, manage regional and international crises, work cooperatively with other nations, and the ability to project national interest around the world.

The relationship between these two concepts is captured through a clear **conceptual linkage**:

**Administrative Efficiency → Institutional Coordination → Policy Implementation → Foreign Policy Outcomes**

The connection illustrates that administrative efficiency serves as the underlying assumption underpinning the level of institutional coordination. Administrative systems that operate efficiently provide for more coordinated cooperation amongst various ministries/agencies (external affairs, defence, trade, and technology) in today's globalized world, where every foreign policy decision is likely to have implications for a number of different areas.

Second, Administrative Strength guarantees effective coordination between different ministerial departments. Today's foreign policy is increasingly moving away from traditional forms of diplomacy.



Modern day foreign policy is now very often linked to trade, environment, security, health and technology. An Administratively Coordinated Governmental structure will allow for the use of Integrated Government Policy responses so there will not be duplication of policy development and implementation and thus will provide more coherency when dealing with other countries.

Thirdly, a sound administrative structure provides the ability to react to emergencies that affect foreign policy, as well as to respond to events like natural disasters, international humanitarian work, global health issues, and any situation where a fast and efficient response can positively influence foreign policy. Administrative ready organizations allow for the rapid mobilization and utilization of resources so that timely executions of decision making take place without any unnecessary delays.

Fourth, Administrative efficiency also helps to increase a country's credibility on the international stage. The more stable, open, and efficient a government is, the more likely it will be viewed as an honest and trustworthy partner in international relations. A country's credibility increases its ability to produce successful diplomatic negotiations; establish trust between nations; and improve its power in global organizations and forums.

## **6.2 Bureaucratic-Politics Theory**

The Bureaucratic Politics Model was developed by Graham T. Allison and argues against the idea that decisions on policy come from one rational decision maker. Decisions on policy are made through a very complex interaction of many actors from different levels of government who represent different institutions, interest groups, and priorities in a competitive and bargaining-based environment.

This model enhances our understanding of how power dynamics, as they exist within the- bureaucratic structure, and influence on the decision-making process. Higher-level decision makers or actors with greater authority, who have access to more information or are closer to political leaders, exert much greater pressure on how policies are developed than do actors who belong to a lower-tier level within the bureaucratic structure. Because of the influence that power dynamics play on the policy development process, the policy decisions made by bureaucracies reflect the power and bargaining abilities of the actors involved at the time of the decision rather than a purely objective or best option.

Another feature of this model is that it recognizes the existence of coordination problems caused by competing priorities and overlapping roles for the various actors in the bureaucratic decision-making process. Because a number of different actors are involved in the policy development process, it is difficult to achieve consensus. These problems can lead to delays, inconsistencies, and compromises



being made at the time of the decision. This is particularly true in the area of foreign policy, where the necessity for timely and cohesive action necessitates the development of an effective coordination process in order for policies to be implemented successfully.

So, the Bureaucratic Politics Model illustrates how institutional fragmentation and the conflict between agencies' jurisdictions can impede the efficiency of foreign policy attempts to coordinate and streamline processes even if the government is trying to reform these systems. The model also shows that unless there are changes in internal power politics or conflicts of interest among agencies, a reform by itself may not lead to effective implementation of policy.

### **6.3 New Public Management**

The New Public Management (NPM) model arose towards the end of the 20th century due to the limitations of bureaucracy, such as being too rigid and inefficient with excessive reliance on process rather than outcomes. NPM suggests that it is possible for public administration to be as efficient, transparent and outcomes-focused as private sector organizations by introducing many of the principles that govern private sector activity into public sector organizations. Key principles of NPM include performance measurement, decentralization, competition and service delivery that focuses on the citizen rather than the process.

NPM promotes accountability through clearly defined outcomes, continual monitoring and evaluation to enhance transparency and to ensure that administration is aligned with the policy outcomes. In terms of foreign policy, NPM highlights how the effectiveness of diplomatic missions and implementation of policy can be improved through continual assessment of both the diplomatic strategy and implementation of policy. NPM suggests that through eliminating bureaucracy (such as bureaucracy reducing efficiency), administration can respond to issues in a timely manner (particularly during times of crisis) or effectively negotiate on behalf of the taxpayer. In addition, NPM promotes innovation through using digital governance and data to support decision-making processes. Overall, NPM places an emphasis on the need for administrative systems that are flexible, efficient, accountable and provide an outcome focused service.

### **6.4 Governance Theory**

The governance theory displaces the focus of public management from that of the government ( i.e., formally elected and appointed authorities) to the more comprehensive network of all entities that contribute to the articulation and execution of policy goals (the "Actor Network"). Hence, the governing



theory posits that policies are produced not by the state alone, but through a collaborative interaction of stakeholders at local, national, and global levels.

Importantly, the 'Governance' framework emphasizes the capacity of Horizontal (i.e., network based) coordination among stakeholders for the development of policies. In contrast, traditional public administration views decision-making as taking place via vertically-based (i.e., hierarchical) structures. The 'governance' framework is particularly applicable in Foreign Policy areas such as Global Climate Change, Global Health, Global Trade and Global Security, all of which involve the coordination of multiple stakeholders working together to achieve coherent policy outcomes.

The 'governance' framework promotes a "shared responsibility" model that is characterized by the distribution of "accountability" for policy outcomes across multiple actors (i.e., governments, international organizations, and the private sector), thus encouraging greater levels of "Participation" and "Innovation". However, the involvement of multiple stakeholders can create challenges for coordinating stakeholders, i.e., creating "Coordination problems" (difficulties in coordinating the activity of multiple actors); "Conflict of Interest Problems" (actors having different agendas and objectives), and "Accountability Problems" (difficulties in assigning accountability for an outcome to a specific actor) related to achieving effective governance.

The need for effective governance, therefore, demands the existence of strong Administrative Capacity, a clearly defined Institutional Framework, and the existence of efficient Communication Systems.

## 6.5 Systems Theory

Systems Theory provides a holistic view of the state as a system comprised of multiple types of interrelated and interdependent parts (i.e. political leaders, administrative institutions, and the external environment) that interact; are coordinated as well as receive feedback about their interactions with one another, rather than simply being analysed in isolation. In governance, state institutions process inputs (e.g., public demands and global pressures) to generate outputs (e.g., foreign policy) through established institutional means. As such, foreign policy is not independent but rather a function of the more comprehensive political-administrative system of which it is part.

It is also important to note that effective foreign policy is the result of inter-ministerial coordination (e.g., between ext. affairs, defence, and commerce, etc.). If there are inefficiencies in any one part, they will produce inefficiencies in the entire system. Reforms to the administration will affect the overall performance of the governance system; administrative inefficiencies will adversely impact the execution



of policy; while administrative delays and fragmentation will negatively impact the timeliness and responsiveness of policy. Therefore, Systems Theory highlights that for an effective foreign policy to exist, there needs to be a well-integrated, adaptable, and coordinated administrative system.

## **6.6 Public Choice Theory**

Under Public Choice Theory, economics can be used to understand how political and administrative behavior occurs. Within political and administrative processes, all actors, including politicians and bureaucrats, make rational, self-interested decisions that are influenced by their own self-interest, as evidenced by the work of both Buchanan & Tullock. These authors have shown that because public officials do not have any incentive to make decisions that are solely based on the public interest, the bureaucratic process can often lead to inefficient bureaucracies, weak incentives, and self-serving decisions. Consequently, public policy is often the result of what was negotiated or agreed to within the political system, as opposed to what is in the best long term interest of the nation. In addition, effectiveness of a nation's foreign policy is largely dependent upon two things: (1) how well the institutions are designed; and (2) how well the incentives are aligned and bureaucratic inertia is reduced, and accountability is maintained within the nation's administrative systems.

## **7. Case Studies: Administrative Reforms and Foreign Policy Efficiency in India**

### **7.1 Case Study 1: Evacuation Missions- Administrative Coordination in Crisis (Operation Gange,2022)**

India's foreign policy implementation relies heavily on effective administrative performance, which is especially clear in modern-day crisis situations such as Operation Ganga (2022). This operation was launched during the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war to help Indian citizens leave Ukraine in a timely manner.

Successful execution of the mission required immediate planning; close cooperation between various ministries involved (Minister of External Affairs, Minister of Civil Aviation, Minister of Defense) as well as with Indian embassies; and cooperation with multiple countries through diplomatic channels. The work of all the agencies and ministries involved was very closely coordinated; digital communication platforms and real time sharing of information have increased responsiveness of those involved.

India had established multiple forms of administrative reform prior to announcing Operation Ganga. Digital governance, crisis management frameworks, and developed mechanisms to create streamlined



inter-ministerial coordination were outstanding tools that laid the groundwork for the successful execution of the mission through the use of special flights, negotiation of land routes through adjacent countries, and advisory communications issued to citizens while the mission was on-going.

The execution of Operation Ganga illustrated that:

Efficient administration leads to the expedited mobilization of resources

Inter-ministerial coordination increases capacity/execution

Administrative readiness strengthens diplomatic negotiations.

However, while the success of the operation demonstrated that previous reforms have allowed for greater administrative efficiency and improved capacity, it also exposed the existence of systemic shortcomings which led to reaction delays and inefficiencies in coordination.

## **7.2 Case Study 2: Vaccine Diplomacy- Administrative Efficiency in Global Health Policy**

The “Vaccine Maitri” initiative (2020 - 2022) demonstrated how administrative capacity shapes foreign policy outcomes through India's delivery of vaccines while partnering with other nations as part of its diplomatic approach during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

To coordinate the various agencies that were involved with the initiative, including:

- External Affairs
- Health and Family Welfare
- Pharmaceutical companies (i.e. Serum Institute of India)
- Logistics and transportation networks

Administrative Capacity shown through the initiative was demonstrated by:

- Distribution and management of all supply chains for logistics
- Real-time tracking of vaccine distributions
- Digital platforms integrating the production and delivery processes.



Due to this initiative, India's image in the world was enhanced as a responsible and cooperative power through the strengthening of bilateral relations with developing countries and the demonstration that India can contribute to providing global public goods.

Challenges associated with the increased domestic demand for vaccines resulted in temporary suspension of vaccine exports, which highlighted:

- The tension between domestic priorities and international obligations.
- The need for increased capacity planning and resource allocation.

Overall, this case shows that while administrative reforms allowed for effective global engagement; the balancing of domestic requirements with those mandated externally continues to remain one of the primary challenges facing countries.

### **7.3 Case Study 3: Digital Diplomacy- Enhancing Foreign Policy through Administrative Reforms**

India's Digital Diplomacy has increased in size and complexity, primarily as a result of a change in administrative modernization due to improvements that have occurred with the implementation of e-government and digital solutions to assist in the management of their interaction with citizens and the international community (through social media and multiple digital platforms). Examples of how the Ministry of External Affairs has leveraged these Digital Diplomacy Innovations are as follows: Real-time communications between the Global Constituents and Government of India via Twitter (X); Consular Services provided through Digital Technology (Issuance/Processing of Passports and Visas); and establishment of Digital Grievance Reporting and Redressal Systems. These innovations in e-governance also have resulted in a dramatic change in the execution of Diplomacy as a whole. Because of Administrative Reforms designed to improve e-governance and Digitalization, India is now able to communicate more rapidly with its Citizens that are living abroad through the use of new and improved methods and technologies, respond more quickly in the event of a Crisis, provide more transparency in their respective activities, and provide easier access to their services to their Citizens. Additionally, use of Digital Diplomacy has allowed India to expand its use of Soft Power, and thereby enhance its Global Standing, through the provision of a direct communication channel between the Indian Government and its Citizens that are living abroad.

Nevertheless, there are a number of challenges associated with Digital Diplomacy, including:

1. Information Overload and the Risk of Misinformation;



2. Data Security and Privacy (protection) issues; and
3. The Digital Divide, which is creating access barriers for a number of populations. The examples provided by this case illustrate that continued Administrative Reforms resulting from Digital Inventions are essential in order to create a more responsive, transparent, and Citizen centered Foreign Policy.

## **8. Analysis and Findings**

### **8.1 Positive Impacts of Administrative Reforms**

The evaluation of previously collected data demonstrates that administrative reforms in India have had a positive impact on the foreign policy implementation efficiencies. The effects of these reforms are seen most prominently in coordination, responsiveness and transparency improvements as well as technological enhancements.

#### **Enhanced Inter-Ministerial Coordination:**

An important outcome of administrative reform is an increase in the level of inter-ministerial coordination. Today's foreign policy is multi-faceted and is associated with trade, defence, technology, environment, and public health among others. Administrative reforms supporting integrated governance and institutional linkages have resulted in a higher level of collaboration among the ministries responsible for Foreign Affairs, Commerce, Defence, and Finance.

Increased inter-ministerial coordination has resulted in:

1. Increased coherence across sectors
2. Decreased duplication of effort
3. Increased inter-departmental synchronisation in the implementation of international commitments

Through increased inter-ministerial coordination, India is taking a more holistic and integrated approach to foreign policy and thus all of its domestic commitments are aligned to all of its global commitments.

#### **Improved Responsiveness**

The state has enhanced its ability to respond more quickly as a result of the modernization of administration, especially through digital governance projects. The implementation of instant messaging



systems, digital monitoring tools and online platforms has made it possible to make and execute decisions more rapidly than ever before.

This enhanced speed of administrative response is especially helpful in contexts such as:

Crisis situations (e.g., evacuations, conflict-based responses, and pandemic-like situations)

Rapidly resolving emergency diplomatic negotiations

Reacting to international developments rapidly

An increase in India's ability to respond quickly will provide the opportunity to take decisive action at the international level, regardless of the current or future situation, thus improving the India's overall strategic position.

### **Increasing transparency and accountability**

Transparency and accountability have improved the functioning of the Government through administrative reforms such as performance monitoring, electronic tracking, and open lines of communication between the public and government. Improved transparency in government policy leads to:

- Trust with international partners
- Reliability on diplomatic commitments
- Enhanced capacity for negotiations in multilateral forums

A transparent government will enhance India's reputation as a responsible and reliable global actor, which is essential to maintaining long-term diplomatic relationships.

Technology has become an essential part of administrative reforms and has dramatically changed the way that we do things from a governmental perspective. With the advent of digital technology, we can now use digital platforms, data analysis, and e-governance tools to increase the speed of communication as well as the efficiency of making decisions.

This has led to an array of benefits, including:

The ability to access real-time data to better inform policy choice



Better communication with international partners and stakeholders

Improved monitoring and evaluation of policies enacted

Technology has also contributed to creating a more efficient, flexible, and data-driven foreign policy for India and improved India's ability to deal with many of the complex global challenges that we face today.

## 8.2 Case-Based Insights

This article offers additional support that there is a strong correlation between good administration and success in implementing international foreign policy, as evidenced by the case study examples below:

**Evacuation Operations (ex. Op. Ganga):** Evacuation operations display the significance of having a properly functioning administrative system and the ability to mobilize resources effectively in order to provide diplomatic relations with countries in a rapid manner, through operational facilities such as Operation Ganga. Evacuation Operations are instances where effective administration results in successful implementation of foreign policy.

**Vaccine Diplomacy (Vaccine Maitri):** Vaccine Diplomacy demonstrates how logistic efficiency, coordination among government departments and effective governance are elemental to the accomplishment of globalisation, resulting in international delivery of public goods. Therefore, through its actions, Canada provides examples of how successful administration has provided countries with assistance in delivering global public goods.

These examples demonstrate that in order for a country to successfully implement foreign policy, it must have effective administration in place as well as be able to act quickly and with a great deal of coordination and strategic execution.

## 8.3 Persistent Challenges

The study illustrates how structural/institutional obstacles hinder an effective application of foreign policy, while the previously described elements may be seen as positive developments.

### **Bureaucratic Inertia**

Bureaucratic administrative systems frequently resist changes and therefore impede the implementation of reform. Bureaucratic and administrative procedures that are routinized have resulted in inflexible, non-innovative behaviour.



### **Institutional Fragmentation**

Overlapping functions of different ministries and agencies results in coordination problems and inefficiency. The fragmentation causes policy coherence and delay in execution

### **Human Resources Constraints**

Shortage of human resources in emerging areas like cyber diplomacy, climate negotiations, and global health governance. This limits the capacity to address complex international issues effectively.

### **Implementation Gap**

There is a significant disconnect between policy formulation and implementation. The administrative bottlenecks delay the implementation of policies.

### **Hierarchical Decision-making**

The centralized and layered decision-making slows the down the analytical and critical responses at the time-sensitive foreign policy situations

## **9. Results**

While the study's findings illustrate that there are several conclusions about administrative reforms and the effectiveness of foreign policy; one of those conclusions states that:

Administrative reform has played a positive role in supporting effective foreign policy by enhancing aspects such as coordination, responsiveness, transparency, and technological capability. Although administrative reforms are effective to a certain extent, the extent of effectiveness has been hampered by structural and institutional barriers that exist and limit their effectiveness.

Since the degree of administrative capacity has a direct correlation to the success of an action, the results support the concept that the stronger a country's system of governance, the greater its effectiveness will be when taking action on the world stage. India has many global ambitions; however, its aspirations have been limited by inefficiencies within its bureaucracy, fragmented institutions, and a lack of ability to implement programs at the local level. As demonstrated throughout this study, while administrative reform has improved India's ability to conduct its foreign policy, there are still systemic issues that need to be addressed in order to attain a greater level of foreign policy effectiveness. Further, administrative



capacity will continue to play a significant role in improving India's prominence and the effectiveness of its actions in the world.

## 10. Conclusion

The efficiency of India's foreign policy has been significantly enhanced by improvements in the coordination, transparency and responsiveness of administrative reform. However, because of factors such as bureaucratic inertia, fragmentation of institutions, gaps in skills, and ineffective policy implementation; the effectiveness of foreign policy has remained inconsistent. To enhance its position in the global arena, India needs to improve cooperation between ministries, invest in specialized knowledge and skills, create a flexible administrative environment and execute policies effectively. Ultimately, effective execution of foreign policy will depend not only on a strategic plan but on a strong administrative capacity. Therefore, comprehensive reforms in administration will be required to align India's global aspirations with its governance capacity and to make it a more effective actor in the international community.

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