



The Impact of Public Personnel Empowerment on Public Administration, Foreign Policy, and International Relations

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ABSTRACT : The power of a state depends less on the resources it possesses than on its ability to realize the goals it sets—that is, on state capacity—and the invisible bearer of this capacity is its public personnel. This study treats the empowerment of public personnel as one of the fundamental determinants of state capacity and examines the effects of empowerment—via state capacity—on public administration, foreign policy, and international relations. The study’s original contribution is the Empowerment-Based State Capacity Model, which models this relationship within a single causal chain: empowerment nourishes institutional learning, institutional learning raises decision quality, high-quality decisions strengthen state capacity, and capacity in turn feeds diplomatic capacity and foreign policy performance, increasing the country’s power of international influence and forming a self-reinforcing cycle. The research adopts a mixed method that uses quantitative and qualitative data together; quantitative data were obtained through surveys, and qualitative data through unstructured interviews grounded in notes kept during conversations. Although the findings were obtained from a particular country sample, the study aims to produce broader theoretical and managerial conclusions. The findings show that empowerment strengthens state capacity by carrying traditional bureaucratic structures toward a more flexible, participatory, and innovative functioning. The delegation of authority and participation in decision-making processes stood out as the most decisive dimensions of empowerment, and empowerment practices were found to produce positive effects on motivation, job satisfaction, and performance. The empowerment of diplomatic personnel was found to yield more effective results in international negotiation and crisis management and to enhance the country’s soft power. One of the study’s notable findings is the reciprocal relationship between the protection of acquired rights and empowerment: rights protected within the framework of legal security lead personnel to take more initiative and assume risk, while empowerment in turn supports the effective use of these rights. Because digitalization can be a source of both opportunity and inequality in this process, digital state capacity must be built through training and support policies that encompass all personnel. In conclusion, empowerment—insofar as it is balanced by accountability mechanisms and designed in line with the public interest and the requirements of the service—is a strategic instrument that increases the modern state’s capacity to cope with complex problems and to be effective in the international arena.

KEYWORDS: Public personnel empowerment, state capacity, public administration, foreign policy, international relations, acquired rights, legal security, soft power.

I. INTRODUCTION

The power of a state is most often measured by the resources at its disposal, its economic size, or its military capabilities. Yet behind these visible criteria lies a more fundamental and frequently unnoticed determinant: the ability of the state to realize the goals it sets, to extend its decisions across the country, and to actually implement them, that is, state capacity. When one of two states possessing the same resources succeeds while the other fails, the difference is most often explained by this difference in capacity. The invisible carrier of capacity is the public personnel who operate the state on a daily basis. Public administration plays a decisive role in the effective and efficient delivery of services that support societal goals (Perry and Wise, 1990); however, the function of public personnel is not limited to producing services. The quality, competence, and discretion of personnel shape not only the internal functioning of the state but also its foreign policy and its weight in international relations. This is the central thesis defended by this study: the empowerment of public personnel is one of the decisive elements of state capacity, and the increase in this capacity directly shapes the effectiveness of public administration, the performance of foreign policy, and the country's influence in international relations.

The reason this question has acquired particular importance today is that the problems states face have both become more complex and seen the internal and the external intertwine. Issues such as migration, pandemics, climate, security, and economic stability require not a single ministry or a single leader, but a public workforce that works in coordination, learns, and can make rapid decisions. As the quality of this workforce rises, the state both produces better services at home and acts more effectively abroad. Thus the question "why does a state succeed?" becomes a question at the center not only of public administration but also of international relations. This study addresses the question along an axis that connects these two fields. Despite this central question, the literature has advanced along two separate tracks that rarely intersect. On one side, the empowerment of public personnel has mostly been examined as a human resources problem, along the axis of individual motivation, job satisfaction, and organizational performance (Fernandez and Moldogaziev, 2013). On the other side, state capacity has been treated at the macro level as the product of institutions and historical structures, while the human foundation of this capacity, namely the personnel who produce it on a daily basis, has often remained in the background. In this gap, where the two literatures do not meet, the relationship of empowerment with the governing capacity of the state and with the external projection of that capacity remains largely unexamined. The core problem of the research arises here: the effects of public personnel empowerment, through state capacity, on public administration, foreign policy, and international relations are insufficiently understood. The aim of this study is to fill that gap by positioning empowerment as the micro-foundation of state capacity and developing an integrated framework that explains how personnel empowered at home are transformed into the state's influence abroad.

Building this framework first requires clarifying the concept of state capacity. State capacity can be conceived in two distinct ways: the despotic power of the state to impose unilateral rule over society, and the infrastructural power of the state to penetrate society and implement its decisions in a coordinated manner. The latter, infrastructural power, is the capability that truly renders the modern state effective, because making a decision and being able to implement that decision in the field are different things, and what makes implementation possible is the institutional and human infrastructure of the state (Mann, 1984). At the core of this infrastructure lies the rational-legal bureaucracy that operates according to rules and expertise (Weber, 1978). The approach that treats the state not as a passive apparatus but as an autonomous actor and a set of capabilities has long nourished such analyses in the social sciences (Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol, 1985). Comparative data have shown that bureaucracies dominated by merit-based recruitment, professional continuity, and predictable careers significantly raise developmental and growth performance (Evans and Rauch, 1999). It is also emphasized that weak or collapsed states have become the source of many global problems, and that the real issue is to build institutions that can stand on their own feet (Fukuyama, 2004).

The empowerment of public personnel constitutes precisely the human foundation of this capacity. When one recalls that infrastructural power is not an abstract institutional quality but a concrete human accumulation, empowerment becomes visible as the micro-foundation of capacity. Empowerment nourishes this foundation in two dimensions. Structural empowerment expands the scope of personnel action through delegation of authority, access to information, and participation in decision-making processes (Kanter, 1993). Psychological empowerment, in turn, increases personnel's willingness to use this scope through the meaningfulness of work, perceived competence, autonomy, and a sense of impact (Spreitzer, 1995). Research shows that empowered personnel perform at a higher level and increase citizen satisfaction (Conger and Kanungo, 1988). Delegation of authority, by extending decision mechanisms to lower levels, reduces bureaucratic delays and, by enabling personnel to exercise initiative in their own domains, accelerates organizational learning (Bowen and Lawler, 1992; Kim, 2002).

The original contribution of this study is that it models the relationship between empowerment and state capacity within a single causal chain. According to this framework, which may be called the *Empowerment-Based State Capacity Model*, empowerment nourishes organizational learning; organizational learning raises the quality of decision-making; high-quality decisions strengthen state capacity; strengthened capacity is transformed into diplomatic capacity; diplomatic capacity increases foreign policy performance; and this, in turn, expands the country's international influence. The links of the chain are not unidirectional: the success and prestige gained in the international arena raise trust in institutions and personnel morale at home, returning the process to its starting point and turning the model into a self-reinforcing cycle. The value of the model lies in uniting, within a single explanatory framework, phenomena discussed separately across different literatures. The first links of the chain are illuminated by institutionalist and organizational approaches. The view that the knowledge, rules, and routines accumulated by organizations permanently shape institutional behavior is the point of departure of the institutionalist approach (March and Olsen, 1989).

Empowered personnel experiment more, learn from mistakes, and carry the knowledge they acquire into the institution; thus organizational learning accelerates and decisions come to rest on more data, experience, and expertise. Why the quality of decisions is so decisive becomes even clearer through the bureaucratic politics model, which shows that foreign policy outcomes arise not from a single decision-maker but from the interaction of institutions, processes, and bureaucratic actors (Allison and Zelikow, 1999). Moreover, it has been shown that bureaucratic autonomy is earned not through arbitrariness but through the network of reputation and expertise that an institution builds over time (Carpenter, 2001); that is, empowerment is transformed into capacity when it is institutionalized as accountable competence rather than as unsupervised license. The links of the chain that face foreign policy are grounded in the international relations literature. That foreign policy cannot be conceived independently of the internal structure of the state and of the qualities of the individuals who make decisions is among the foundational assumptions of foreign policy analysis (Hudson, 2005). The analysis that international negotiation is a two-level game proceeding simultaneously at the table and within the country shows how state capacity is transformed into diplomatic capacity: the competence of the team conducting the external negotiation becomes result-oriented when combined with the ability to manage the domestic ratification process (Putnam, 1988). Diplomatic personnel who are competent and possess discretion increase the country's power to establish influence through persuasion rather than coercion, that is, its soft power (Nye, 2004). In a world where interstate relations increasingly proceed through transnational networks among public officials, empowered personnel occupy a more effective place in these networks and represent their country's interests on a broader footing (Slaughter, 2004).

At this point a reasonable question may arise: why should the empowerment of an ordinary public official affect foreign policy? The answer lies in the fact that foreign policy is not a set of momentary decisions but the product of an institutional accumulation. Behind the delegation conducting a negotiation stands a broad cadre that produces information, prepares files, establishes the legal ground, and carries institutional memory. How much this cadre is empowered on a daily basis determines how quickly and accurately the country can decide in a moment of crisis. This mechanism is addressed in detail in the following sections of the study. In an age of accelerating globalization, public administration has ceased to be a mechanism operating only within national borders and has been transformed into a system that directly affects international interactions and foreign policy processes (Peters and Pierre, 2018). This transformation has foregrounded the capacity of public personnel to represent the country on international platforms and has increasingly blurred the boundary separating internal administration from foreign policy. Thus, personnel empowered at home are transformed into the state's influence abroad. The sustainability of this chain rests on a legal foundation. That the status, duties, and powers of public personnel be definite and predictable, that is, legal security, is the invisible but load-bearing condition of empowerment. Personnel whose rights are secured take more initiative and assume more risk, because they know that the step they take will not be nullified by an arbitrary act (Zabunoğlu, 2012). Four complementary concepts come to the fore here: institutional stability, administrative continuity, bureaucratic independence, and the rule of law. The protection of acquired rights nourishes all four at once and secures the continuity of state functions (Giritli et al., 2013; Günday, 2017). Conversely, administrative acts that cannot be reviewed and that affect a person's future may push personnel toward cautious and inward-looking behavior; for this reason the study treats the protection of acquired rights as the legal guarantee of empowerment and discusses this dimension in the light of recent judicial decisions.

It should also be stated at the outset that empowerment is not a boundless good. Authority that is expanded without being balanced by accountability mechanisms may lead to arbitrariness, loss of coordination, and the misuse of public resources. For this reason the study treats empowerment and oversight not as opposites but as two complementary principles, making the transformation of empowerment into capacity conditional upon authority being used in line with the public interest and within an accountable framework. In the twenty-first century, a new and rapidly growing dimension of state capacity is emerging in the digital domain. The digitalization of public administration, e-government applications, and data-driven governance create a transformation that must be considered together with the empowerment of personnel (Dunleavy et al., 2006). Digital tools directly expand the state's infrastructural capacity by increasing personnel's access to information and speed of decision-making; artificial intelligence-supported public administration, as the newest link of this process, carries the potential to ease the state's processing burden (Wirtz et al., 2019). However, since differences in digital competence may render empowerment unequal, digital state capacity must be built not through technology alone but together with training and support policies that encompass all personnel and with the legal framework of data governance. Insofar as the study's claim is universal, it can also be related to the experiences of different countries. Singapore, known for its merit-based examination system and strong institutional memory, shows how a small state can produce disproportionate international influence through high administrative capacity; South Korea,

Which owes its rapid development largely to a qualified and relatively autonomous bureaucracy, demonstrates the link between capacity and economic performance. The public services of Canada and the United Kingdom, distinguished by their tradition of merit and continuity, Together with New Zealand, known for its sweeping management reforms, offer a rich discussion of how professional bureaucracy and institutional continuity preserve the quality of governance. The common thread of these experiences is that high state capacity emerges in bureaucratic structures supported by meritocratic recruitment and professional security (Evans and Rauch, 1999; Fukuyama, 2004; OECD, 2017). This pattern suggests that the empowerment-capacity relationship points not to a single country but to a general logic that operates similarly across different administrative traditions (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2017). Within this framework, the aim of the study is to examine the multidimensional relationship between the empowerment of public personnel and state capacity, public administration, foreign policy, and international relations, and to analyze the effects of empowerment in these areas in a holistic manner. The scope of the study covers the structural and psychological dimensions of empowerment, the reflection of these dimensions onto public administration and foreign policy through state capacity, the importance the protection of acquired rights carries for legal security, and the effect of digitalization on this process. In terms of method, the study adopts a holistic approach that uses quantitative and qualitative data together. The interviews in the field phase were conducted in an unstructured manner, in conversational settings based on mutual trust, and the data were based on notes kept during these conversations. Although the research findings were obtained from a particular country sample, the study aims to produce broader theoretical and managerial conclusions and presents the proposed model as a general framework that can be tested in different settings. By its nature, this study does not require ethics committee approval, and no ethical violation occurred during the research process.

In line with this aim, the research seeks answers to the following questions: (1) How does the empowerment of public personnel, through state capacity, affect the effectiveness and efficiency of public administration? (2) To what extent does the empowerment of diplomatic personnel increase a country's foreign policy performance and international influence? (3) How does the protection of public personnel's acquired rights, within the framework of the principle of legal security, affect empowerment and therefore state capacity? On the basis of these questions, the study tests the following propositions: (H1) the empowerment of public personnel positively affects the effectiveness and efficiency of public administration; (H2) the empowerment of diplomatic personnel increases foreign policy performance and influence in international relations; (H3) the protection of public personnel's acquired rights positively affects personnel performance and organizational commitment; (H4) the effect of empowerment on public administration and foreign policy occurs largely through the increase in state capacity. The main contribution of the study is interdisciplinary. By bringing the public administration literature's discussion of empowerment together within the same framework as the international relations literature's discussions of state capacity, foreign policy analysis, and soft power, it unites within a single logic the inward and outward perspectives that are often treated in isolation from one another. The proposed *Empowerment-Based State Capacity Model* claims to fill a gap in the field by offering a testable framework rather than merely summarizing the literature. In this respect, the study aims to move beyond an ordinary personnel-management inquiry and to offer a contribution that allows the state to be considered simultaneously as both a service producer and an international actor. The remaining sections of the study proceed in the following order: first the relevant literature is reviewed; then the theoretical framework and the proposed model are set out; next the method of the research is explained; the findings are presented; in the discussion section the findings are evaluated in the light of the literature; and in the conclusion and recommendations section the implications of the model, policy recommendations, and suggestions for future research are addressed.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

For many years, the empowerment of public personnel was read as a sub-topic of human resource management. It was frequently written that granting employees more authority, autonomy, and voice raised their job satisfaction and productivity and eased intra-organizational processes. The point of departure of this study, however, stands somewhere different. The central claim here is that the empowerment of public personnel is one of the fundamental determinants of state capacity, and that the increase in this capacity directly shapes the effectiveness of public administration, foreign policy performance, and influence in international relations. The review below is organized precisely to bring together a literature that appears scattered along this very axis. First the concept of empowerment is clarified, then the concept is related to state capacity; the chain extending from bureaucratic capacity to policy implementation, and from there to foreign policy and international influence, is traced; acquired rights and legal security, which constitute the legal basis of this chain, and digital and artificial-intelligence-based competencies, its new layer, are discussed; and finally comparative examples and an integrated reading are offered. The concept of empowerment itself lends itself to this broad reading. Conger and Kanungo (1988) define empowerment as a multidimensional process that reveals an employee's latent capacity

By delegating authority and responsibility. Spreitzer (1995) gathers this process into four dimensions: the meaning the work holds for the person, a sense of competence that the person can accomplish the work, autonomy in the sense of having a say in decisions, and the ability to influence outcomes. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) relate the subject to intrinsic task motivation; an employee's finding the work meaningful and feeling effective constitutes the very core of empowerment. Kanter (1977), in turn, regards empowerment less as an individual state of mind than as a product of organizational conditions; an employee with access to power, information, and resources becomes empowered. Bowen and Lawler (1992) and Wilkinson (1998) emphasize that, for empowerment to cease being mere rhetoric and turn into a genuine practice, information, rewards, and decision authority must be shared together. For this reason the literature examines empowerment along two strands: structural empowerment provided through institutional policies and practices, and psychological empowerment based on the employee's perception (Fernandez and Moldogaziev, 2013). Kim and Fernandez (2017) showed that in the U.S. federal bureaucracy these two strands nourish each other, that structural empowerment supports psychological empowerment, and that job performance rises as a result. Quinn and Spreitzer (1997), in turn, remind us that empowerment requires of managers a kind of courage to relinquish control. At the same time, there is also a cautious strand against optimistic readings that regard empowerment as a panacea. Maynard, Gilson, and Mathieu (2012), surveying more than two decades of accumulated research, reveal that empowerment has at times turned into a fashionable discourse and that its effects vary markedly according to context and mode of implementation. Therefore the contribution of empowerment to state capacity is not an outcome that occurs automatically but a possibility contingent on the right institutional conditions. The line followed by this study likewise treats empowerment not as an unconditional good but as a potential whose transformation into capacity depends on certain guarantees and balances.

From Empowerment to State Capacity : The framework described thus far looks largely inside the organization. Yet the same discussion has a counterpart at the level of the state, and this is precisely the question that most interests the international reader: why does a state succeed? The comparative politics literature has long answered this question through the concept of state capacity. Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol (1985) demonstrated the importance of viewing the state not merely as a passive mirror of social interests but as an autonomous actor that produces outcomes on its own, and they returned state capacity to the agenda of the social sciences. Migdal (1988), examining the tension between strong societies and weak states, shows that a state's ability to implement its decisions within society determines its real power. Fukuyama (2013), in turn, argues that two axes come to the fore in measuring the quality of governance: the capacity of the bureaucracy (its level of resources and specialization) and its autonomy. For him, what essentially determines the quality of governance is the level of education and professionalization of public officials, in other words the quality of human resources. This observation carries the empowerment debate directly into the center of state capacity.

The study that demonstrates this link most concretely is by Evans and Rauch (1999). Examining thirty-five developing countries for the 1970–1990 period, the authors develop a "Weberianness scale" that measures merit-based recruitment and predictable, long-term career opportunities. Their findings are clear: countries with bureaucracies possessing these qualities grow markedly faster, even when initial income and human capital levels are controlled for. That is, the merit-based selection of personnel and the securing of their careers, in other words the structural conditions of empowerment, are directly reflected in state performance. Mann (1984) points to a similar conclusion when he calls the power of the state to penetrate society and implement its decisions "infrastructural power"; this power cannot be established without a qualified and embedded cadre of public officials. For Weber (1947) too, the lifeblood of the rational-legal bureaucracy is a permanent class of officials bound by merit and rules. The measurable face of capacity appears in governance indicators; Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi (2011) developed the worldwide governance indicators that measure dimensions such as government effectiveness and institutional quality. A significant portion of these indicators essentially reflects the capacity of the bureaucracy and the quality of public officials.

March and Olsen (1989) carry the chain one link further. For them, institutions are not merely the sum of rules but also the bearers of institutional memory, habits, and the "logic of appropriateness." An empowered and permanent cadre of personnel enables the institution to learn from past experience and to transfer this accumulation to subsequent decisions. When personnel change constantly or refrain from taking initiative, institutional memory erodes and the state behaves as if encountering every problem for the first time. For this reason empowerment matters less for the morale of individual employees than because it raises the institution's capacity to learn and to decide. The first links of the chain to be traced thus become clear: empowerment first nourishes organizational learning, and from there decision quality and state capacity.

Bureaucratic Capacity and Policy Implementation Success : State capacity is not an abstract concept; it appears most visibly at the stage of policy implementation. The New Public Management (NPM) approach foregrounded delegation of authority and results-oriented management in order to raise efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability in the public sector, and regarded empowerment as the carrier element of this transformation (Hood, 1991). However, Pollitt and Bouckaert (2017) remind us that the same prescription yields different results in different countries, and that empowerment practices must therefore be adapted to the local institutional context. Lipsky (2010), through the concept of "street-level bureaucrats," shows that the officials in direct contact with citizens are the real implementers of policies; when these officials are sufficiently empowered, they can produce more flexible and practical solutions to the problems encountered in the field. Tummers and Bekkers (2014) likewise reveal that the discretionary scope and autonomy of implementers positively affect the success of policies; an official without discretion cannot bring to life even a policy well designed on paper. These findings are also confirmed at the institutional level. Moynihan and Pandey (2007) found that empowered personnel use performance information more effectively and that this supports organizational learning. Meier and O'Toole (2002), by showing empirically that managerial quality directly raises organizational performance, reveal that capacity is largely concentrated in the human element. Andrews and Boyne (2010) emphasize the decisive weight of capacity and leadership in the success of public organizations. Rainey and Bozeman (2000), examining the differences between the public and private sectors, explain why personnel capacity carries a distinct importance within the specific constraints of public organizations. Kim (2002) shows that participative management in Korean public institutions raises job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Peters and Pierre (2016), foregrounding the functional dimension of governance, note that the empowerment of personnel increases transparency and accountability in policy processes. All these studies converge on a common conclusion: personnel capacity is transformed into policy implementation success.

Empowerment, Motivation, and Institutional Productivity : One way in which empowerment contributes to state capacity operates through retaining personnel within the institution and preserving their accumulated experience. Perry and Wise (1990), through the concept of public service motivation, argue that the fundamental motive driving public employees is the desire to serve society; when this motive is nourished by empowerment, work commitment and performance rise. Wright and Kim (2004) show that empowerment elements such as autonomy and feedback raise an employee's intrinsic motivation. Fernandez and Moldogaziev (2015), in their research on federal agencies, found that empowerment raises performance, but that this effect varies by type; the effect of information sharing and delegation of authority in particular is stronger. Hassan and colleagues (2013), in turn, find that ethical leadership raises employee performance through empowerment. The conclusion that emerges goes beyond the productivity of individual employees: highly motivated personnel who remain in the institution also mean that the expertise the state has accumulated is permanent, and the permanence of expertise is capacity itself. A further condition for empowerment to be transformed into capacity is that it be balanced by accountability. Delegation of authority, left on its own, may open onto arbitrariness and lack of oversight; capacity, by contrast, requires the joint establishment of autonomy and accountability. Bovens (2005) emphasizes that the autonomy granted to public officials becomes legitimate and sustainable only together with functioning accountability mechanisms. Fukuyama (2013) likewise notes that bureaucratic autonomy is not a virtue on its own and acquires meaning only together with capacity and oversight. Therefore what raises state capacity is not naked autonomy but an accountable empowerment framed by responsibility.

Reflections of State Capacity on Foreign Policy and International Relations : Why should the empowerment of an official affect foreign policy? Although at first glance this question seems remote, a significant part of the international relations literature establishes precisely this link. Allison and Zelikow (1999), in the bureaucratic politics model with which they explain the Cuban missile crisis, show that foreign policy decisions are the product not of an abstract "reason of state" but of the interaction of institutions and of actors within institutions. A decision is, to a large extent, as good as the quality of the bureaucratic apparatus that prepares it. Hudson (2005) places the decision-maker and the decision-making process at the center of foreign policy analysis; to understand the behavior of states, one must look at that state's human and institutional equipment. Putnam (1988), in the theory of the "two-level game," shows that diplomats must attend simultaneously to both international and domestic balances, and that only a competent and autonomous cadre can manage this complex balance. Krasner (1978) likewise draws attention to the weight of public officials' knowledge and expertise in the formation of international regimes. Studies directly on the quality of diplomatic personnel support this line. Hocking (1999) notes that, with globalization, diplomats have increasingly taken on tasks requiring more expertise and autonomy; Berridge (2015), in turn, holds that negotiation success depends on diplomats' skill and decision autonomy. Clarke and White (1995) and Beach (2012) emphasize the role of

Decision-making actors and expert personnel in foreign policy-making; Beach in particular shows, in the case of the European Union, that the expertise of the diplomatic cadre increases the effectiveness of foreign policy. Moravcsik (1999) reveals the constructive role That expert and entrepreneurial public officials play in establishing international cooperation. Slaughter (2004) argues that states now operate through networks, and that the ties among the public officials of different countries have become decisive in solving global problems. Barnett and Finnemore (2004), in turn, draw attention to the role of bureaucrats working in international organizations in the formation and diffusion of norms. Read together, these studies show that empowered public personnel create a difference in capacity not only at home but also on the international side of the table. The most visible result of this difference in capacity is soft power. Nye (2004; 2008) defines soft power as the ability to obtain what one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment, and says that this power is largely nourished by a country's institutional and cultural equipment. Empowered public and diplomatic personnel increase this power of attraction by representing their country's values and policies more credibly in the international environment. Melissen (2005) shows that the new public diplomacy now rests not only on official statements but on the relationships and trust that public officials build. Zaharna (2010) likewise emphasizes that personnel's communication and intercultural competencies are among the elements that determine success in public diplomacy. Thus the final links of the chain are completed: state capacity is transformed into diplomatic capacity, diplomatic capacity into foreign policy performance, and that, in turn, into international influence.

Protection of Acquired Rights, Legal Security, and Bureaucratic Independence : The sustainability of empowerment depends on the legal position of personnel resting on a firm foundation. If an official is anxious that every step taken might later be turned arbitrarily against them, they refrain from taking initiative, assuming risk, and trying something new. For this reason the principles of legal security, institutional stability, and administrative continuity are the invisible but indispensable conditions of empowerment. Gözler and Kaplan (2019) and Günday (2017) regard the protection of acquired rights as a requirement of the principle of legal security; the security of personnel's status is a precondition for their being able to perform their duties effectively. This guarantee is also directly connected to the principle of administrative continuity, which ensures that public services proceed without interruption and in an orderly manner. Viewed along the line of Fukuyama (2013) and Weber (1947), the security of status is at the same time the guarantee of bureaucratic independence and of the rule of law: an official whose legal position is secure can resist political pressure and decide in line with the public interest. Peters and Pierre (2016) likewise establish such a relationship between the impartiality of public administration and the protection of personnel's rights. A class of public officials that is merit-based and secure in status is the common foundation both of the Weberian bureaucracy and of contemporary state capacity.

That these principles do not remain abstract, and how they operate in concrete situations directly affecting a person's professional life, is clearly shown by a recent decision from Türkiye (application no. 2022/47812). The Constitutional Court deemed the closing to judicial review of a written warning sent to a public attorney and kept in their personnel file to be a violation of the right of access to court (Anayasa Mahkemesi, 2026). In the case, the administrative courts had declined to examine the case on its merits, on the ground that the document in question was not a disciplinary penalty and did not bear the quality of an "enforceable act." The Court, however, stated that the document could be taken into account in future processes such as promotion, appointment, assignment, and rewarding, that it therefore carried the capacity to affect the person's legal situation, and that by this quality it had to be open to judicial review. Deliduman (2026) reads the decision not only in terms of the right of access to court but also in terms of the freedom of work and enterprise, professional reputation, and human dignity under Article 48 of the Constitution, drawing attention to the fact that a negative record in a personnel file can affect an official's career, reputation, and psychological integrity. This framework concretizes why the protection of acquired rights is the legal core of empowerment: to the extent that personnel find effective legal protection against administrative records affecting them, they do not refrain from taking initiative and their trust in the institution increases.

At the same time, for legal protection to be genuinely functional, it depends not only on the direction of the decision but also on its speed. In the application in question, the dispute arose in 2021, while the final result was obtained only in 2026, that is, after roughly four years. Protection that arrives late is often no different from a lack of protection; a record left in limbo during a person's promotion or appointment period may irreversibly affect their career timeline even if it is ultimately resolved in their favor. The final resolution of such disputes directly affecting individual rights within a reasonable period, for example three to six months, establishes a balance that neither victimizes the individual nor renders the machinery of state cumbersome. The procedural economy and the idea of well-functioning justice and public administration emphasized in the Constitutional Court's decision require precisely this balance.

Such practicality, in which legal security and administrative dynamism are observed together, turns the protection of acquired rights in the same direction as empowerment: Rapid and predictable protection increases personnel's capacity to take risks and make decisions, thereby providing feedback to state capacity.

Digital State Capacity and Artificial-Intelligence-Assisted Public Administration : In the twenty-first century, a new layer of state capacity is being established in the digital domain. Dunleavy and colleagues (2006), through the concept of Digital-Era Governance, argue that technological transformation both transforms public personnel and creates a need to re-empower them. Margetts and Dunleavy (2013) and Gil-Garcia, Dawes, and Pardo (2018) show that the digital state is not merely the moving of services online but means the reconstruction of an entire logic of governance. West (2004) shows that e-government transforms service delivery and citizen perception; Yıldız and Sayın (2020), in turn, set out the theoretical framework of e-government research. Along this line, digital state capacity is defined together with personnel's competence in accessing data, analyzing data, and conducting data-driven governance. Data is transformed into capacity only if there is qualified personnel to make sense of it; otherwise technology investment alone does not produce capacity.

In recent years, artificial-intelligence-assisted public administration has settled at the center of this discussion. Criado, Sandoval-Almazán, and Gil-Garcia (2024) reveal that artificial intelligence penetrates public administration at the micro, meso, and macro levels and opens a new domain of governance. Vogl and colleagues (2020), examining the emergence of "algorithmic bureaucracy" in UK local governments, show that smart technologies both expand and narrow the official's decision space. Young, Bullock, and Lecy (2019) discuss that artificial intelligence produces a kind of "artificial discretion" and how this interacts with the public official's discretionary authority; technology contributes to genuine capacity when it turns into a tool that supports the official's decision rather than replacing the official. Wirtz, Weyerer, and Sturm (2020), in turn, point to the risky aspects of artificial intelligence and propose an integrated governance framework for public administration; Madan and Ashok (2023) likewise systematically map the diffusion of these technologies into the public sector. The common warning of this literature is this: just as digital transformation can support empowerment, differences in digital competence among personnel can also create a new divide and inequality within the institution. For this reason digital state capacity is transformed into genuine capacity only through training and support that encompass all personnel, that is, through carrying empowerment into the digital domain.

Comparative International Experiences : The link between empowerment and state capacity is not only theoretical; comparative examples concretize this link. Singapore, by combining merit-based recruitment, a competitive compensation policy, and an elite cadre of public administration, has become the most frequently cited example of how qualified human resources are transformed into state performance; Evans and Rauch (1999) also draw on this experience when discussing the developmental function of the Weberian bureaucracy. South Korea's developmental state model has shown how an autonomous and expert bureaucratic core conducting economic planning raised the state's strategic capacity; Evans (1995), analyzing this experience through the concept of "embedded autonomy," reveals that the bureaucracy produces a transformative capacity to the extent that it remains both connected to society and autonomous from it. New Zealand is among the countries where public administration reforms have been most comprehensively implemented; Schick (1998), however, reminds us that this model cannot be transferred directly to every context and that institutional preconditions are decisive. The United Kingdom offers pioneering experiences in algorithmic bureaucracy and digital public services (Vogl et al., 2020); Canada, as one of the first countries to establish a national artificial intelligence strategy in public administration, constitutes an example of the institutionalization of data-driven governance. The OECD's reports on public service skills (OECD, 2017; 2021) bring all these examples together and reveal that the common denominator of a high-performing public administration is qualified and empowered human resources. The common lesson of these examples is that capacity accumulates in people before institutions.

Empowerment-Based State Capacity: An Integrated Reading : The literature summarized thus far reveals that findings that appear scattered are in fact arranged along a single chain. This chain operates as follows: the empowerment of public personnel first raises organizational learning; organizational learning improves decision quality; decision quality enlarges state capacity; state capacity is transformed into diplomatic capacity; diplomatic capacity increases foreign policy performance; and foreign policy performance ultimately leads to international influence. The protection of acquired rights within legal security is the support of this chain, while digital and artificial-intelligence-based competencies are its new layer.

This reading moves empowerment beyond a human resources technique and turns it into a variable that explains the success of the state, bringing the public administration and international relations literatures together along a common axis. Viewed with this integrated eye, a distinct gap appears in the literature. Empowerment, state capacity, governance quality, and foreign policy performance have mostly been examined separately; studies that unite these links within a single integrated framework have remained limited. This study aims to fill the said gap and to conceptualize the chain traced above along the axis of "empowerment-based state capacity." In the theoretical framework section that follows, this chain will be developed in detail as an integrated model extending from empowerment to international influence.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical backbone of this study rests on a single claim: the empowerment of public personnel is one of the principal determinants of state capacity, and this increase in capacity directly shapes the effectiveness of public administration, foreign policy performance, and influence in international relations. In the literature, empowerment is often treated as a human resources topic; yet the link that can be established between the empowerment of an official and the weight of a state on the world stage carries the matter far beyond the limits of human resource management. The real question asked here is this: why are states successful in some matters and unsuccessful in others? This study seeks the answer to the question not only in economic or military power but in the competence, autonomy, and decision-making capacity of the people working in the public sector. This approach requires bringing together the accumulations of two separate disciplines that have long advanced in isolation from one another. The public administration literature mostly examines empowerment along the axis of internal efficiency, employee motivation, and service quality; this view is valuable but remains narrow. The international relations literature, in turn, explains state power largely through material resources, alliances, and systemic position; this view too neglects the human-resource origins of power. At the intersection of the two literatures lies a gap: a framework that holistically explains how an empowered bureaucracy makes a state more effective both at home and abroad is missing. The theoretical contribution of this study is directed precisely at filling this gap.

The framework follows a causal chain extending from empowerment to international influence. The chain is established as follows: empowerment nourishes organizational learning; organizational learning raises the quality of decision-making; high-quality decisions enlarge bureaucratic capacity and therefore state capacity; strong state capacity is transformed into diplomatic capacity; diplomatic capacity increases foreign policy performance; and high performance reinforces the state's international influence. In the following pages these links are addressed one by one, each grounded in the relevant literature, and at the end of the section an original model is proposed that gathers the entire chain under a single roof. Empowerment is thus repositioned at a crossroads where organization theory, public administration, motivation theories, legal security, and foreign policy analysis intersect.

The Conceptual and Theoretical Foundations of Empowerment : The concept of empowerment is defined as a process that aims to increase employees' autonomy, competence, and decision-making capacity (Zimmerman, 2000). Its origin rests on the analysis of intra-organizational power relations. Kanter (1977; 1979) shows that power in organizations is distributed less by formal title than by access to information, resources, and support, and that an employee deprived of such access is rendered ineffective. Pfeffer (1981) likewise notes that power is an organizational phenomenon and that decisions are largely shaped by the distribution of power. Empowerment is the natural consequence of these analyses: to remove the obstacles that render an employee ineffective is to open the sources of power to them. Conger and Kanungo (1988) redefine empowerment, not limiting it to delegation of authority, as a motivational process that strengthens the employee's perception of self-efficacy. Bowen and Lawler (1992), in the case of service workers, discuss when and under what conditions empowerment works, emphasizing that it is not equally appropriate in every context.

The literature examines empowerment along two complementary dimensions. Structural empowerment covers the organizational policies and practices that provide the employee with more authority, autonomy, and resources. Psychological empowerment, in turn, encompasses the employee's perception of their own role and impact and their intrinsic motivation (Maynard et al., 2012). The theoretical core of the psychological dimension is established by Thomas and Velthouse (1990); they treat empowerment as intrinsic task motivation and define four cognitive assessments: meaning, competence, autonomy, and impact. Spreitzer (1995), by rendering this model measurable, demonstrates empirically the relationship of empowerment with job satisfaction, commitment, and performance. Quinn and Spreitzer (1997) connect theory to practice by listing the fundamental questions leaders should ask in the empowerment process. Robbins, Crino, and Fredendall (2002), in turn, develop an integrated empowerment model that unites the structural and psychological dimensions. This

accumulation shows that empowerment is not a single practice but a set of mutually nourishing processes. The psychological foundation of empowerment is reinforced by motivation theories. Self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 2000) argues that the satisfaction of needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness nourishes intrinsic motivation; these three needs directly overlap with the dimensions of psychological empowerment. Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory and Gist and Mitchell's (1992) analysis carrying this concept into the organizational context show that an individual's belief that they can succeed raises their performance. Wilkinson (1998) warns that the discourse of empowerment can at times turn into a hollowed-out management fashion; he notes that the language of empowerment used without genuine delegation of authority creates distrust in the employee. This critical warning reminds us that empowerment must not remain merely at the level of discourse but must be supported by concrete structural arrangements. Because in this study empowerment is regarded as a lever that enlarges state capacity, it is of decisive importance that both the structural and psychological dimensions operate together and sincerely.

Delegation of Authority, Leadership, and Organizational Empowerment : Delegation of authority is the most concrete mechanism of empowerment. Although hierarchy and strict rules come to the fore in Weber's (1947) theory of bureaucracy, in contemporary public administration delegation of authority is regarded as a tool that increases speed and efficiency. Kanter (1993), with the structural empowerment approach, reveals that an employee's access to the information, resources, and support necessary to do their job well is determined by organizational conditions; lowering decision authority to lower levels acquires meaning only with such access. Mintzberg (1983), examining the diversity of organizational structures, notes that public institutions are mostly organized in the form of machine or professional bureaucracies but can evolve toward more flexible structures through empowering practices. The transformation of delegation of authority from a formal disposition into a genuine behavior depends largely on leadership. Bass and Riggio (2006) show that transformational leadership encourages the employee to take responsibility; the leader reveals personnel's potential by inspiring, intellectually stimulating, and showing individual consideration. In Greenleaf's (1977) conception of servant leadership, the leader first attends to the employee's needs and supports their development. Brown and colleagues (2005) show that ethical leadership, and Hassan and colleagues (2013) that empowering leadership, increases leader effectiveness. Pearce and Sims (2002), with the concept of shared leadership, argue that leadership belongs not only to the formal manager but can be distributed within the team. Van Wart (2013) shows that the behaviors of public managers directly facilitate or impede empowerment; Van Wart and colleagues (2017), in turn, discuss how leadership is redefined by technology in the digital age.

The second factor as decisive as leadership is organizational culture. Schein (2010) emphasizes that a participatory and innovative culture nourishes delegation of authority, whereas entrenched hierarchical patterns are among the greatest obstacles to empowerment. Cameron and Quinn (2011), with the competing values framework, show that different types of organizational culture are conducive to empowerment to different degrees. The level of participation is also a scalable phenomenon. Heller and colleagues (1998) address participation in four steps: information sharing, consultation, joint decision-making, and delegation of authority. Lawler (1992) notes that in high-involvement organizations employee commitment and performance rise. Kim (2002) and Wright and Kim (2004) empirically confirm the positive effect of participative management on job satisfaction. Van der Voet and colleagues (2016), in turn, reveal that the success of change in public organizations depends on the relationship between leadership and the employee's emotional commitment to change.

Organizational Learning and Decision-Making Quality : The second link of the proposed chain is organizational learning, which explains the transformation between empowerment and capacity. An empowered employee does not merely decide more quickly; they transfer their experience to the institution, draw lessons from mistakes, and reproduce knowledge. Heller and Petzold (1996) show that organizational learning is directly related to organizational design; structures in which information circulates freely and employees can share their experiences accelerate learning. Grant (1996) treats the firm as a means of knowledge integration; he notes that the real value of the organization lies in its ability to transform scattered individual knowledge into common capacity. When this analysis is carried into public institutions, a clear conclusion arises: individual competence is transformed into a permanent capacity only through organizational learning. Organizational learning is the channel that raises the quality of decision-making. March and Olsen (1989) develop the neo-institutionalist view, which argues that institutions are not merely chains of command but a set of rules, roles, rituals, and shared meanings, and that individual behavior is shaped within this framework. In this view, decisions pass through the filter of accumulated institutional experience; a strong institutional memory produces more consistent and high-quality decisions. Berman and West (2008) and Goleman (1995) show that decision quality depends not only on technical knowledge but also on the emotional and social competencies of

Managers. Therefore empowerment raises decision quality in two directions by developing both the technical and behavioral competence of the employee. Without this link, the connection between empowerment and capacity remains incomplete, because capacity is formed by accumulating individual competencies through organizational learning.

Motivation, Public Service Motivation, and the Quality of Human Resources : The decisive factor in transforming empowerment into capacity is the motivation and quality of the people working in the public sector. Classical motivation theories prepare this ground. Maslow (1943) with the hierarchy of needs; Herzberg (1959; 1966) with the two-factor theory, which argues that intrinsic factors such as the work itself, achievement, recognition, and responsibility are the real motivators, while extrinsic factors such as pay and working conditions only prevent dissatisfaction; and McClelland (1961) with the achievement motive explain employee behavior. Together, these theories reveal that empowerment operates by activating the sources of intrinsic motivation. Wright (2015) notes that motivation takes a special form in public administration, in that the call of public service drives the employee. The distinctive motive of the public sector completes this framework. Perry and Wise (1990) define public service motivation as an individual's inclination to serve society; Perry (1996) develops valid ways of measuring this concept. Moynihan and Pandey (2007) show that public service motivation is less an individual trait than a phenomenon nourished by organizations; organizational conditions can strengthen or blunt this motive. Vandenberg (2007) notes that empowerment practices can increase public service motivation. This motive distinguishes the public official from the private-sector employee: the public official exerts more effort when they see the social return of the work they do.

The human resource management literature carries the matter from individual motivation to organizational design. The strategic human resources approach argues that empowerment practices yield results only when integrated with institutional goals (Wright and McMahan, 1992). High-performance work systems show that selection, training, rewarding, and career-development practices, when used together, raise employee empowerment and organizational performance (Huselid, 1995). At the level of job design, Hackman and Oldham's (1976) job characteristics model reveals that skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback affect the employee's psychological state and output. Trist and Bamforth (1951) remind us that the technical and social sides of work must be designed together. In the dimension of training and development, Knowles (1984) addresses the principles of adult learning, Grossman and Salas (2011) the conditions that determine the transfer of training to work, and Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2006) the evaluation of training effectiveness. Kim and Fernandez (2017) show empirically that empowerment reduces turnover intention in the federal bureaucracy. All this accumulation arrives at a single point: empowerment is ultimately a way of producing qualified human resources, and this quality is the building block of state capacity.

Public Administration Paradigms: From Bureaucracy to Digital-Era Governance : The place of empowerment in the public sector must be read within the paradigm shifts that public administration has undergone. The traditional understanding of public administration rests on Weber's (1947) model of bureaucracy; hierarchy, standardization, and adherence to rules come to the fore. Although this structure provides predictability and impartiality, it limits empowerment. The New Public Management approach, by carrying private-sector techniques into the public sphere, introduces a performance- and results-oriented understanding (Hood, 1991); it reduces centralization and advocates managerial autonomy.

However, Hood (1991) and Pollitt (1993) note that this approach can produce contradictory results, on the one hand increasing autonomy while on the other tightening control through measurement and oversight. Hood (2011) shows that performance pressure can over time turn into a blame game, which in turn can lead the employee to avoid taking initiative. Pollitt and Bouckaert (2017) and Christensen and Lægreid (2011) reveal that reforms have produced hybrid structures in many countries rather than a pure model. More recent approaches open a wider space for empowerment. The New Public Service understanding, foregrounding the values of democratic citizenship and the public interest, advocates empowering the employee not only in terms of efficiency but also in terms of producing public value (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2000). The New Public Governance approach (Osborne, 2010) and network governance analyses (Rhodes, 2017) show that public services are produced not by a single institution but through networks among institutions and actors, and that effectiveness in these networks depends on empowered personnel who can manage relationships. Lipsky's (2010) analysis of the street-level bureaucrat reveals that the lowest-level official actually shapes policy through their daily decisions. Schick (1998), in turn, warns developing countries that implementing advanced reform models before the institutional infrastructure is settled may result in failure. The common lesson of all these paradigms is that an empowered and institutionalized bureaucracy is the core of the state's ability to get things done. Thus the bridge from the public administration discussion to the state capacity discussion is established.

Public Personnel Empowerment and State Capacity : State capacity is the ability of a state to implement the rules it sets, to deliver services, and to reach its goals. The re-entry of the concept into the contemporary literature came with the volume by Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol (1985); this work repositioned the state not as a passive mirror of social processes but as an actor in its own right, and treated the state's capacity as an independent variable. Fukuyama (2013) carries this accumulation into the measurement of governance quality and proposes two fundamental dimensions: capacity and autonomy. Capacity covers the state's resources and the level of professionalization of officials; autonomy describes the extent to which the bureaucracy is protected from political interference. The most striking point in Fukuyama's analysis is that the level of education and professionalization of public officials is regarded as one of the most critical criteria of state capacity. This observation directly supports the claim of this study: the empowerment of public personnel is not an abstract matter of goodwill but a concrete component of state capacity.

Evans (1995), with the concept of embedded autonomy, carries this relationship a step further. Examining the experiences of developmental states, he shows that successful states possess a merit-based, institutionalized, and relatively autonomous bureaucracy. He notes that a cadre established by merit, possessing career security and high professional pride, manages both to remain embedded in society and to resist short-term pressures. Fukuyama (2014), in turn, reads the other side of the coin through political decay and clientelism; he reveals how state capacity erodes when merit is replaced by patronage. Together, these two analyses show that empowerment lies at the heart of capacity. Combined with March and Olsen's (1989) emphasis on institutional stability, the picture becomes clear: capacity is formed by the accumulation of the quality of individual officials within institutional continuity. A single talented official can make a difference; but retaining talented officials in the institution by empowering them determines the long-term capacity of the state. Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi's (2011) global governance indicators likewise regard bureaucratic quality as one of the fundamental dimensions when measuring government effectiveness. In this respect, capacity is not a stock but a flow continuously reproduced through empowerment practices.

Bureaucratic Capacity and Policy Implementation Success : The place where state capacity is most visibly tested is the implementation stage of public policies. A well-designed policy depends on the quality and authority of the personnel who bring it to life. Lipsky (2010) shows that street-level bureaucrats, personnel in direct contact with citizens such as teachers, police, and social workers, actually shape policy through their daily decisions. These officials inevitably exercise discretion; therefore the real content of a policy is largely in the hands of the implementer in the field. Tummers and Bekkers (2014) note that discretion, when used correctly, raises implementation success and enables the employee to add meaning to the policy. The responsible use of discretion by empowered personnel closes the gap between implementation and design.

Empirical research supports this relationship. Andrews and Boyne (2010) establish a direct link between managerial capacity and organizational performance; as the quality of management rises, the output of the public institution improves. Andrews, Boyne, and Walker (2006), examining the relationship between strategy content and performance, reveal the effect of institutional capability on outcomes. Meier and O'Toole (2002) show that managerial quality significantly increases the performance of public organizations. Rainey and Bozeman (2000), analyzing the differences between public and private organizations, note that public institutions operate under distinctive constraints and that capacity assessment must therefore take these Constraints into account. Moore (1995) argues that the real task of the public manager is to produce public value, and that strategic capacity must be developed for this. Bryson (2018), in turn, shows that participation in strategic planning and management processes develops personnel's strategic thinking and analytical skills. Read together, these findings show that state capacity is as much a matter of quality as of structure. However favorable the budget and legislation may be, a policy cannot reach its goal if the implementing personnel are not empowered. Bureaucratic capacity is thus the transmission belt between empowerment and implementation success.

Reflections of State Capacity on Foreign Policy : Why should the empowerment of an official affect foreign policy? This question constitutes the most original link of the study, and its answer is hidden in the foreign policy analysis literature. Foreign policy is not the product of an abstract reason of state; it is a decision produced by institutions, processes, and people. Allison and Zelikow (1999) show that foreign policy decisions can be explained by three distinct models. The rational actor model regards the state as a single and coherent decision-maker. The organizational process model argues that decisions are shaped within institutional routines and standard operating patterns; this shows that the quality of institutions determines the quality of the decision. The bureaucratic politics model, in turn, treats the decision as the result of interaction and bargaining among institutions and officials. The second and third models are critical for the study's claim: the quality of foreign

Policy depends on the quality of the bureaucratic capacity that produces it. Krasner (1978) reinforces this view by revealing that decisions defending the national interest are largely shaped by the state's internal institutional structure. The foreign policy analysis literature foregrounds the importance of individual and institutional factors. Hudson (2005) notes that this approach must take into account, alongside structural factors, the role of decision-makers and institutions; Beach (2012) and Clarke and White (1995) show that foreign policy is produced within a system, through institutional inputs and processes. Although Waltz's (1979) structural theory draws the boundaries of the international system, what determines what the state can do within those boundaries is internal capacity. At the level of negotiation, Putnam's (1988) two-level game theory reveals that the diplomat conducts simultaneous bargaining both at the international table and in domestic politics; succeeding in this dual-front task is possible only with an empowered cadre of high autonomy and decision capacity. Moravcsik (1999) shows that international cooperation often advances through the initiative of supranational entrepreneurial officials; Barnett and Finnemore (2004), in turn, reveal that international organizations produce an independent power through their own bureaucratic capacities.

The institutional side of diplomacy also completes this framework. Hocking (1999) shows that the capacity of foreign ministries to adapt to changing conditions determines foreign policy success; Berridge (2015) shows that the theory and practice of diplomacy require a qualified cadre. In the dimension of power, Nye (2004; 2008; 2011) defines soft power as the ability to obtain what one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment; culture, values, and diplomacy are the carriers of this power. Melissen (2005) and Zaharna (2010) treat public diplomacy as a country's effort to explain its values and policies to other societies. Empowered public personnel both skillfully manage hard-power instruments and are the real producers of soft power. Slaughter (2004) shows that states increasingly operate through transgovernmental networks among officials, and that these networks among regulators, judges, and experts have become central to solving global problems. What makes a state effective in these networks is the quality and authority of the official it brings to the network. Thus state capacity is transformed into diplomatic capacity, and diplomatic capacity into international influence.

Legal Security, Acquired Rights, and Institutional Stability : There is one more condition for the empowerment chain to stand firm: the legal security of personnel. When a public official trusts that their status, duties, and rights cannot be changed arbitrarily, they take initiative, assume risk, and carry out their duties independently. Legal security requires that the person's legal situation be definite and predictable and that acquired rights be respected. This principle brings together five concepts: legal security, institutional stability, administrative continuity, bureaucratic independence, and the rule of law. The bureaucratic autonomy that Fukuyama (2013) proposes as the second dimension of state capacity flourishes precisely on this ground of legal security. March and Olsen's (1989) emphasis on institutional stability explains why continuity is a precondition of capacity: neither institutional memory nor long-term capacity can be expected from a cadre whose legal situation is constantly shaken. Rosenbloom (2010; 2014) shows that the legal dimension of public administration is as decisive as the managerial and political dimensions; Bovens (2007) and Behn (2001), in turn, show that accountability produces legitimacy when balanced with the guarantee of acquired rights. A recent example from Türkiye concretizes this theoretical link. In its decision dated 29 January 2026 with application number 2022/47812, the Constitutional Court deemed the closing to judicial review of a written warning sent to a public attorney to be a violation of the right of access to court under Article 36 of the Constitution (Anayasa Mahkemesi, 2026).

The Court stated that this document, apparently merely a reminder, was of a nature that could be taken into account in promotion, assignment, appointment, and rewarding processes, and that it therefore carried the capacity to affect the person's legal situation. In the decision, the three sub-elements of the principle of proportionality, suitability, necessity, and proportionality in the narrow sense, were discussed in detail; it was emphasized that one must look not at the formal name of the administrative act but at its real effect on the individual. This approach reveals that the protection of acquired rights is not absolute; that proportionate intervention is possible on legitimate grounds such as the public interest, public order, and the requirements of service, but that such intervention must be kept open to judicial review. Deliduman (2026), in evaluating the decision, emphasizes that the matter is not limited to access to court but also encompasses the freedom of work, professional reputation, and human dignity. He notes that a negative record kept in a personnel file and closed to judicial review can directly affect the person's professional future and their trust in the institution. This example shows that legal security is not an abstract principle but a practical guarantee that determines whether an official can decide with courage. Another aspect of the decision important for the capacity discussion is the duration itself. The application in question was concluded in roughly four years. Yet such a long duration for a dispute affecting a person's status, career, and reputation both victimizes the individual and confirms the principle that justice delayed is justice denied.

From the perspective of state capacity, the final resolution of such decisions affecting individual rights within a reasonable period, such as three to six months, without rendering institutions and the machinery of state cumbersome, strengthens both legal security and administrative dynamism. Rapid and predictable legal protection, by encouraging the official to take initiative, indirectly increases the state's capacity to get things done. Moreover, prolonged uncertainty pushes not only a single person but all personnel in similar situations toward caution and avoidance; this lowers the institution's collective capacity for initiative. For this reason the resolution of legal disputes within a reasonable period is, beyond being a matter of individual justice, a matter of institutional capacity. Thus legal security becomes both the guarantee and the accelerator of the link between empowerment and state capacity.

Digital State Capacity and Artificial-Intelligence-Assisted Public Administration : In the twenty-first century, a new layer has been added to state capacity: digital capacity. Digital governance, e-government, data-driven governance, and artificial-intelligence-assisted public administration are today inseparable parts of a state's ability to get things done. Dunleavy and colleagues (2006) show that digital technologies enlarge the public employee's access to information and decision capacity; Margetts and Dunleavy (2013), in turn, show that the second wave of this transformation radically reconstructs governance. Gil-Garcia, Dawes, and Pardo (2018) note that digital governance transforms public personnel's interaction with citizens and mode of service delivery. While West (2004) reveals that e-government changes service delivery and citizen attitudes, Wirtz and Langer (2018) analyze the design and experience of digital public services. Yıldız and Sayın (2020) survey the e-government literature and outline the theoretical framework of the field; Yıldız and Sayın (2020) likewise address Türkiye's e-government experience. The United Nations' periodic e-government surveys (United Nations, 2014; 2018; 2022) track the global course of this transformation.

The newest link of this layer is artificial intelligence. Wirtz, Weyerer, and Geyer (2019) reveal that artificial intelligence finds a wide field of application in the public sector, from decision support to service delivery, from oversight to resource allocation; however, this opportunity also brings with it serious problems such as transparency, accountability, and data security. Digital state capacity is not gained merely by purchasing technology; it requires qualified and empowered personnel to render the technology meaningful. Without a cadre that can read data, question algorithmic decisions, and steer digital tools in line with the public interest, even the most advanced systems remain idle; indeed, unsupervised algorithms can create new accountability gaps. Moreover, digital transformation can create a divide within the institution because of differences in digital competence; for this reason the transformation must be conducted with training and support mechanisms that encompass all personnel. Therefore digital capacity is a contemporary extension of the link between empowerment and state capacity: unless human resources are empowered, digitalization is not transformed into capacity.

A Comparative View: Examples of Strong State Capacity : The link between empowerment and state capacity becomes visible in the experiences of different countries. Singapore is the most striking example. Quah (2010) describes Singapore's public administration as a model built on merit, competing with the private sector for talent, low in corruption, and effective in policy implementation; the competence of the country's public officials has ranked at the top in international comparisons. Singapore's success shows the direct contribution of a qualified and empowered bureaucracy to state capacity. South Korea relied on a professional and relatively autonomous bureaucracy in its rapid development process. Amsden (1989), analyzing Korea's late-industrialization success, reveals the decisive role of professional management, investment in human resources, and the leap in education; Evans's (1995) analysis of embedded autonomy is also nourished by this experience. A similar pattern is observed in Western democracies. New Zealand has been regarded as a pioneer in public administration since the 1980s with reforms based on managerial autonomy and results orientation; the United Kingdom has reshaped its bureaucratic capacity through performance management and public service reforms (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2017). However, Schick (1998) reminds us that these models cannot be transferred directly to every context, and that the same reforms may result in failure in countries whose institutional infrastructure is not settled. Canada offers an example of stable managerial capacity with its tradition of professional public service and the high competence level of its officials. Comparative governance indicators (Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi, 2011) and the OECD's analyses of public service skills (OECD, 2017; 2021) confirm that the common denominator of these countries is qualified and empowered human resources. Although these examples rest on different contexts, they point to a common lesson: the power of the state lies less in structures on paper than in the capacity of the people who operate those structures. At the same time, these examples show that the model must be applied with sensitivity to context, and that empowerment yields results together with institutional ground and legal security.

The Empowerment-Based State Capacity Model : The links traced thus far can be gathered under a single theoretical roof. This study, by uniting separately developed literatures, proposes the *Empowerment-Based State Capacity Model*. The model establishes the causal flow from the empowerment of public personnel to international influence in the following order: the empowerment of public personnel nourishes organizational learning; organizational learning raises the quality of decision-making; high-quality decisions enlarge bureaucratic capacity and therefore state capacity; strong state capacity is transformed into diplomatic capacity; diplomatic capacity increases foreign policy performance; and high foreign policy performance reinforces the state's international influence. Each link of the chain is nourished by the theoretical accumulation discussed in previous sections: the empowerment dimension by psychological and structural empowerment theories; the organizational learning dimension by the analyses of Heller and Petzold (1996) and Grant (1996); the state capacity dimension by Fukuyama's (2013) capacity-autonomy framework, Evans's (1995) concept of embedded autonomy, and Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol's (1985) analysis of the state; and the foreign policy dimension by Allison and Zelikow's (1999) models, Hudson's (2005) foreign policy analysis, and Nye's (2004) soft power theory.

The originality of the model is that it brings together two separate disciplines, public administration and international relations, within a single logic of causality. The public administration literature tends to explain empowerment through institutional efficiency, while the international relations literature tends to explain state power largely through material resources; the proposed model, by uniting these two views, seeks the source of state power in the quality of human resources. The model foregrounds two intervening variables that carry the chain. The first is legal security: the protection of acquired rights and rapid, predictable legal protection are the guarantee of the transformation of empowerment into capacity; when this guarantee weakens, the chain breaks at the very first link. The second is digital state capacity: digital tools are added to capacity only in the hands of empowered personnel; otherwise technology turns into an idle investment. These two variables are the load-bearing pillars that prevent the chain from breaking. The model also produces testable propositions. According to the first proposition, in contexts where personnel empowerment is high, organizational learning and decision quality increase, which in turn raises the effectiveness of public administration. According to the second proposition, states with strong bureaucratic capacity produce more consistent and effective results in foreign policy and negotiation processes. According to the third proposition, in contexts where legal security is weak or where legal disputes are not resolved within a reasonable period, the contribution of empowerment to capacity decreases markedly. According to the fourth proposition, digital transformation makes a positive contribution to state capacity only when combined with empowered and qualified human resources. The model also has validity conditions: that the institutional infrastructure be settled at a minimum level, that the principle of merit operate, and that political stability be ensured are preconditions for the chain to work. In this respect, the study moves beyond an ordinary human resources inquiry and proposes an interdisciplinary and original answer to the question of why states succeed. In the twenty-first century, the success of states depends not only on economic or military capacity but also on the bureaucratic capacity created through the empowerment of public personnel.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a mixed approach that uses quantitative and qualitative methods together in order to examine the effects of public personnel empowerment, through state capacity, on public administration, foreign policy, and international relations. Beneath this choice lies a pragmatic conception of knowledge: the use of whatever method the research question requires, and the principle that different types of data complement one another, are taken as the basis (Morgan, 2007). The mixed method, by bringing together the generalizability provided by quantitative measurements and the depth offered by qualitative data, makes it possible to grasp both the prevalence and the lived form of a multilayered phenomenon such as empowerment (Creswell and Clark, 2017). The research follows a sequential explanatory design (Ivankova et al., 2006): quantitative data were first collected and analyzed, and then qualitative data were collected to deepen and explain these findings and to understand the reasons behind unexpected results. Thus the quantitative findings were supported by qualitative data, and the links of the proposed *Empowerment-Based State Capacity Model* were related to observable indicators.

The quantitative component of the research rests on survey studies spread over many years and repeated at different times, aiming to measure the different dimensions of empowerment and their relationship with organizational outcomes. The qualitative component, in turn, covers unstructured in-depth interviews, small-group conversations, and document review; it aims to deepen the insights obtained from the quantitative findings. The spreading of the data collection process over a long period and the researcher's personal involvement in this process contributed to a holistic understanding of both the measurable and the contextual aspects of the empowerment phenomenon.

Although the research findings were obtained from a particular country sample, the study aims to produce broader theoretical and managerial conclusions regarding the empowerment of public personnel. The design of the method was established precisely to render the links of the proposed model observable. Empowerment was measured in its structural and psychological dimensions; organizational learning and decision quality were tracked with qualitative data and performance indicators; and the managerial reflections of state capacity were addressed through assessments of service quality, institutional efficiency, and decision speed. Since the links of the model facing foreign policy could not be measured directly, this dimension was evaluated through qualitative interviews and document review, on the basis of perceptions and experiences concerning diplomatic capacity. Thus each link was matched with the type of data most suited to its own nature. In the quantitative data collection phase, standardized scales aimed at measuring the level of public personnel empowerment and the associated outcomes were used. Psychological empowerment was measured with Spreitzer's (1995) scale in the dimensions of meaning, competence, autonomy, and impact; structural empowerment was assessed with the Kim and Fernandez (2017) scale, which evaluates practices at the institutional level. For the motivation and performance variables, Perry's (1996) Public Service Motivation Scale and Williams and Anderson's (1991) job performance scale were taken as the basis. Widely accepted threshold values were observed for the internal consistency of the scales, and reliability coefficients were evaluated according to these criteria (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). The questionnaires were administered face to face; to test the validity and reliability of the scales, pilot studies were conducted at intervals throughout the process. These measurements constitute the observable counterparts of the first links of the model, extending from empowerment to decision quality and from there to state capacity.

In the qualitative data collection phase, the interviews were conducted in an unstructured manner. This choice is deliberate: on sensitive topics such as the rights, status, and intra-institutional experiences of public personnel, a predetermined and rigid set of questions may push participants toward reticence. Instead, interviews proceeding in a conversational atmosphere based on mutual trust were preferred, allowing participants to share their views without feeling pressure and without entering the atmosphere of a formal interrogation. The data were based on detailed notes kept during and immediately after these conversations; no audio recording was made, thereby observing both the comfort of participants and the confidentiality of institutions. Care was taken to keep the notes current and complete; most of the interviews were deepened by being repeated with the same people over many years. This long-term and repeated structure made visible changes and continuities that one-off interviews could not capture. In addition to individual interviews, small-group conversations of three to five people were organized. These settings provided a ground for the free expression of shared perceptions of empowerment and of institutional culture, and enabled the emergence of collective interpretations that did not become clear in individual interviews. Within the scope of document review, institutional policy documents, strategic plans, personnel management guides, relevant reports, and the legal texts regulating the legal status of public personnel, together with judicial decisions, were addressed. The documents were examined in accordance with the systematic principles of content analysis (Krippendorff, 2018); thus the declaration-based data found an opportunity for comparison with institutional and legal records.

In the quantitative phase, data were collected through stratified random sampling from personnel working in public institutions. In forming the sample, institutional diversity (central and local administrations, ministries, foreign affairs institutions, and the like), position level (manager and employee), and demographic characteristics (gender, age, seniority) were observed; thus the representation of personnel at different institutions and levels and the generalizability of the findings were strengthened (Onwuegbuzie and Collins, 2007). The minimum sample sizes determined as a result of power analysis were taken as the basis; considering the possibilities of missing data, change of opinion, and low response rate, a broader set of participants was reached. The collection of data spread over a long period and repeated at different times reduced the effect of fluctuations specific to a single period. In the qualitative phase, purposeful sampling was used; participants meeting the criteria determined in line with the quantitative findings were selected (Palinkas et al., 2015). Maximum variation sampling was adopted to include participants from different institutions, positions, and demographic characteristics; thus the aim was to capture both common patterns and context-specific differences (Patton, 2015). The sample size was determined according to the principle of theoretical saturation; data collection was terminated at the point where new participants added no new insight to the existing findings (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Guest et al., 2006). Participation rested entirely on a voluntary basis, and the interviews were conducted with the consent of the participants. In analyzing the quantitative data, descriptive statistics were first calculated, and the relationships among variables were examined through correlation analyses. Structural equation modeling was used to test the relationships between empowerment and organizational outcomes and the mechanisms underlying these relationships (Hair et al., 2010). The analysis was carried out in two steps;

The measurement model was tested first, and then the structural relationships among variables were evaluated. Because this technique makes it possible to assess the fit of the proposed model with the data and to distinguish direct from indirect effects, it was particularly suitable for tracing the indirect links extending from empowerment to state capacity. Multiple regression was applied to determine the effect of different dimensions of empowerment on outcomes; and mediation and moderation analyses were applied to understand the conditions playing a role in these relationships and, in particular, the mediating role of capacity (Hayes, 2013). In analyzing the qualitative data, thematic analysis was adopted (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The notes kept during the conversations were compiled in an orderly manner and analyzed through a six-stage process: familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and reporting. The analysis was conducted iteratively; by continuously moving back and forth between codes and data, the themes were matured (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Coding was done with the support of qualitative data analysis software; to increase reliability, part of the coding was cross-coded by two independent researchers, and inter-coder agreement was evaluated with an appropriate coefficient (Cohen, 1960). Document review was likewise carried out with a similar thematic approach; the policies, strategies, and practices concerning empowerment in the documents, as well as the provisions regulating acquired rights, were systematically addressed.

Various criteria were observed to increase validity and reliability. In the quantitative phase, the construct validity of the scales was tested with confirmatory factor analysis, and internal consistency was evaluated with Cronbach's alpha coefficients. For content validity, the scales were examined by field experts and revised according to the results of the pilot study. Common method bias that may arise in data collected from a single source and by self-report was controlled both through measures taken at the design level and through Harman's single-factor test (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Conway and Lance, 2010). The provision of demographic diversity and a large sample, in turn, supported external validity. In the qualitative phase, the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were taken as the basis. To increase credibility, triangulation of data, researcher, and method was used (Denzin, 2017). For transferability, detailed and context-rich descriptions were made; for dependability, the process was documented and audit trails were established. To strengthen confirmability, reflexive notes were kept and member checking was used in subsequent interviews. The integration validity arising from the joint interpretation of quantitative and qualitative findings, in turn, was ensured through the systematic comparison of the two types of data and the clear demonstration of the points that confirmed and diverged from one another (Fetters et al., 2013). The researcher's involvement in the process over many years is both an important source of depth and a position that must be managed with care. The proximity provided by this position facilitated building trust with participants and understanding institutional functioning from the inside; however, the same proximity also brought the risk of influencing interpretations.

To limit this risk, reflexive notes were kept, interpretations were compared with quantitative findings and documents, and care was taken to ensure that conclusions rested primarily on the data. Thus, while the comprehension provided by the insider's view was preserved, the distortion of findings by subjectivity was prevented as far as possible. Ethical sensitivity was observed throughout the research. Because the interviews were conducted in the form of unstructured conversations, the data rested only on notes kept during these conversations, and no specific institution was focused on but rather general opinions on the subject were obtained, participants' personal identifying information was not recorded. Participation is voluntary; details that could lead to the identification of individuals were left out of the reporting, and the data were evaluated anonymously. While sensitive topics were addressed, care was taken not to make participants uncomfortable; the conversations were conducted within the boundaries they set. By its nature, this study does not require ethics committee approval, and no ethical violation occurred during the research process. An original dimension of the research methodology is that it renders measurable the effect of the principles of the protection of acquired rights and legal security on empowerment. In the quantitative phase, scales developed on the basis of the literature and tested through a pilot study were used to measure public personnel's perception of legal security and the level of protection of their acquired rights; these scales made it possible to evaluate the relationship of the perception of legal security with motivation, performance, and organizational commitment. In the qualitative phase, the interviews and group conversations were directed, through indirect questions, at understanding the role of concepts such as legal security, the public interest, and the requirements of service in the empowerment process. In the document review, the texts regulating the legal status of personnel and judicial decisions were addressed, so that the link between the protection of acquired rights and empowerment was analyzed more comprehensively. This triple approach enabled the legal and managerial dimensions, often examined separately in the public administration literature, to be addressed within the same framework.

As in every research, this study too has certain limitations. Because a significant part of the quantitative measurements rests on particular time cross-sections, the precise determination of causality among variables is limited; although the design spread over many years and repeated partially mitigates this limitation, fully longitudinal analyses could establish the link more strongly. The use of self-report scales brings with it possible problems such as common method bias and social desirability; in future studies, multiple sources such as managerial assessments and objective performance indicators could reduce this limitation. Because the findings were obtained from a particular country sample, comparative studies to be conducted in different country and institutional contexts will better illuminate the universal and contextual aspects of the empowerment-capacity relationship. Although the unstructured interview technique provides data rich in depth and sincerity, it is a method that limits generalizations based on standard measurements and that reflects the researcher's interpretation into the process to some extent; moreover, voluntary participation may lead to the relative overrepresentation of individuals more willing to share their experiences. Finally, the fact that the links of the model facing foreign policy could not be measured directly and were largely evaluated through perception and documents requires that inferences concerning this dimension be interpreted with caution. These limitations were kept in mind in evaluating the findings.

As a whole, this method aims to grasp the phenomenon of empowerment in both its measurable and its lived aspects and to relate the links of the proposed model to observable data. While the quantitative methods measure the prevalence and effects of empowerment in a broad sample, the qualitative methods reveal in depth how this process is experienced and interpreted. The integration of the two approaches, by bringing together the legal and managerial dimensions often examined separately in the public administration literature, makes it possible to test the relationship between empowerment and state capacity in a multifaceted manner. Thus the method becomes the means not only of collecting data but also of testing the theoretical model on an empirical basis.

V. FINDINGS

The data obtained from the field study reveal that the empowerment of public personnel is not merely a human resources topic but a factor that directly determines the state's power to get things done, that is, state capacity. In a study based on unstructured interviews spread over a long period, on notes kept in a conversational setting during these interviews, and on the examination of institutional documents, the observations compiled from personnel in central and local institutions, in various ministry units, and in posts connected to external relations draw a consistent picture that mutually reinforces itself. As personnel become empowered, institutions learn better, decide more accurately, and the work carried out by the state proceeds more quickly and at a higher quality. This makes a tangible difference not only in internal administration but also in foreign policy. The findings gather from beginning to end around a single claim: the empowerment of public personnel is one of the fundamental determinants of state capacity, and this increase in capacity directly shapes the effectiveness of public administration, foreign policy performance, and influence in international relations. The field data confirm this claim within a causal chain as follows: empowerment nourishes organizational learning, organizational learning raises the quality of decision-making, high-quality decisions enlarge state capacity, strong capacity is transformed into diplomatic capacity, and ultimately it determines foreign policy performance and the country's international influence. Below, the links of this chain are addressed in turn, together with the field findings and the relevant literature. Seeing within which understanding of governance these findings fit makes it easier to read them correctly. The classical bureaucracy model is an understanding that prioritizes rules and hierarchy and sees personnel as passive implementers. The New Public Management current carried market criteria and performance management into the public sector (Hood, 1991; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2017). By contrast, the New Public Service and New Public Governance approaches that have come to the fore recently see the citizen and personnel not as the passive object of the process but as its active subject (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2015; Osborne, 2010). The findings of this study are in the same direction as the latter approach: the empowerment of personnel transforms public administration from a rule-centered structure into a structure that learns and adapts. This transformation is a process that directly enlarges the state's capacity.

Empowerment, Bureaucratic Capacity, and the Effectiveness of Public Administration : The findings show that in institutions where structural empowerment practices (delegation of authority, participation in decision-making processes, information sharing, and access to resources) have taken root, service is produced more quickly and at a higher quality. In units where delegation of authority is widespread, it was observed that transactions are completed in a shorter time, that citizen-facing service is delivered with less delay, and that problems are solved at lower levels, lightening the agenda of senior management. The main finding that stands out is that empowerment does not consist of a single efficiency gain. Institutions that spread authority and information to the base are transformed over time into institutions that learn better and adapt more quickly to the new situations they encounter.

The approach that, as one of the pioneers of empowerment theory, treats the sharing of power, resources, and information as an organizational condition (Kanter, 1977; Conger and Kanungo, 1988) conceptually grounds this observation. The meaning of these findings for state theory connects directly to the state capacity discussion. The concept of infrastructural power, which measures the power of the state not by its ability to make decisions on paper but by its ability to implement these decisions in every corner of the country (Mann, 1984), is extremely suitable for explaining the field findings. The real power of a state becomes visible not in the subtlety of its legislation but in the quality and capacity of the personnel who implement that legislation in the field. Empowered personnel increase infrastructural power by strengthening the state's arms reaching into the field. Similarly, studies that establish a strong link between the quality of the bureaucracy and the success of governance and development (Evans and Rauch, 1999; Fukuyama, 2013), together with the approach that argues the state must be treated as an actor in its own right (Skocpol, 1985), point to the same conclusion: an institution whose personnel are strong increases the state's power in the field. At this point an important distinction emerges. State capacity rises not merely by granting authority to personnel but by the use of this authority in adherence to the needs of society. The framework showing that bureaucratic autonomy nourishes development when it is autonomy embedded in society rather than detached from it (Evans, 1995) is consistent with the field data. In the interviews, it was seen that institutions in which personnel whose discretionary scope had been expanded used this scope not arbitrarily but according to the requirements of service stood out. The difference between an authorized but society-alienated bureaucracy and an authorized and society-oriented bureaucracy is the main factor determining whether empowerment is transformed into capacity.

Participation in Decision-Making Processes and Organizational Learning : It was determined that participation in decision-making processes raises both the quality and the implementability of the decisions taken. It was seen that personnel included in the process take ownership of the decision, that resistance at the implementation stage decreases, and that decisions cease to remain on paper and are actually brought to life. This pattern is in line with findings showing that employee participation in decisions increases the acceptance and legitimacy of decisions (Kim and Fernandez, 2017; Tummers and Bekkers, 2014). At the same time, it was found that participation varies greatly from institution to institution. While in some institutions participation remains only at the level of informing, in others it turns into genuine joint decision-making. A mid-level manager had reported that in their institution participative decision-making operates mostly in daily affairs, while the truly determinative decisions are still made at the top. That traditional, rigid hierarchical structures and an overly centralist understanding are the most visible obstacle to participation was repeated in many interviews. The real value of participation in decisions is that it nourishes organizational learning. When the institutionalist approach, which holds that institutions accumulate and transfer knowledge through rules and routines (March and Olsen, 1989), is combined with field observation, a clear mechanism emerges. Empowered personnel, as the people who produce the service, are the party that sees problems first and most closely; when initiative is granted to them, this knowledge is transformed into institutional memory, recurring mistakes decrease, and the institution produces sounder decisions. The street-level bureaucracy approach, which holds that the daily discretionary scope of officials deciding at the point closest to the citizen determines the face of the state in contact with the public (Lipsky, 2010), complements this finding. Indeed, it was determined that empowered personnel bring more practical solutions to problems, produce suggestions that improve processes, and that these suggestions visibly increase institutional efficiency. These results are consistent with studies revealing that empowerment nourishes innovation and performance in the public sector (Fernandez and Moldogaziev, 2011, 2013). Participation in decisions, delegation of authority, and information sharing build, beyond individual efficiency gains, the state's capacity to learn and renew itself, that is, its long-term capacity.

The Quality of Human Resources: Motivation, Public Service Motive, and Psychological Empowerment

That state capacity rests at its most fundamental on people is a fact the findings clearly show. The effect of empowerment on motivation and job satisfaction was tracked through the four dimensions of psychological empowerment: meaning, competence, autonomy, and impact. The dimension of meaning expresses personnel's seeing their work as valuable and purposeful. A member of personnel interviewed had said that feeling their work touches society and serves a purpose was the strongest motive for them. The dimension of competence concerns personnel's confidence that they can accomplish their work; a mid-level manager had noted that personnel who believe they can do their job are more willing to take on responsibility. The dimension of autonomy covers the perception of being able to make work-related decisions and exercise initiative; the dimension of impact covers feeling that one can affect institutional outcomes. In the interviews, it was observed that these four dimensions operate not independently of one another but as a mutually nourishing whole. These findings overlap with studies revealing that psychological empowerment raises intrinsic motivation, job satisfaction, and performance (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990; Spreitzer, 1995).

That the dimension of meaning emerged as particularly strong is connected to a factor specific to the public sector. The public service motivation approach, which reveals that one of the fundamental motives driving public employees is the desire to benefit society (Perry and Wise, 1990; Perry, 1996; Vandenabeele, 2007), meets directly with the field findings. Empowerment releases this intrinsic motive of personnel; personnel who find their work meaningful and believe they can turn this meaning into a concrete contribution exert more effort for the public interest. In this respect, empowerment is not an externally imposed instrument of motivation but a mechanism that frees the service motive the public employee already carries from the obstacles before it. It was also determined that the effect of empowerment on motivation is not the same for everyone. The effect varies according to personnel's personal characteristics, career stage, and the institution's culture. In the interviews, it was frequently expressed that empowerment finds a particularly strong response in young personnel with a clear career goal. In the same interviews, it was also emphasized that empowerment is not sufficient on its own and must proceed together with performance evaluation and rewarding. The approach that human resources practices must be addressed not separately but as an integrated system (Huselid, 1995) is confirmed by these findings. The sustainability of state capacity depends not on individual practices but on their being established as a mutually supporting whole.

Training, Development, and Capacity Building : Training and development programs stood out as one of the most concrete tools that raise personnel's perception of competence and their performance. It was seen that personnel who received professional development and leadership training felt more competent and were more willing to take on responsibility. Self-efficacy theory, which holds that competence is closely connected to a person's belief that they can accomplish their work (Bandura, 1997), shows consistency with field observations. However, the content and quality of training differ seriously among institutions. While in some institutions training is designed in a planned and strategic manner, in others it is glossed over with mandatory and uniform content. A member of personnel interviewed had noted that the training in their institution mostly consists of standard content, whereas they need programs personalized according to real needs and career goals. The approach that not only the provision of training but also the measurement of its results matters (Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick, 2006) is in the same direction as participants' demands that the impact of training be evaluated regularly. The meaning of training for state capacity is that capacity is not a quality acquired once but one continuously renewed. When personnel's knowledge and skills are not renewed, the institution's capacity in the face of new problems it encounters erodes over time. For this reason training, as an investment the state makes in its human resources, is the guarantee of the sustainability of capacity. Field observation shows that institutions that have tied training to a strategic plan and that track its results stand out in terms of both personnel quality and service quality.

Rewarding, Performance, Leadership, and Trust : It was determined that a fair and transparent performance evaluation is an important factor that empowers personnel, but that establishing these systems in the public sector carries distinctive difficulties. In the interviews, it was expressed that, by the nature of public service, its output is often difficult to measure, and that evaluation therefore frequently slides toward subjective criteria. It was also emphasized that rigid pay structures and budget limits weaken performance-based rewarding. These difficulties parallel the known problems in the design of performance and reward systems in the public sector (Perry et al., 2009). By contrast, it was observed that non-material rewards, that is, recognition, appreciation, and career opportunities, often find a stronger response than material rewards. The recognition of personnel's success and making them feel valued directly nourish motivation; this is consistent with Herzberg's (1966) counting recognition among the intrinsic motivators.

It was clearly seen that leadership is one of the most important factors determining the success of empowerment. It was determined that transformational, participative, and servant leadership styles proceed together with empowerment, while an authoritarian management understanding fixated on control suffocates empowerment. What is decisive here is not the manager's discourse but their behavior. A mid-level manager had recounted that when senior management nominally supports empowerment but does not demonstrate it through behavior, the same attitude spreads to lower levels as well. It was frequently expressed that the leader's not merely granting authority but also coaching and guiding increases personnel's self-confidence. These findings are consistent with studies revealing the decisive effect of leadership style on empowerment (Bass and Riggio, 2006; Pearce and Sims, 2002). It was determined that the main element establishing the link between leadership and empowerment is trust. The field data meet with the approach that trust is one party's willingness to make itself vulnerable on the basis of a positive expectation about the other's behavior (Mayer et al., 1995). Personnel take initiative when they trust that their manager will not withdraw the authority granted and will not leave them alone when they make a mistake. When trust is damaged, authority remains on paper and personnel avoid responsibility. In this

respect, leadership is the link that establishes the culture of empowerment and embeds it in the institution's routine; it is among the foremost factors determining how state capacity is produced within the institution.

The Balance between Empowerment and Accountability : The findings also show that empowerment is not sufficient on its own; when not balanced by accountability, it can harm its own purpose. As the discretionary scope granted to personnel widens, it becomes important that how this scope is used be traceable. In the interviews, it was observed that the institutions that succeed are not those in which oversight is entirely loosened but those in which it is properly designed. The approach that accountability is not merely auditing rule compliance but questioning outcomes and public value (Behn, 2003; Bovens et al., 2014) is consistent with the field findings. Excessive and formalistic oversight suffocates initiative; the complete disappearance of oversight, in turn, leads to arbitrariness and distrust. This balance is directly a dimension of state capacity. Studies emphasizing that the concept of accountability consists of multilayered and at times contradictory demands (Dubnick and Frederickson, 2011) explain why empowerment in the public sector requires a delicate design. An accountability without capacity paralyzes the institution by burying it in paperwork; a capacity without accountability, in turn, turns power into arbitrariness. The field data show that successful institutions treat these two ends not as opposites but as complementary principles. An empowered but accountable personnel structure is the foundation of a state that is both effective and trustworthy.

Acquired Rights, Legal Security, and the Institutional Stability of State Capacity : One of the most striking findings of the study is the reciprocal relationship between the protection of acquired rights and empowerment. It was seen that personnel who know their rights are under legal guarantee take initiative more readily, do not refrain from assuming risk, and are more open to developing innovative ideas. A senior manager interviewed had said that personnel who know their status and rights are protected contribute more to the institution and do not shirk responsibility. Another member of personnel had noted that knowing their institution protects their rights binds them more closely to the institution. This pattern, in which legal security empowers personnel, is also consistent with the fundamental sources in the field of public personnel law (Gözler and Kaplan, 2019; Zabunoğlu, 2012). The picture that emerges when the guarantee disappears is exactly the opposite: personnel who think their rights may be opened to dispute at any moment withdraw into defense, take refuge only in the letter of the rule, and are driven into a timidity that reduces the state's effectiveness in the field. At this point it becomes clear that legal security is not only about the protection of the individual but directly concerns state capacity. The protection of acquired rights constitutes the foundation of institutional stability, administrative continuity, and bureaucratic independence. Personnel who trust that they will not encounter an arbitrary act while carrying out their duties can decide more independently and impartially. Fukuyama's (2013) placing bureaucratic autonomy alongside capacity when measuring a high-quality state corresponds exactly to this observation in the field: as personnel's security increases, so does their autonomy, and as autonomy increases, so does the state's decision quality. The rule of law is the invisible but load-bearing link of this chain, because for personnel to be empowered, there must first be a legal order in which their acts are reviewable and predictable. A recent decision of the Constitutional Court of Türkiye concretely reveals this relationship. In the Court's decision dated 29 January 2026 with application number 2022/47812, the closing to judicial review of a written warning sent to a public attorney and kept in their personnel file was deemed a violation of the right of access to court guaranteed under Article 36 of the Constitution (Anayasa Mahkemesi, 2026). In the case at issue, the administrative court had rejected the case without examining it on the merits, on the ground that the warning letter was not a disciplinary penalty and did not bear an enforceable quality; the Court, however, accepting that this document was an act that could be taken into account in future promotion, assignment, appointment, and rewarding processes and could therefore affect the person's legal situation and professional future, deemed the closing of the path to judicial review a violation.

This decision is important for the study's claim in three respects. First, it shows that even an administrative act regarded as apparently insignificant can affect personnel's career, professional reputation, and indirectly human dignity (Deliduman, 2026). Leaving a negative record kept in a personnel file unreviewed prevents personnel from feeling secure and blocks the way to empowerment. Second, it reminds us that the freedom of work covers not only being able to enter a profession but also being able to pursue that profession free from unjust and unreviewed interventions; this is the legal precondition for the empowerment of personnel. Third, the decision, by emphasizing that law must proceed from results rather than from form, establishes a direct link between legal security and managerial effectiveness. A state that protects its personnel against arbitrary acts and renders their rights reviewable is at the same time a more trustworthy, more predictable, and stronger state. At the same time, the protection provided by such decisions being genuinely useful depends on one condition: that justice be delivered in a timely manner. The dispute in question took roughly four years to reach the individual application stage. Yet the prolonged limbo, over years, of such disputes that directly affect a person's professional future,

Status, and rights means that the right is recognized on paper but damaged in practice. Justice delayed is not justice. The conclusion reached by this study is that disputes concerning such acts that affect a person's rights and are reflected in the personnel file must be finally resolved within a reasonable period, preferably within three to six months. Such speed, on the one hand, avoids leaving the person in uncertainty and victimizing them, and on the other hand enables institutions and the machinery of state to operate without being rendered cumbersome by unnecessary litigation. The principles of procedural economy and of good justice and good public administration also emphasized in the Constitutional Court's decision (Anayasa Mahkemesi, 2026) require precisely this practical and dynamic approach. Rapid and predictable judicial review, by increasing personnel's trust, nourishes empowerment; and this is directly reflected in state capacity.

The Public Interest, the Requirements of Service, and the Direction of Empowerment : The findings show that empowerment is not an end in itself and gains its real value to the extent that it serves the public interest. It was observed that empowered personnel adopt a citizen-oriented understanding of service and take decisions that consider the public interest. A member of personnel interviewed had said that when they take on more authority and responsibility, they use it for the benefit of citizens and to increase service quality. The public value approach, which holds that the aim of empowerment is to produce public value (Moore, 1995), frames this finding. When personnel direct their discretionary scope toward the public interest, empowerment is transformed into a capacity gain; when this orientation cannot be ensured, authority carries the risk of sliding into a license that contributes nothing to the institution and society. A point frequently emphasized in the interviews is that empowerment must be designed so as to support fundamental public-interest elements such as public order, public safety, and public health. It was noted that each institution must develop an empowerment approach specific to the requirements of its own service domain, because the discretion to be granted in a domain requiring security cannot be the same as the discretion to be granted in a routine service domain. This finding shows that empowerment is not a uniform prescription but a balance adjusted according to the requirements of service. An empowerment that is tied to the public interest, in accordance with the requirements of service, and accountable raises both the effectiveness and the legitimacy of the state together.

Digital State Capacity : It was determined that digital transformation has become a new and increasingly growing dimension of empowerment. It was seen that personnel with high digital competence access information more quickly, decide on the basis of more data, and feel more effective. A senior manager interviewed had said that data analysis tools enable personnel to make more informed decisions and that this increases self-confidence. It was also determined that digital platforms, by facilitating cooperation and information sharing among different units, contribute to the joint empowerment of personnel. These findings are consistent with studies revealing the role of digital technologies in empowering public administration and personnel (Dunleavy et al., 2006; Gil-Garcia et al., 2018). The real importance of these findings is that digital tools are transformed into a lever that enlarges state capacity. In an order where data guides governance (data-driven governance), well-designed electronic government (e-government) services and the increasingly widespread applications of artificial-intelligence-assisted public administration (AI-assisted public administration) visibly raise personnel's analysis and decision capacity. Digital infrastructure directly increases the state's power to reach into the field and implement its decisions, that is, its infrastructural power; in this respect digital governance is transformed into a contemporary digital state capacity. A state that can benefit from these possibilities increases both its internal service and its analytical power in external relations. However, the field data also contain a warning. Differences in digital competence can lead to a digital divide within the institution and create new inequalities in the empowerment process. The gap between personnel who reach information and tools more easily and personnel deprived of them leads to divisions within the institution. For this reason digital transformation must be conducted in a way that encompasses all personnel, together with training and support; otherwise it was seen that the tool expected to increase capacity can turn into a source of division within the institution. It was also determined that observing acquired rights and data security in the design of digital systems is decisive for personnel's participation in this process with confidence.

From Empowerment to Foreign Policy Performance: Diplomatic Capacity and International Influence

The most original contribution of this study is that it shows how the empowerment-capacity link established in internal administration is carried into foreign policy. The question the reader may justifiably ask is this: why should the empowerment of an official affect foreign policy? The findings give a clear answer to this question. A distinct link was found between the level of empowerment of diplomatic personnel and of public officials working in units connected to external relations and success in foreign policy. It was determined that diplomats with high authority and autonomy have a wider room for maneuver at the negotiating table and decide more quickly and accurately in moments of crisis. A senior diplomat interviewed had recounted that when they have sufficient authority and autonomy, they can act more flexibly in negotiation and agreements conclude more in

line with the country's interest. In another interview, it was emphasized that being able to exercise initiative in the field is decisive in crisis situations. These findings are in the same direction as studies revealing that the quality of diplomatic personnel is decisive in reaching foreign policy goals (Berridge, 2015; Hocking, 1999).

The mechanism establishing this link is already grounded in the foreign policy analysis literature. The bureaucratic politics model, which reveals that the state decides not as a single, flawless reason but through the interaction of the institutions within it and the people working in those institutions (Allison and Zelikow, 1999), is directly connected to the field findings. This approach shows that foreign policy decisions are not merely a rational calculation but also the product of organizational routines and intra-institutional politics. The conclusion that emerges is clear: as the organizational routines and personnel of the institutions producing foreign policy become empowered, the quality of the policy produced also rises. The foreign policy analysis approach, which emphasizes that the state's external behavior must be explained by internal processes and the qualities of decision-makers (Hudson, 2005), supports the same conclusion. Empowered personnel raise the decision quality the state projects outward; and this quality is transformed into diplomatic capacity.

One of the frameworks that most clearly establishes the link between internal capacity and external success is the approach showing that international negotiations are a two-level game conducted simultaneously both at the table and within the country (Putnam, 1988). According to this approach, the result a state can obtain abroad is limited by the cohesion and capacity it can ensure at home. A diplomat backed by strong bureaucratic capacity can be more credible and more flexible at the table. Similarly, the approach revealing that contemporary diplomacy increasingly proceeds through networks formed by the public officials of different countries (Slaughter, 2004), and the study showing that bureaucratic expertise in international institutions is a source of influence in its own right (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004), explain how empowered personnel are transformed into a concrete influence in the international arena. Qualified and authorized public officials represent their countries more strongly in these networks.

Another concrete output of diplomatic capacity is the country's soft power. In the interviews, it was noted that strengthening the intercultural competencies and communication skills of diplomatic personnel increases the capacity to build international partnerships and trust. A member of personnel had said that being able to communicate effectively with different cultures directly nourishes the country's soft power. The concept of soft power, which reveals that a state's international influence stems not only from military or economic power but also from the power of persuasion and attraction (Nye, 2004, 2011), frames these findings. The chain here is clear: empowered and qualified personnel enlarge the state's diplomatic capacity; this capacity is transformed into success in negotiation and crisis management, success into the country's soft power and international prestige, and this ultimately into international influence. It was observed that personnel whose acquired rights are protected can, especially in external assignments, act independently and impartially without being under pressure, and that this independence strengthens the country's hand.

Comparative International Examples : Although the field data of this study were obtained from a particular country context, the conclusions reached also show consistency with a broader picture. The experience of countries known for high state capacity suggests that the link between personnel empowerment and governance success carries a universal aspect. The assessments in this part rest not on field data but on the literature concerning the relevant countries. Singapore, with its merit-based bureaucracy and an understanding of public administration that invests in its personnel, is a distinct example of how strong personnel quality is transformed into high governance success; its systematic approach to attracting, training, and retaining qualified public officials has transformed a small country into a high-capacity state (Quah, 2010). South Korea, with the investment it has made in the continuous training of public personnel and in digital state infrastructure, is another example in which qualified human resources enlarge state capacity (OECD, 2017). Canada and New Zealand, with their results-oriented and participative management understandings that expand the discretionary scope in public service, have foregrounded personnel initiative. The United Kingdom, in turn, completes this picture with its approach that places personnel competence and leadership at the center of public administration reforms (OECD, 2021). The common point of these countries is that they do not leave bureaucratic capacity to chance and that they develop personnel quality systematically. The understanding of infrastructural power, which measures the power of the state by its ability to implement its decisions in the field (Mann, 1984), and studies that regard the quality of the bureaucracy as the driving force of development (Evans and Rauch, 1999; Fukuyama, 2013), are concretized in these examples. The comparative picture supports the study's claim: states that empower their personnel are more effective both in internal administration and in the international arena. This result shows that the link between empowerment and state capacity is not specific to a single country but is valid across different administrative traditions.

Obstacles to Empowerment and the Common Features of Successful Practices : The findings also show that there are serious obstacles before empowerment. The most frequently expressed obstacle is the traditional hierarchical structure together with an organizational culture that avoids taking risks. The approach that organizational culture determines the success of empowerment (Schein, 2010) is confirmed by the field data. A significant portion of mid-level managers resist empowerment out of concern that delegation of authority will weaken their own authority. The excessive rigidity and detail of legislation also makes it difficult for personnel to produce flexible and practical solutions; excessive oversight mechanisms deter the taking of initiative. A member of personnel interviewed had said that the excessive rigidity of legislation prevents the development of productive solutions. It was also determined that managers' concern that, if personnel are empowered, the scope of their rights will expand and this will reduce managerial flexibility, can constitute an obstacle.

By contrast, the common features of institutions that successfully conduct empowerment were also determined. In these institutions, strong and visible support from senior management, open communication, planned training, and effective rewarding are present together. In institutions that place empowerment within the strategic plan and that operate practices such as mentoring and peer learning, it was observed that both knowledge transfer and personnel quality rise. A manager had recounted that empowerment had become one of the institution's strategic goals, and that this goal was tied to responsibilities at all levels of management. Another notable point in successful institutions is the adoption of a balanced approach between the protection of acquired rights and empowerment. This pattern is consistent with studies revealing that the success of empowerment depends on the harmonious treatment of institutional, managerial, and legal factors (Fernandez and Moldogaziev, 2013). Overcoming the obstacles requires that state capacity be built consciously rather than left to chance.

The Empowerment-Based State Capacity Model : When the field findings and the literature are brought together, an original model emerges that gathers scattered observations within a single framework. This study names this framework, which explains the relationship between public personnel empowerment and international influence, the *Empowerment-Based State Capacity Model*. The model consists of successive links, each nourishing the previous one:

Public Personnel Empowerment → Organizational Learning → Decision-Making Quality → State Capacity → Diplomatic Capacity → Foreign Policy Performance → International Influence

The first link of the model is the granting to personnel of authority, information, resources, and discretionary scope. In the second link, this empowerment is transformed into organizational learning by enabling field knowledge to be transferred to the institution. In the third link, the learning institution produces more accurate Decisions. In the fourth link, the accumulation of high-quality decisions enlarges the state's power to get things done, that is, state capacity. In the fifth link, this capacity is transformed into diplomatic capacity in the institutions conducting external relations. In the sixth link, strong diplomatic capacity is reflected in success in negotiation and crisis management, that is, in foreign policy performance. In the final link, this performance, combining with the country's soft power and prestige, reaches international influence.

The model has two further complementary dimensions. Beneath the chain lies a ground that carries it: legal security, institutional stability, administrative continuity, bureaucratic independence, and the rule of law. Without this ground, none of the links of the chain operate permanently, because insecure personnel do not take initiative and an unstable institution cannot learn. Alongside the chain, in turn, lies a lever that accelerates it at every stage: digital state capacity. Moreover, the model is not unidirectional; the success and prestige gained in the international arena, by increasing trust in the institution and personnel motivation, again nourish the empowerment link at the very beginning. Thus capacity is transformed into a self-reinforcing cycle. This model moves the study beyond an ordinary personnel empowerment inquiry and carries it into an interdisciplinary framework that connects public administration and international relations. The fundamental proposition the model offers is this: the state's power in the international arena is the result of a capacity that begins with the empowerment of the lowest-level official and accumulates upward. The process that begins with empowerment, when supported on the ground of legal security and with the digital lever, makes the state stronger both at home and abroad.

General Evaluation of the Findings : When all the findings are brought together, the picture that emerges confirms the study's fundamental claim. The empowerment of public personnel is, far beyond being a practice that raises motivation and performance, one of the fundamental determinants of state capacity. Structural and psychological empowerment increase the state's power to get things done through organizational learning,

decision quality, and infrastructural power; this power is transformed into the effectiveness of public administration, foreign policy performance, and international influence. Participation in decisions, delegation of authority, training, rewarding, and leadership are the principal tools of this process; the public service motive, in turn, adds a distinctive energy to the process. The empowerment of diplomatic personnel, meanwhile, constitutes the outward-facing end of the chain. The success of empowerment depends on several conditions. The first is that it be balanced by accountability, because accountability without capacity paralyzes, while capacity without accountability opens onto arbitrariness. The second is that it adhere to the public interest and the requirements of service; otherwise authority turns into a license that contributes nothing to society. The third is the protection of acquired rights; without legal security, institutional stability, and bureaucratic independence, empowerment cannot be permanent. For this reason a legal order that protects personnel's rights, renders their acts reviewable, and delivers justice in a timely manner is directly part of state capacity. Digital transformation is a lever that enlarges this capacity but, when unmanaged, can create new inequalities. Obstacles, in turn, mostly stem from rigid culture, the fear of losing authority, and overly rigid legislation. In sum, empowerment is a multilayered process that requires the harmonious treatment of institutional, legal, cultural, and technological factors. When this process is conducted successfully, it makes the state stronger both at home and abroad. The findings clearly show that in the twenty-first century the success of states depends not only on economic or military power but also on the bureaucratic capacity created through the empowerment of public personnel.

VI. DISCUSSION

The most fundamental conclusion this study puts forward is that the empowerment of public personnel is not merely a human resources matter but a factor that directly determines the state's power to get things done, that is, state capacity. In the public administration literature, empowerment is often addressed within the framework of motivation, job satisfaction, and individual performance. Yet the findings point to a broader picture. The main thesis defended here is this: the empowerment of public personnel is one of the fundamental determinants of state capacity, and this increase in capacity simultaneously shapes the effectiveness of public administration, foreign policy performance, and the country's influence in international relations. In the international literature, most of the answers given to the question "why do states succeed?" rest, in the final analysis, on the quality of the human resources at the state's disposal and on the extent to which this resource can exercise initiative. Fukuyama (2013), in measuring the quality of the state, treats capacity and autonomy as two fundamental dimensions and regards the level of professionalization of the bureaucracy as one of the strongest indicators of capacity; the same author (2004) emphasizes that the real problem of weak states is the lack of institutional capacity. Evans and Rauch (1999), in their research covering thirty-five countries, showed that Weberian bureaucracies with merit-based recruitment and predictable, rewarding career paths significantly support economic growth. Mann (1984), who defines state capacity as the power to implement organized decisions within society, and Skocpol (1985), who brought the state back onto the agenda as an autonomous actor, likewise emphasize, along the same line, that at the center of this capacity stands a cadre of officials who are trained and able to act with relative independence. The findings of this study reveal that empowerment is one of the primary mechanisms nourishing precisely this capacity. Starting from the totality of the findings, the study takes a further step and proposes an original theoretical framework that connects public administration and international relations. This framework, which we call the *Empowerment-Based State Capacity Model*, establishes a causal chain extending from empowerment to international influence. The links of the chain follow this order:

**Public Personnel Empowerment → Organizational Learning → Decision-Making Quality →
Bureaucratic (State) Capacity → Diplomatic Capacity → Foreign Policy Performance → International
Influence**

The operation of the model can be explained as follows. The empowerment of personnel, that is, equipping them with authority, including them in decision processes, and increasing their access to information, accelerates organizational learning in the first link. When personnel who exercise initiative see the problems and inefficiencies that arise from within the work and carry them back to the institution, the institution turns individual experiences into common knowledge. March and Olsen (1989) showed that institutions are not merely instruments that aggregate individuals' preferences but structures that produce their own memory, rules, and "logic of appropriateness"; empowerment keeps this memory alive. In the second link, this learning is transformed into decision-making quality: decisions are made that rest on more information, are nourished from the field, and incorporate different viewpoints. In the third link, a bureaucracy that can regularly produce and implement high-quality decisions constitutes the concrete form of state capacity. In the fourth link, this general capacity is reflected as diplomatic capacity in the field of foreign affairs and diplomacy, because the same bureaucratic cadre is the one that conducts international negotiations, decides in moments of crisis, and

Represents the country. In the fifth and sixth links, diplomatic capacity is transformed first into foreign policy performance and then into the country's international influence. It must be added that the chain does not operate unidirectionally: international influence and foreign policy success, by bringing the country resources, prestige, and learning opportunities, again nourish bureaucratic capacity; thus a feedback cycle forms among the links. The main contribution the model offers is that it brings together the concept of "empowerment" from the public administration literature with the concepts of "state capacity" and "influence" from the international relations literature within a single causal framework, and renders traceable the link between the empowerment of an official and the international weight of a country.

The findings concerning the first links of the chain reveal that delegation of authority and participation in decision-making processes are the most decisive dimensions of empowerment. In institutions where delegation of authority is applied and personnel participate effectively in decisions, institutional performance and employee satisfaction are higher. This result overlaps with Kanter (1993) and Fernandez and Moldogaziev (2013), who regard authority and participation as the cornerstones of structural empowerment. However, the findings also show that participation occurs at different levels: while in some institutions participation remains only at the level of consultation, in others it reaches the level of joint decision-making. Keeping participation limited in strategic decisions carries the risk of turning empowerment into a hollow, symbolic practice. The important point here is that empowerment contributes to state capacity only to the extent that it gives an opportunity for organizational learning. A model that grants a say only in operational details while leaving the strategic mind outside interrupts the learning cycle and creates a blockage at the second link of the chain. The organizational learning link is the often-overlooked but decisive intermediary mechanism of the model. Empowerment is transformed into capacity to the extent that it can turn individual knowledge into institutional knowledge; otherwise valuable insights remain in the minds of individual employees and leave the institution with them. Heller and Petzold (1996) reveal that participative structures nourish organizational learning; Grant (1996), in turn, reveals that the integration of scattered knowledge lies at the basis of organizational efficiency. When empowered personnel share their observation in the field and this sharing is incorporated into institutional processes, the state turns individual experiences into institutional competence. Moynihan and Pandey (2007) also showed that empowered personnel use performance information more effectively and that this supports organizational learning. In this respect, organizational learning is the bridge between empowerment and decision quality, and the main dynamic that enables state capacity to accumulate and increase over time.

That the empowerment-focused transformation does not occur equally across institutions is largely related to the vision and leadership approach of senior management. In institutions with managers who adopt transformational leadership, empowerment is more widespread and effective; these managers attach importance to revealing the employee's potential and intellectually stimulating them. Bass and Riggio (2006) note that transformational leadership offers a favorable ground for the empowerment of employees. By contrast, in institutions where traditional bureaucratic leadership persists, resistance to delegation of authority is observed. Mid-level managers' avoidance of sharing authority out of fear of losing control is closely connected to organizational power relations. Pfeffer (1981) reminds us at this point that intra-organizational power dynamics shape or limit empowerment practices. Andrews and Boyne (2010), by establishing a direct link between institutional capacity and leadership and organizational performance, show that managerial quality is the spark that activates capacity. For state capacity, therefore, managerial resistance is not insignificant, because by closing the channels that would nourish organizational learning, it weakens the entire chain.

The effect of empowerment on motivation is another finding that supports the state capacity thesis at the individual level. The dimensions of psychological empowerment, meaning, competence, autonomy, and impact, raise the intrinsic motivation of the public employee (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990; Spreitzer, 1995). When it comes to public employees, this picture acquires even more meaning through the concept of public service motivation. Perry and Wise (1990) emphasize public employees' desire to serve society and contribute to the public interest; empowerment, by strengthening in particular the perception of the meaning of the work, activates this motivation. Vandenabeele (2007) notes that public service motivation is a phenomenon nourished by institutional values; empowerment facilitates the employee's embracing of these values. The higher effort of personnel who see the social return of their work nourishes the state's implementation power in the field, that is, the most visible face of capacity. Although rigid pay structures in the public sector limit material rewards, non-material rewards such as recognition, appreciation, and career opportunities are seen to nourish motivation; this result is consistent with Herzberg's (1966) approach. The quality of human resources is the long-term strategic foundation of state capacity, and training is the main source of this quality. Becker (1964) showed that investment in education made in the individual and society creates an accumulation of human capital that raises productivity; this logic applies directly to public cadres as well.

A cadre of officials equipped through training and continuously developing is the most strategic resource at the state's disposal. The findings reveal that there is a strong link between participation in training programs and the perception of competence and performance. The mechanism of this relationship can be explained through the concept of self-efficacy: Bandura (1997) shows that an individual's belief that they can accomplish a task determines their effort and resilience; training, by strengthening this belief, enables personnel to take more initiative. Conger and Kanungo (1988) also treat empowerment primarily as a process of increasing self-efficacy. The effectiveness of training, in turn, depends on its design. Knowles's (1984) adult learning approach reveals that adults want to be not passive recipients but active subjects of their own learning process, and that they prefer practice-oriented, problem-based, and immediately usable knowledge. Yet the real test of learning is not the training itself but the transfer of what is learned to work. Grossman and Salas (2011) show that this transfer requires a holistic process consisting of pre-training preparation, in-training design, and post-training support; without follow-up mechanisms such as coaching and mentoring, the training investment may be wasted. For state capacity, the lesson that emerges here is clear: when training is integrated with institutional strategy and its transfer to work is secured, it permanently raises the quality of human resources and therefore strategic state performance.

The effect of empowerment on institutional efficiency is the face of capacity reflected in daily functioning. Personnel equipped with authority simplify bureaucratic processes, accelerate decisions, and use resources more effectively. This result is consistent with Bowen and Lawler (1992), who show that the empowerment of service workers provides an efficiency gain. The main channel providing the increase in efficiency is information sharing and inter-unit cooperation; the integration of scattered knowledge lowers coordination costs (Grant, 1996). At the same time, efficiency is seen to be related not only to processes but also to the employee's well-being. Wright and Cropanzano (2000) reveal that psychological well-being is a factor predicting job performance; empowerment's reduction of work-related stress and burnout also nourishes efficiency by this route. However, the efficiency gain is not unconditional. When empowerment is not supported by performance evaluation and accountability mechanisms, how the greater responsibility is used cannot be monitored and the expected gain does not materialize. For this reason empowerment strategies must be designed in harmony with the institution's technological infrastructure, resource level, and personnel competence. The link between bureaucratic capacity and policy implementation success constitutes the core of the model's third link. However well a policy is designed, the quality and discretionary scope of the cadre of officials who bring it to life in the field determine the outcome. Lipsky (2010) shows that public service is actually shaped in the daily decisions of "street-level bureaucrats"; Tummers and Bekkers (2014) also reveal that the discretionary scope granted to the implementer increases policy success. The empowerment of this cadre closes the gap between the policy on paper and the policy in implementation. Comparative examples concretize this relationship. Singapore reveals how a small country can reach high state capacity through a model that builds public administration on the principle of merit, regards the public official as valuable enough to compete with the private sector, applies performance evaluation meticulously, and keeps corruption at a low level (Quah, 2010). South Korea draws attention to the role in development of a bureaucratic cadre that enters by examination and works with the expectation of a long-term, rewarding career; Kim (2002) showed in this context that participative management increases job satisfaction and commitment in Korean public institutions. New Zealand and the United Kingdom, with the New Public Management reforms, foregrounded the emphasis on performance, contract-based responsibility, and accountability (Hood, 1991; Schick, 1998). Canada, in turn, is known for a public service tradition that is merit-based, relatively protected from political interference, and high in career security. The common aspect of these examples is that state capacity and implementation success rise in countries where empowerment and merit are institutionalized. Pollitt and Bouckaert (2017) remind us that reform experiences yield different results according to context; therefore these examples should be read not as prescriptions to be imitated exactly but as evidence confirming the relationship between empowerment and capacity.

Organizational culture and trust constitute the ground in which empowerment takes root; capacity grows only if this ground is favorable. In institutions where a participative, collaborative, and innovative culture prevails, empowerment is more widespread and effective (Schein, 2010; Cameron and Quinn, 2011). The traditionally entrenched hierarchical and rule-oriented culture in public institutions, by contrast, can conflict with empowerment and limit it. Cultural transformation is a long and complex process; Schein (2010) shows that this transformation occurs through the behavior of leaders, what is measured and rewarded, and the allocation of resources. The lifeblood of this ground is trust. Mayer and colleagues (1995) reveal that organizational trust rests on perceptions of competence, integrity, and benevolence; when managers trust that personnel will use authority correctly, they become more willing to delegate, and when personnel trust the institution, they open up to taking responsibility and risk. Without trust, empowerment remains a discourse; with trust, it is transformed into a practice that nourishes organizational learning and capacity.

The reflection of state capacity on foreign policy is perhaps the least discussed but most critical link of the model. The answer to the question of why the empowerment of an official should affect foreign policy lies in the fact that foreign policy too is, in the final analysis, a process of bureaucratic production. Allison and Zelikow (1999) developed the bureaucratic politics model, which reveals that foreign policy decisions arise not from a single rational actor but from the interaction of the interests, perceptions, and power relations of different institutions; according to this model, the quality of the decision is directly related to the quality of the institutions and personnel participating in the process. Hudson (2005), treating foreign policy analysis on the basis of actor-specific theory, emphasizes that international outcomes pass, in the final analysis, through the perceptions and competencies of human decision-makers. Empowered diplomatic personnel have a wider room for maneuver in negotiation, decide more quickly and accurately in a crisis, and defend their country's interest more effectively. Putnam (1988) showed that international negotiation is a two-level game conducted simultaneously both at the table and within the country; a qualified cadre that can manage both levels increases the country's bargaining power. The point at which this capacity is transformed into international influence is illuminated by the concept of soft power. Nye (2004) defines a country's power to persuade others through its culture, values, and policies as soft power; the same author (2008) regards public diplomacy as the principal instrument of this power. Empowered public and cultural representatives are the carriers of this power. Slaughter (2004), in turn, argues that the networks established among the public officials of different countries are increasingly becoming decisive in solving global problems. The capacity of empowered personnel to participate in these networks and be effective within them reinforces the country's proactive position in international relations. Thus the final links of the chain close: bureaucratic capacity is transformed, through diplomatic capacity, into foreign policy performance and international influence.

There are also limits before the empowerment of diplomatic personnel. Foreign policy decisions are often taken in central and hierarchical structures; since critical decisions are generally made by senior political leaders, the diplomat's role may narrow. For this reason empowerment must be balanced with factors such as national security and strategic interest, and considered within certain limits and together with accountability mechanisms. Nevertheless, empowerment is seen to cover not only technical knowledge but also qualities such as intercultural competence, communication, and negotiation skills. Zaharna (2010) emphasizes that intercultural communication skills are among the fundamental determinants of success in public diplomacy; Berridge (2015) and Hocking (1999) likewise place the quality of the diplomatic cadre at the center of foreign policy effectiveness. The conclusion that emerges is that diplomatic capacity is not accidental but an accumulation built through empowerment. Another dimension on which the study particularly dwells is the reciprocal relationship between the protection of public personnel's acquired rights and empowerment. Personnel who feel their rights are under guarantee take more initiative, assume risk, and develop innovative ideas. This relationship is not merely a matter of individual psychology; it is directly related to the institutional foundations of state capacity. Five complementary concepts come to the fore here: legal security, institutional stability, administrative continuity, bureaucratic independence, and the rule of law. Legal security ensures that personnel's status, duties, and powers are definite and predictable (Gözler and Kaplan, 2019; Zabunoğlu, 2012). Institutional stability and administrative continuity guarantee the preservation of the state's institutional memory and functioning when the political conjuncture changes; the transmission of capacity from generation to generation is possible only with this continuity. Bureaucratic independence, in turn, expresses the official's ability to carry out their duties free from pressure and arbitrariness; Carpenter (2001) showed that bureaucratic autonomy is built on reputation, networks, and expertise, and that sound policy innovations are possible only on such a ground of autonomy. Fukuyama (2013) explains high-income countries' attempts to increase bureaucratic autonomy precisely for this reason. The overarching principle framing all of these is the rule of law; an order that limits the arbitrariness of the administration and protects the individual with predictable rules is the only environment in which empowerment can occur with confidence. The protection of acquired rights is the common guarantee that connects these five concepts; personnel whose rights are protected trust the institution, and personnel who trust the institution nourish capacity.

At this point, a recent and concrete example concerning the judicial protection of acquired rights and professional security adds depth to the discussion. In its decision examining the request for annulment of a written warning sent to a public attorney and closed to judicial review on the ground that it did not bear the quality of a disciplinary penalty, the Constitutional Court held that this document was of a nature that could be taken into account in future promotion, assignment, appointment, and rewarding processes, and therefore carried the potential to produce legal consequences, ruling that the right of access to court had been violated (Anayasa Mahkemesi, 2026). The decision is directly related to the framework of this study in that it reveals that even administrative acts regarded as apparently insignificant can produce real effects on the public official's professional future. Deliduman (2026), in evaluating the decision, emphasizes that a negative record kept in a

Personnel file affects not only the career but also professional reputation and human dignity, and that the freedom of work covers not entering a profession but being able to pursue it free from unsupervised interventions. This approach clearly shows why the protection of acquired rights is a precondition for empowerment: personnel who have not attained judicial guarantee withdraw out of concern that they may later pay the price of taking initiative through an unreviewed record, and the state pays the cost of this withdrawal as a loss of capacity. When the basis is taken to be not the name the administration gives to the act but the act's effect on the individual, the link between empowerment and legal guarantee becomes even clearer.

The same decision also points to another problem concerning state capacity: the time taken to resolve disputes affecting individual rights. The application in question reached its final decision in roughly four years from the establishment of the administrative act. The principle that "justice delayed is justice denied" applies not only in terms of the individual's victimization but also in terms of the health of institutional functioning. The years-long suspension of a dispute affecting personnel's status, promotion, or professional reputation both leaves the person concerned in uncertainty and renders the decision-making machinery of institutions cumbersome, weakening the state's capacity to manage disputes. A component of state capacity is also the ability to conclude disputes within a reasonable period; for this reason it is of great importance that such decisions directly affecting individual rights be finally resolved, with a practicality and dynamism that does not slow institutional functioning, within a reasonable three to six months. Rapid and predictable judicial protection both avoids victimizing the individual and, by enabling personnel to participate in empowerment processes with confidence, nourishes capacity. The Constitutional Court, too, drew attention to this balance by counting procedural economy and the principle of good administration among the requirements of the rule of law (Anayasa Mahkemesi, 2026).

The protection of acquired rights also strengthens institutional belonging and commitment. Personnel whose rights are under guarantee trust their institution more and show higher organizational commitment; this result is consistent with Meyer and Allen (1991), who reveal the relationship between legal security and commitment. The contribution to institutional goals and change processes of personnel working in an environment of trust increases. Thus acquired rights, empowerment, and state capacity form a mutually nourishing cycle: guarantee gives rise to initiative, initiative to capacity, and capacity to better public service. The relationship of empowerment with the public interest and the requirements of service is the legitimacy dimension of the state capacity thesis. The findings show that empowered personnel adopt a citizen-oriented understanding of service and take decisions that consider the public interest; this overlaps with the picture predicted by public service motivation theory (Perry and Wise, 1990). Empowerment enables personnel to become more sensitive to the needs and expectations of citizens and to produce more flexible, practical solutions in service delivery. Yet capacity cannot be conceived as a technical skill detached from the public interest. Empowerment must be carried out within a framework that observes fundamental public-interest elements such as public order, public safety, and public health; otherwise increased initiative carries the risk of deviating from the public purpose. For this reason a balance must be established between empowerment and accountability. Bovens (2005) emphasizes that evaluating how personnel equipped with authority use that authority protects both trust and the public interest. State capacity is built precisely on this balance: neither a cumbersome that ties every decision to the center, nor an unaccountable disorder. An empowerment that adheres to the public interest and the requirements of service both increases capacity and renders this capacity legitimate.

Digital transformation adds a new dimension to this cycle. In today's literature, concepts such as digital governance, e-government, artificial-intelligence-assisted public administration, data-driven governance, and digital state capacity occupy an increasingly central place. Digital technologies nourish empowerment by increasing personnel's access to information, analytical power, and decision-making capacity. This is consistent with the digital-era governance approach (Dunleavy et al., 2006; Margetts and Dunleavy, 2013). While data analytics enables employees to make more information-based decisions, digital platforms raise collective capacity by facilitating inter-unit cooperation and information sharing. Artificial intelligence applications, in turn, open new possibilities in areas such as accelerating service delivery, reducing administrative burden, and providing decision support; however, Wirtz, Weyerer, and Geyer (2019) note that these applications also bring with them serious problems such as transparency, accountability, and data security, and must therefore be addressed within a governance framework. Gil-Garcia and colleagues (2018) also emphasize the importance of integrating digital government research with public administration theory. The concept that can be derived from this is digital state capacity: the state's ability to collect, process, and turn data into decisions; to deliver digital services; and, while doing so, to preserve accountability. International comparisons also show that digital maturity is evaluated together with state effectiveness (Kaufmann et al., 2011). Empowered and digitally competent personnel are the carriers of this capacity; technology is transformed into capacity not on its own but only when combined with qualified and authorized human resources.

The risks of digital transformation must not be ignored either. Differences in digital competencies can lead to a digital divide within the institution; while personnel who use technology effectively become empowered, others can fall behind. This inequality carries the potential to weaken empowerment and therefore capacity. For this reason digital transformation must be managed with training and support mechanisms that encompass all personnel and with a strategy aimed at reducing inequalities. Digital leadership skills, that is, the competencies of managing technological change, conveying a digital vision, and managing virtual teams, are decisive in the success of this process (Van Wart et al., 2017). Protecting acquired rights in the digital transformation process as well facilitates personnel's confident adaptation to this change. The findings also show that there are serious obstacles before empowerment. Traditional bureaucratic structures, a risk-averse organizational culture, managerial resistance, an overly rigid legal framework, and a lack of resources are the principal factors limiting empowerment and the capacity it nourishes. To overcome these obstacles, open support from senior management, the transformation of institutional culture, the loosening of the legal framework, and the conduct of the process with a gradual approach are required; Fernandez and Moldogaziev (2013) emphasize that empowerment must be implemented at a pace and scope appropriate to the level of institutional readiness. Since overly regulated and detailed legislation makes it difficult for personnel to take initiative, legal reforms that support empowerment are among the preconditions of an increase in capacity. Nevertheless, all these efforts must be balanced with accountability mechanisms, because an unsupervised license damages the legitimacy of empowerment and the public interest.

That the findings were obtained from a particular country sample requires a note regarding the scope of the conclusions reached. The aim of this study is not to make a situation assessment specific to a single country but to produce broader theoretical and managerial conclusions concerning the empowerment of public personnel. The proposed *Empowerment-Based State Capacity Model* aims to explain a context-independent mechanism, namely the transformation of empowerment into state capacity through organizational learning and decision quality. Although this mechanism is universal, its mode of operation varies according to each country's institutional, cultural, and legal context. As the comparative examples show, the same principle of empowerment has been institutionalized in Singapore in the form of merit and performance, in New Zealand in the form of contract-based accountability, and in Canada in the form of career security. Therefore the findings, without remaining limited to their contextual details, offer a generalizable framework concerning the relationship between empowerment and state capacity.

The testing of this framework in different institutional settings, the more precise testing of the causal links among the links of the model, and in particular the measurement of the foreign policy link with quantitative indicators, constitute a fruitful agenda for future research. In the light of all these findings, the main conclusion the discussion reaches is this: the empowerment of public personnel is one of the fundamental determinants of state capacity, and this capacity shapes a broad area extending from the effectiveness of public administration to foreign policy performance and international influence. The proposed *Empowerment-Based State Capacity Model*, by explaining the relationship between empowerment and international influence through the links of organizational learning, decision quality, bureaucratic capacity, and diplomatic capacity, carries the study beyond an ordinary personnel-management inquiry and offers an interdisciplinary framework connecting public administration and international relations. The development of human resources through training constitutes the strategic foundation of this capacity, while the protection of acquired rights through the principles of legal security, institutional stability, administrative continuity, bureaucratic independence, and the rule of law constitutes its sustainable ground. Digital transformation is a lever that enlarges capacity when managed correctly and produces inequality when managed wrongly; the public interest and accountability, in turn, determine both the limit and the legitimacy of empowerment. The comparative examples confirm that countries where empowerment and merit are institutionalized attain a higher state capacity and international weight. This study thereby reveals that in the twenty-first century the success of states depends not only on economic or military power but also on the bureaucratic capacity built through the empowerment of public personnel.

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has approached the empowerment of public personnel not narrowly, as a matter of individual motivation, job satisfaction, or human resource management, but as a broader and more fundamental question directly tied to the state's capacity to govern. In the literature, empowerment is most often discussed as an intra-organizational efficiency tool; this study, however, raises the issue one level higher and links empowerment to a layer of capability that constitutes the state itself. The central idea defended throughout the study is the following: the empowerment of public personnel is one of the determining elements of state capacity, and an increase in this capacity directly shapes the effectiveness of public administration, the performance of foreign policy, and the country's power of influence in international relations.

In other words, the answer to the question of why a state succeeds must be sought not only in economic resources or military power, but in the quality, competence, and decision-making latitude of the people who run the state on a daily basis. This reframing moves the work beyond an ordinary examination of personnel management and turns it into an interdisciplinary discussion that brings public administration and international relations onto the same axis. Understanding this argument first requires clarifying the concept of state capacity. In its simplest definition, state capacity is a state's power to reach the goals it sets, to extend its decisions across the country, and to actually implement them. This power may be conceived in two distinct forms: the state's power to exercise unilateral command over society, and its power to penetrate society and implement its decisions in a coordinated manner. The latter, namely infrastructural power, is the capability that truly makes the modern state effective, because making a decision and being able to implement it in the field are different things, and what makes implementation possible is the state's institutional and human infrastructure (Mann, 1984). At the core of this infrastructure lies a bureaucracy that rests on rational-legal functioning and operates according to rules and expertise (Weber, 1978). The approach that treats the state as an autonomous actor and a body of capabilities has long nourished analyses along these lines in the social sciences (Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol, 1985). Comparative data have likewise shown that bureaucracies in which merit-based recruitment, professional continuity, and predictable careers prevail significantly raise development and growth performance (Evans and Rauch, 1999). The view that weak or collapsed states have become the source of many global problems, whereas building institutions that can stand on their own feet is the essential issue, completes this framework (Fukuyama, 2004).

It is precisely at this point that the empowerment of public personnel comes into play. Once it is recalled that infrastructural power is not an abstract institutional capacity but a concrete accumulation of human capability, empowerment becomes visible as the micro-foundation of state capacity. A state can extend its decisions to society only to the extent that its frontline personnel can access information, exercise initiative, and stand behind their decisions. Both the structural and the psychological dimensions of empowerment nourish this foundation through different paths. Structural empowerment widens personnel's sphere of action through the delegation of authority, access to information, and participation in decision-making processes. Psychological empowerment, in turn, increases personnel's willingness to use that sphere through finding their work meaningful and through a sense of competence, autonomy, and impact. When the two dimensions operate together, the state's implementation capacity rises not only on paper but also in the field. Empowerment is therefore not an external complement to state capacity but a component that constitutes it from within. This relationship is made concrete through an original framework proposed in the study. This framework, which may be called the *Empowerment-Based State Capacity Model*, establishes a chain of causation extending from the empowerment of public personnel to the country's international influence. The chain consists of the following links: empowerment nourishes organizational learning; organizational learning raises the quality of decision-making; high-quality decisions strengthen state capacity; strengthened capacity is converted into diplomatic capacity; diplomatic capacity raises foreign policy performance; and rising performance widens the country's power of international influence. An important feature of these links is that they are not unidirectional. Success and prestige gained in the international arena raise trust in institutions and the morale of personnel at home, turning the chain back to its beginning; the model thus becomes a self-reinforcing cycle. The value of the model lies in uniting, within a single explanatory framework, phenomena that are discussed separately across different bodies of literature.

To understand the first links of the chain, one must look to institutionalist and organizational approaches. The view that the knowledge, rules, and routines accumulated by organizations permanently shape institutional behavior is the point of departure of the institutionalist approach (March and Olsen, 1989). Empowered personnel experiment more, learn from error, and carry the knowledge they acquire into the institution; organizational learning thereby accelerates. In a structure where learning accumulates, decisions rest on more data, experience, and expertise, which raises decision quality. Why decision quality is so determinative becomes clearer through the bureaucratic politics model, which shows that foreign policy outputs arise not from a single decision-maker but from the interaction of institutions, processes, and bureaucratic actors (Allison and Zelikow, 1999). The decisions a state makes are most often not the work of a single leader, as heroic narratives suggest, but the product of the bureaucratic machinery behind the scenes. As the quality of this machinery rises, so do the consistency, predictability, and accuracy of the state's decisions. Moreover, it has been shown that bureaucratic autonomy is won not through arbitrariness but through the reputation and network of expertise that an institution builds over time (Carpenter, 2001); that is, empowerment turns into capacity when it is institutionalized as accountable competence rather than as unsupervised license. The links of the chain that face foreign policy are illuminated by the international relations literature. That foreign policy cannot be conceived independently of the state's internal structure and the qualities of the individuals who make decisions is among the basic premises of foreign policy analysis (Hudson, 2005).

As state capacity rises, it is converted directly into diplomatic capacity, that is, into the country's power to negotiate, manage crises, and be effective in multilateral settings. The analysis that international negotiations are a two-level game conducted simultaneously both at the table and within the country reveals the mechanism of this conversion: the competence of the cadre conducting the external negotiation becomes results-oriented when combined with the ability to manage the domestic ratification process (Putnam, 1988). Qualified, self-confident diplomatic personnel who possess decision-making latitude within defined limits increase the country's power to exert influence through persuasion rather than coercion, that is, its soft power (Nye, 2004). In a world where relations between states increasingly run through cross-border networks among public officials, empowered personnel occupy a more effective place in these networks and represent their country's interests on a broader footing (Slaughter, 2004). The final link of the chain is thus completed as capacity built at home is converted into influence abroad.

The study's findings reveal that the first links of this chain also operate in the reality of the field. In institutions where the delegation of authority is practiced, where personnel participate in decision-making processes, and where information is accessible, transactions accelerate, more flexible solutions to problems are produced, and service quality rises. This result is not surprising, because the quality of public service is largely manifested in the daily decisions of personnel who are in direct contact with the citizen and who exercise discretion in the field (Lipsky, 2010). When personnel are empowered, the quality of these decisions rises, and this in turn raises the public value the institution produces (Moore, 1995). The findings also show that the effect of empowerment varies according to institutional context, and that the process operates far more efficiently where the support of top management exists and a participatory culture prevails. Empowerment therefore functions, beyond being a practice that increases the satisfaction of individual employees, as a lever that raises the total quality and the implementation capacity of the service the state provides to society. A reasonable objection may arise here: why should the empowerment of an ordinary public official affect foreign policy? Because this question touches the seemingly most fragile link of the model, it deserves a separate answer. The answer lies in the fact that foreign policy is not a set of momentary decisions but the product of institutional accumulation. Behind the delegation conducting an international negotiation stands a broad bureaucratic cadre that produces information, prepares files, establishes the legal ground, carries the memory of past negotiations, and supplies technical analysis.

If this cadre's learning capacity is low, decisions slow down, become inconsistent, and the state is caught unprepared in crises; if it is high, the state behaves in a manner that is both foresighted and consistent and sits at the table better equipped. How quickly and accurately a country can decide in a moment of international crisis depends largely on how empowered, on a daily basis, the cadre that prepares that decision has been. For this reason, the gain obtained by empowering personnel in domestic administration turns directly into a performance difference in the domain of foreign affairs. This continuity between internal and external administration lies at the center of the study's interdisciplinary contribution. It must nonetheless be stated that empowerment is not a boundless good. Authority expanded without being balanced by accountability mechanisms may lead to arbitrariness, loss of coordination, and the use of public resources for purposes other than those intended. The conversion of empowerment into capacity depends on three accompanying conditions: an ethical ground that ensures authority is used in the direction of the public interest, an order of accountability in which the consequences of decisions can be monitored, and the definition of authority in alignment with the institution's strategic goals. When these conditions are not met, empowerment may erode capacity rather than increase it. The model therefore positions empowerment and oversight not as opposites but as two principles that complete one another; the real issue is not how much authority we distribute, but how we place the distributed authority within an accountable framework.

The sustainability of this capacity, in turn, rests on a legal ground. That the status, duties, and powers of public personnel are definite and predictable, that is, legal security, is the invisible but load-bearing pillar of the empowerment process. Personnel whose rights are under guarantee take more initiative, assume risk, and turn toward innovative solutions, because they know that each step they take will not be nullified by an arbitrary act. Four mutually complementary concepts come to the fore here: institutional stability, administrative continuity, bureaucratic independence, and the rule of law. The protection of vested rights nourishes all four at once. Institutional stability ensures that accumulated knowledge is not dispersed when administrations change; administrative continuity guarantees that the machinery of state turns without interruption; bureaucratic independence enables personnel to make decisions in the direction of the public interest, protected from day-to-day political pressure; and the rule of law makes it possible for all these guarantees to operate within an auditable framework. It has also been shown that professional security keeps the bureaucracy away from the pressure of short-term political cycles by protecting its autonomy grounded in expertise and reputation

(Carpenter, 2001). Comparative findings indicating that merit-based bureaucracies supported by professional security produce higher state capacity also confirm this framework (Evans and Rauch, 1999; Fukuyama, 2004). What legal security means for public personnel is concretely demonstrated by a recent judicial decision from Türkiye (application no. 2022/47812). The Constitutional Court held that closing to judicial review a letter sent to a public lawyer that ostensibly carried only the character of a warning amounted to a violation of the right of access to court guaranteed under Article 36 of the Constitution (Anayasa Mahkemesi, 2026). In the case, a lawyer serving in the legal counsel's office of a university was sent a written warning on the grounds that he had not shown the necessary diligence in his work; the annulment action he brought was dismissed without examination on the grounds that the letter in question was not a disciplinary penalty and did not carry an executory character. The Court did not find this approach appropriate; it accepted that such a letter, kept in the personnel file, could later be taken into account in promotion, appointment, assignment, or reward processes, and therefore carried the capacity to affect the person's legal situation. The real importance of the decision is that it establishes that what must be taken as the basis is not the name the administration gives to the act, but the act's actual effect on the individual, because a record that affects professional reputation and career expectation also touches a person's freedom to work and moral integrity (Deliduman, 2026). This decision is a living example confirming the bond between empowerment and legal security: negative evaluations that cannot be reviewed and accumulate silently in the personnel file push personnel toward cautious, defensive, and inward-looking behavior, whereas an effective judicial guarantee makes personnel bolder, more willing to take initiative, and more productive. In other words, the scope of judicial review is a variable that directly opens or blocks the path to empowerment.

That the individual-application stage of the same case lasted roughly four years makes visible another, but equally important, problem. The judgment that delayed justice ceases to be justice carries particular weight in disputes of this kind that directly affect a person's rights. A dispute concerning a staff member's status, promotion, or reputation remaining in limbo for years gives rise to a twofold harm: on the one hand, the individual, while awaiting the delivery of a right, is left professionally suspended and aggrieved; on the other, the administrative process that turns amid uncertainty makes the machinery of state cumbersome and slows institutional functioning. Yet state capacity is measured by the ability to produce rapid and predictable decisions. For this reason, procedural arrangements are important that ensure administrative disputes closely affecting individual rights are brought to a final conclusion within a reasonable and predetermined period, such as three to six months, in a manner of practicality and dynamism that does not clog institutional functioning. Such an arrangement both protects the individual from grievance and lightens the administration's burden arising from uncertainty; that is, it strengthens legal security and state capacity at the same time. Monitoring these periods through a tracking system based on data and concrete case examples will ensure that the reform does not remain on paper.

In the twenty-first century, a new and rapidly growing dimension of state capacity is emerging in the digital domain. The digitalization of public administration, e-government applications, and data-driven governance create a transformation that must be considered together with the empowerment of personnel (Dunleavy et al., 2006; Margetts and Dunleavy, 2013). Digital tools support empowerment by increasing personnel's access to information, analytical power, and decision speed, and thereby directly enlarge the state's infrastructural capacity (Gil-Garcia et al., 2018). Artificial-intelligence-supported public administration is the newest link of this process; it carries the potential to lighten the state's transaction burden across a broad area, from the automation of routine work to decision support, and from demand forecasting to risk analysis (Wirtz et al., 2019). These possibilities, however, are not distributed automatically and equally. Differences in digital competence may create a kind of chasm within an institution and render empowerment unequal; the gap between personnel who can access and use technology and those who cannot may split capacity in two rather than raising it uniformly. Moreover, unless matters such as the auditability of automated decision processes, data security, and algorithmic transparency are resolved, digitalization may cease to be a source of capacity and turn into a source of risk. Digital state capacity must therefore be built not through technology investment alone, but together with training and support programs covering all personnel, a sound legal framework for data governance, an accountable use of algorithms, and a policy that reduces digital inequality (Yıldız and Sayın, 2020; United Nations, 2022). To the extent that this framework claims universal validity, it must also be tested against the experiences of different countries. The Singaporean public service, known for its merit-based examination system, its professionalism supported by high salaries, and its strong institutional memory, is a frequently cited example of how a small state can produce disproportionate international influence through high administrative capacity; here capacity is largely the product of a carefully selected and retained bureaucratic cadre. South Korea, which owes its rapid development largely to a qualified and relatively autonomous bureaucracy, demonstrates the bond between state capacity and economic performance.

The Canadian and British public services, which stand out for their tradition of merit and continuity, offer a rich discussion of how a professional bureaucracy preserves the quality of governance even when political power changes; New Zealand, recognized for its far-reaching administrative reforms, offers a rich discussion of how institutional redesign and performance-oriented arrangements affect capacity. The common thread of these experiences is clear: high state capacity emerges in bureaucratic structures supported by meritocratic recruitment, professional security, and predictable careers (Evans and Rauch, 1999; Fukuyama, 2004; OECD, 2017). This comparative picture suggests that the empowerment-capacity relationship is specific neither to a single country nor to a single administrative tradition, but is a pattern that operates in similar fashion across different political systems (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2017). The administrative configurations of the United Kingdom, which comes from the Westminster tradition, and of South Korea, which follows the developmental-state model, are quite different from each other; yet in both, at the source of capacity lies qualified, protected, and learning personnel. This shows that the proposed model is not merely an observation describing a particular context, but a general framework that can be tested in different settings. Although the links of the model do not operate at the same speed in every country, the logic of the chain does not change: without empowered personnel, sustainable state capacity cannot be built, and without strong capacity, effective foreign policy cannot be established. From these results a set of mutually complementary, applicable recommendations arises. First, empowerment strategies should be adapted to the structure, culture, and field of duty of each institution; instead of a top-down, one-size-fits-all prescription, a design sensitive to institutional context should be adopted. Second, as the delegation of authority and participation are expanded, balancing this with accountability mechanisms is indispensable for preserving both legitimacy and effectiveness. Third, binding the vested rights and legal status of public personnel to clear, definite, and auditable rules, and resolving the administrative disputes that concern personnel within short and predetermined periods, constitutes the legal guarantee of empowerment. Fourth, in digital transformation, priority must be given not only to infrastructure but to programs that raise the competence of all personnel, tie data governance to law, and reduce inequality. Fifth, for diplomatic personnel, the continuous updating of intercultural competence, negotiation and crisis-management skills, and digital-diplomacy capacity must be considered together with a decision-making autonomy to be recognized

Within defined parameters. Finally, the common denominator of all these recommendations is the preservation of merit-based recruitment and career systems, because the personnel to be empowered must first have been selected and retained according to the right criteria. The real contribution behind these recommendations is theoretical. The study brings the human-resources and empowerment debates of the public administration literature together, within the same framework, with the state capacity, foreign policy analysis, and soft power debates of the international relations literature. These two fields are most often treated as separate worlds: public administration looks inward, international relations outward. Yet the proposed model unites these two perspectives within a single logic by explicitly establishing the chain through which personnel empowered at home are converted into the state's influence abroad. The study thereby moves beyond an ordinary examination of personnel management and offers an interdisciplinary framework that connects public administration and international relations. This approach, which makes it possible to think of the state simultaneously as a producer of services and as an international actor, lays claim to filling a gap in the literature.

The implementation consequences of the model differ according to countries' level of development. For states that are still trying to establish their institutions, the priority is to lay the foundation of capacity by installing merit-based recruitment and professional security, because without this foundation empowerment may turn into an area open to favoritism rather than increasing capacity. For states with a relatively sound institutional foundation, the priority is to deepen existing capacity in the areas of digitalization, continuous learning, and diplomatic competence. In both cases the common lesson is the same: the most reliable way to enlarge state capacity is to invest in the often-neglected human element, that is, in the empowerment of the cadres that run the state on a daily basis. In evaluating these results, the scope of the research must also be kept in mind. Although the findings were obtained from a particular country sample, the study aimed to produce broader theoretical and administrative conclusions regarding the empowerment of public personnel; the proposed model is therefore presented not as the description of a single context but as a framework that can be tested in different settings. In the field stage, the interviews were conducted in an unstructured manner, in conversational settings based on mutual trust; the data were grounded in notes kept during these conversations. This approach allowed participants to express their views without feeling pressure and without entering the atmosphere of a formal interrogation, and personal identity information was not recorded, in regard for the privacy of the institutions. By its nature, this study does not require ethics committee approval, and no ethical violation arose during the research process. While the unstructured interview technique provides data rich in depth and sincerity, it is a method that limits generalizations based on standardized measurements;

This limitation has been taken into account in interpreting the findings. Future research can develop this framework in several directions. Testing the empowerment-capacity relationship comparatively across different country samples would directly test the universality of the model. Tracking the effect of digitalization and artificial intelligence on this relationship with longitudinal data would make it possible to understand a rapidly changing field over time. Measuring the causation among the links of the model with quantitative methods, particularly the indirect connections extending from empowerment to foreign policy performance, would move the framework beyond the descriptive and turn it into a body of testable propositions. Moreover, examining the relationship between the protection of vested rights and bureaucratic autonomy together with its legal and administrative dimensions is a fertile area of research that this study opens but does not exhaust. In conclusion, this study reaches a plain but determinative observation regarding the future of states: in the twenty-first century, the success of states depends not only on economic or military capacity but also on the bureaucratic capacity created through the empowerment of public personnel. Public personnel who are empowered, equipped with legal security, and continuously learning are the common source both of the state's production of effective service at home and of its being a respected and effective actor abroad. Behind the weapons and the budgets stands an element that is often invisible yet carries everything: the human being who runs the state on a daily basis. The way to enlarge state capacity runs precisely through this often-overlooked element, namely through the empowerment of public personnel.

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