

# **Role of Ambassadors in Development Diplomacy in the Context of Nepal**

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## **Abstract**

Diplomacy has existed for a long time as an integral component of maintaining relations with other countries as required by factors like geopolitical aspects, international situation, population size, the economy's productivity, security sensitiveness, military strength, and main law of the land. Diplomacy is a vital tool for implementing foreign policy construed as an art of dealing with the diplomats of other countries for the host country's benefit. The style and manner of diplomacy are shifting with time in the form of expanding the sphere of influence by the stronger power over the weaker power, economic domination, marine power, and navigational supremacy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, led by the foreign minister, ministry staff, and ambassadors abroad constitute the key actors in executing development diplomacy. Nepal has failed to grasp the opportunity due to her inability to select skillful candidates for such fascinating but challenging roles at various times compared to the past. Development diplomacy constitutes a significant part of overall diplomacy for most of the developing countries as is the case of Nepal with a major thrust of receiving development cooperation as much as possible from the advanced countries in the form of grants as well as loans with the minimum possible rate of interest.

## **Introduction**

Diplomacy has been occupying a pivotal role since the dawn of documented history as one of the two main components in running the statecraft namely by delivering governance for the wellbeing of the people, accelerating the pace of development, safeguarding territorial integrity and protection from possible threats by foreign countries, and protecting and promoting the country's image abroad with diplomatic acumen (Straw, 2018). However, the concepts, style, and practice of diplomacy have undergone many changes. The focus on the foreign front includes, among many others, expanding the sphere of influence in the case of the affluent countries over other countries, the geopolitical situation of the country, economic and military strength, trade and commerce between the nations, the size of population and the sociocultural dimension, and the provision of each nation's law of the land with regards to foreign policy.

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Diplomacy is the art of dealing by a diplomat of one country with the diplomat of the other country or countries while taking up concerns that may contain both bilateral or multilateral interests to bring the desired results for the benefit of the initiating country. Diplomacy is also a function that acts to achieve the cherished objectives of the foreign policy of any given country under its foreign ministry. To achieve these goals, a diplomat needs to be well-equipped with appropriate qualifications, on-the-job training, experience, expertise, and skills to successfully discharge his/her duties and responsibilities as a government representative assigned to deal with external counterparts.

Diplomacy is highly valued and skillful performance by diplomats can turn a situation from failure to success, from war to peace, and from foe to friend between nations. The First World War (1914-1918) and the Second World War (1939-1944) are attributed to the failure of diplomatic negotiations among the warring nations (Khanal, 2021). While diplomacy applies in every aspect and step in dealing with external diplomats, mainly of other friendly countries, diplomacy becomes crucial, especially during negotiation on any specific issue of national interest. Thus, diplomacy serves an instrumental role in gaining the support of the other countries' authority for the approaching country as part of managing foreign relations under an adopted foreign policy of the government.

The functioning of diplomacy, though a part of running foreign affairs in the normal sense of the jargon is beyond a regular job under an institutionalized bureaucratic structure as it demands situation-specific expertise and skill from a diplomat which is interlinked with so many domestic set-ups and concerns (Kissinger, 1973). Working as a diplomat, therefore, encompasses a multidimensional quality to perform up to the mark. He/she should have broad knowledge in looking at the subject matters with multidimensional perspectives while dealing with the officials of other countries on behalf of his/her country. In this context, an attempt is being made in this write-up to highlight some aspects of development diplomacy and the role of the ambassadors in Nepal's scenario since they also happen to be some of the key actors of the government after being posted abroad.

### **Methodology**

It has been observed that Nepal lacks desired stock of literature on the diplomatic arena which is badly wanted by the researchers, academicians, writers, and media for their reporting and review of the events on foreign affairs. However, in the recent past, quite a few institutes and study centers at the governmental and academic levels and writings of scholars, professors, ex-career and non-career diplomats, journalists, and the publication of few journals and magazines serve the purpose to a certain extent. The narratives in this paper are based on more qualitative analysis than a review of quantitative figures. In other words, this paper follows a combination of both the cardinal and ordinal methods.

## Roles of Ambassadors

A laudable performance at the ambassadorial level demands high-level skills in representation, negotiation, communication, and public relations domain by establishing links with various sectors involving academics, media, businessmen/ industrialists, civic societies, professional associations, celebrities, and intellectuals of the country. On top of all these, a thorough knowledge of the subject matter involving the country's foreign and security policy, and, development priorities are the prerequisites on the part of an envoy. Contrary to these rationales associated with choosing a candidate for such a highly responsible assignment in a foreign land, little consideration seems to be given to the capabilities of a candidate by the Nepali authorities due to their shortsightedness in identifying the appropriate nominees matching the gravity of this position time and again.

From the time of the *Panchayat* regime till the restoration of the multiparty system in 1990, the envoys would be appointed at the discretion of the king on a merit basis coupled with high-caliber professional expertise and their past profile. The candidates for such a charming yet sensitive job were selected from/among the senior joint secretaries, secretaries of the Foreign Service cadre (career diplomats), retired chiefs of the security agencies, former chief secretaries of the government, academicians of repute including former vice-chancellors of the Tribhuvan University, former vice chairman of the National Planning Commission. A former prime minister and a former Chief justice of the Supreme Court also became ambassadors during this time. The other consideration in appointing ambassadors included the persons who were characterized to be especially suitable to secure the host country's support in some specific issues of national importance.

The selection and appointment of the ambassadorial position have often been done based on the will of political parties sidelining professional expertise. Such a trend in selection has led to a weakened performance of ambassadors with adverse effects on developmental diplomacy. The current process of selection of candidates for such posts appears to be more rigorous while the quality of the nominees displays a degrading trend. Starting first at the party stage to the cabinet through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs leading to the Parliament Special Hearing Committee, an ambassador is finally appointed after getting a confirmation from the host government known as the "agreemo". While some have performed well, many of the ambassadors in the present context have not done justice to their roles at a time when development diplomacy has the scope to aid Nepal's development.

There are many developmental agencies and actors under the Government of Nepal, chiefly the Ministry of Finance, National Planning Commission, and Nepal Rastra Bank for goal setting, resource creation, allocation, and mobilization of such resources generated from both internal and external sources. However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the focal point of development diplomacy. The foreign ministry

is the counterpart of the UN agencies. Likewise, the finance ministry is the focal point for the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank whereas the Nepal Rastra Bank is assigned to represent Nepal in the International Monetary Fund. All the officials of these state organs, too, have a role in development diplomacy in addition to the officials of the foreign ministry and the designated ambassadors in different countries. This situation demands a better coordination mechanism among all the organs.

Nepal has had many appreciable examples of ambassadorial excellence in the past worth to be cited who have played key roles in promoting and protecting Nepal's national interests in the domains that include foreign policy, economic diplomacy, trade, and commerce.

### Conclusion

Nepal is currently traversing through a path of many hardships with adverse effects in gearing up the pace of development. The situation has been compounded by political instability, economic hazards, social taboos, lack of proper law and order situation, impunity, corruption, effects of the 2015 earthquake, economic blockade by the southern neighbor, and the Covid-19 pandemic. The selection and appointment of able ambassadors have consequences and implications in both immediate and long-term perspectives. Garnering the support of friendly countries for Nepal's development largely depends, in addition to other factors, on how an ambassador displays his/her diplomatic capacity in the country he/she is designated as the sole representative aptly coined as an extraordinary and plenipotentiary in diplomatic terms on behalf of the Government of Nepal for protection and promotion of national interests. While tracing a few of the abovementioned past achievements made by the country's ambassadors that contributed to the development through diplomacy, the Nepali intelligentsia, media, and the general public would like to see a new dimension imparted by the ambassadors of this generation no matter whether they are career diplomats or political appointees selected through rigorous but a nominal process of appointment.

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