



Leveraging Military Diplomacy in Nepal's Foreign Policy

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Abstract

Military diplomacy, which notably developed following the end of World War II, is the peaceful utilization of military resources for cooperative relations with foreign countries to enhance national interests and attain objectives of foreign policy. Before and after the codification of the Foreign Policy, 2020, Nepal employed a variety of diplomatic strategies. However, since military diplomacy is not explicitly incorporated into the foreign policy, this paper focuses on prevailing legislations regulating military diplomacy and the challenges they impose on relevant authorities to facilitate military diplomacy. This paper also makes recommendations to the concerned authorities to expand military diplomacy by mitigating misconceptions, taking initiatives to lead in the UN Peacekeeping Missions, establishing proper coordination, and developing common consensus about national interests in global forums. The paper uses both primary and secondary sources for data collection and desk reviews and Key Informants Interview form the foundation of the study. This paper is divided into four parts explaining the meaning and forms of military diplomacy and foreign policy, the historical aspect of military diplomacy, its use as a tool, and hindrances in promoting military diplomacy to attain objectives of foreign policy.

Keywords: military diplomacy, foreign policy, Nepal Army, military aid, UN peacekeeping missions

Introduction

Military diplomacy is the non-violent use of military resources for cooperation with foreign countries. Nepal has established cordial bonds with its neighbors and other countries through bilateral and multilateral treaties and arrangements using military diplomacy. The deployment of the Nepali Army (NA) in UN Peacekeeping missions; recruitment of Nepali citizens in the British and Indian Armies; the purchase of arms and ammunition according to treaties, etc. are examples of Nepal's use of military diplomacy. The Foreign Policy 2020 aims to contribute to world peace, harmony and security by safeguarding Nepal's national interests of dignity, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence, and promoting Nepal's economic

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prosperity. Military diplomacy can play an important role in achieving these goals. However, its low priority over other forms of diplomacy and its misinterpretation as hard power, lack of proper procedural mechanisms in military diplomacy, and violations of the diplomatic code of conduct makes it difficult to use as an instrument of foreign policy.

The objective of the study is to delineate the meaning of military diplomacy, to identify its uses in foreign policy, and the challenges faced by the concerned authorities in utilizing military diplomacy in Nepal. This paper is based on the research question i.e. what are the challenges of using military diplomacy to address the objectives and goals of Nepal's foreign policy?

The author has divided the paper into four parts. The first part introduces the meaning and modes of Military Diplomacy and Foreign Policy. The second part explores the historical practice of foreign policy and the role of military diplomacy in conducting foreign policy and maintaining international relations along with the present provisions regulating military diplomacy in a broader spectrum to attain the objectives of foreign policy. The third part of the paper describes how Nepal has used various forms of military diplomacy to achieve its foreign policy goals. The challenges of using military diplomacy as an instrument of foreign policy and recommendations to mitigate those challenges are discussed in part four of this paper.

Methodology

Both primary and secondary data sources were explored and the author embodied descriptive, explanatory, and analytical research methods. Primary data sources include the Nepalese constitution, relevant laws of Nepal, codes of diplomatic conduct, foreign policy, national security policy, treaties, and agreements to which Nepal is a party; secondary data sources include books, articles published in reputable journals, transcripts of conferences, seminars and interviews. The research is based on desk reviews and interviews with Key Informants (KII), including semi-structured open-ended questions attached as appendices to this document. For qualitative data analysis, the author conducted interviews with an expert in International Relations, an assistant professor of International Law, with retired military personnel and officers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA)

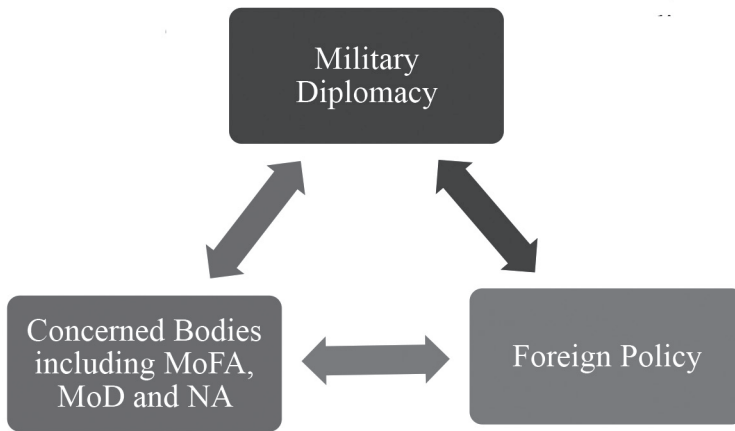
Literature Review

The paper is based on various books, journals, thesis and articles. Many scholars have discussed military diplomacy and its role in the nation's foreign policy. Drab (2018) has argued military diplomacy is a significant instrument for enforcing foreign policy and maintaining national security. In the context of Nepal, Pankaj (2019) has briefly elaborated historical development of the use and role of military diplomacy in achieving Nepal's foreign policy objectives and interests. Similarly, Paudel (2022) has analyzed military diplomacy in relation to foreign policy and recommended several measures for the betterment of military diplomacy to ameliorate foreign policy such as formulating country-specific foreign policy, generating an amicable environment for foreign direct investment, etc. These reviewed works have barely addressed the challenges of using military diplomacy in meeting the foreign policy goals and objectives in Nepal. Thus, this paper attempts to outline the challenges faced by the concerned authorities to use military diplomacy to attain national interest and objectives of Foreign Policy 2020.

Conceptual Framework

Foreign Policy is the mechanism that nations use to maintain their diplomatic relations with foreign countries, reflecting their goals, visions and objectives in the global arena. To meet these ends military diplomacy is practiced by nations along with other forms of diplomacy. This study is based on the conceptual framework of analyzing the interrelationship between military diplomacy and foreign policy and the coordination of concerned governmental authorities such as MoFA, Ministry of Defense (MoD) and Nepali Army (NA) to execute foreign policy.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Ethical Considerations

To ensure confidentiality of key informants, interviewees are coded as AA for an expert of International Relations, AB for retired military personnel, AC for an assistant professor of International Law and AD, and AE for the officers of MoFA. Author has obtained prior consent from respondents.

Military Diplomacy

Military diplomacy is the use of the military as soft power to further a nation's foreign policy goals. It is the sum total of all non-violent actions, including the cooperative use of military forces and related infrastructure [the Department of Defense] in peacetime as instruments of foreign and security policy (Cotty & Foster, 2004, p.365). After the end of World War II, the use of military diplomacy has been used in international relations to disperse hostilities, build and maintain confidence, and assist in the development of democratically responsible military forces, preventing conflict, and therefore, highly recommended for contributing significantly to resolution (United Kingdom Ministry of Defence MoD Policy Paper, 2000).

The term military diplomacy is used primarily in a historical context in connection with diplomatic negotiations in the context of the Vienna Conference or the Versailles Peace Conference. The UK MoD first attempted to define defense diplomacy by presenting it in its Strategic Defense Review in 1998 (Drab, 2018, p.60). The term gained prominence in the 1990s after the fall of communism in Eastern Europe. In the current situation, most countries,

including Nepal, China, India, the UK, and the US, etc., use military diplomacy to achieve their foreign policy goals (Winger, 2014, p.2).

Some of the definitions of Military Diplomacy are as follows:

- Edmonds and Greg Mills, “Military diplomacy is the use of armed forces in other than combat operations for the purpose of promoting the objectives of the state abroad” (Edmonds, 1998).
- Shafikul Alam: “Military diplomacy is the peaceful use of military in the realm of diplomacy to achieve the goals of national foreign policy” (Alam, 2019).
- Göran Swistek: “Military diplomacy is a force to ward off enmity, while generating and maintaining trust and confidence in partner countries; and it supports building armed forces that effectively execute the democratic orders of the government” (Swistek, 2012).

From the definitions cited, we can conclude that military diplomacy is the peaceful use of force to strengthen defense ties and advance military interoperability in order to further the goals and objectives of national policy. The modes of using military diplomacy consist of “strategic and political defense dialogues, bilateral defense cooperation, deployment of training units, bilateral and multilateral military exercises for training purposes, bilateral and multilateral agreements between senior military and civilian defense officials, hiring of defense attachés, assisting other countries to develop their defense capability without impinging on own security” (Cotty & Foster, 2004, p.7) and participating in United Nations Peace Keeping Operations (UNPKO).

Foreign Policy

The management of interactions between States and other States, international organizations, and non-state actors is accomplished by the systematic development and use of a set of predetermined strategies, goals, metrics, procedures, policies, and guidelines is known as foreign policy (Jackson & Sorensen, 2013, p. 252). Diplomacy, negotiation, appeal to international law, dialogue and cooperation are some of the instruments used to accomplish foreign policy goals. The main feature of any nation's foreign policy should be to find what is most beneficial to it (Bhattacharai, M. 2018). Senior government officials such as presidents, prime ministers, foreign ministers, defense ministers, finance ministers, and their closest advisers are usually the key policymakers. Policymaking involves a means-end way of thinking about the goals and activities of government (Jackson & Sorensen, 2013, p. 252).

Nepal enacted the first codified foreign policy in 2020. By upholding independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity while advancing Nepal's economy, the present foreign policy aims to uphold national dignity. Prior to codification, however, there have been changes to foreign policy across the time period covered in the history below.

Practice of Military Diplomacy and Foreign Policy in Nepal

In this part, the author discusses the changing trends in foreign policy and the use of military diplomacy after the unification of Nepal and the formal establishment of NA. Rulers of Nepal

have used military diplomacy to reclaim lost territories, uphold their country's sovereignty, strengthen its position in international organizations, control armed conflict and provide humanitarian assistance. Nepal has no separate doctrine related to military diplomacy and Foreign Policy, 2020 also has not explicitly mentioned it. So, the author, in this part, presents applicable provisions regulating military diplomacy in broader aspects to meet national interests on an international scale.

Baral (2018) has identified various trends in foreign policy prior to its codification in 2020. Based on his article, the use of military diplomacy to respond to certain foreign policy trends is explained as follows:

Independent Foreign Policy [1792-1814]

As Nepal was in the process of unification, there was no formal foreign policy at the time. King Prithvi Narayan Shah, acknowledging the geopolitical situation of Nepal, had said that "the Kingdom of Nepal is a yam between two stones" (Acharya, 2061 B.S., p. 482) and suggested to pursue an independent foreign policy (Baral, 2018, p.32). However, subsequent rulers failed to maintain an independent foreign policy and Nepal was embroiled in the war between British India and Tibet in 1792 and 1814.

Policy of Isolation/Aftermath of Anglo-Nepal War

After the debacle of Anglo-Nepal War and Sugauli Treaty in 1815 (Uprety, 2015, p.131), Nepal adopted British-India centric foreign policy. Geopolitical isolation was the foundation of the Rana government's foreign policy, which gave Nepal a certain amount of freedom from outside interference and control. Nevertheless, recognizing the rise of the British Empire, the Rana regime allied itself with British India and implemented a range of military diplomatic measures (Uprety, 2015, p.144), from military support to allowing Gurkhas to be recruited into the British army and dispatching battalions of NA in the World War I and II to India to assist British and Indian soldiers in fighting abroad. In 1885, the British were officially granted the right to recruit Gurkhas into the Indian Army.

The Anglo-Nepalese War, during which Nepal implored the British to recognize its sovereignty, had a lasting influence on British India, who in turn helped Nepal reclaim land in the Terai that had been lost. The treaty signed between the British government and Nepal in 1860 and 1923 recognized the complete sovereignty of Nepal (Uprety, 2015, p.156).

Policy of Special Relations

A political shift in 1950 ended the 104-year-old Rana Oligarchy. The newly introduced democratic institutions paved the way for new foreign policy paradigms. However, Nepal's diplomatic relations during King Tribhuvan's reign were dominated by India. It is said that the two nations enjoy a "special relationship" with one another. Things didn't change much after Britain left the subcontinent. Three significant events with a close connection to India were the signing of the Extradition Treaty of 1953, the Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950, and the tripartite accords allowing for the reinstatement of Gurkhas in India (Baral, 2018).

Non-aligned Foreign Policy/Policy of equiproximity

Nepal adopted a non-aligned foreign policy and policy of equiproximity after the devastating World War II. When King Mahendra ascended the throne in 1955, Nepal joined the United Nations (UN) and established diplomatic relations with China. King Mahendra used NA's participation in UNPKO as a foreign policy tool to preserve Nepal's sovereignty from its neighbors. This strategy bore fruit as Nepal was twice elected as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council (UNSC), in 1969-70 and 1988-89.

King Mahendra initiated Nepal's accession in various multilateral forums, notably he began appealing to Western countries for military aid after the 1962 India-China War (Bhattarai, K., 2019). Western powers, primarily the United States (US) and Britain, responded positively to Mahendra's military requests, and in 1964, Nepal entered into an agreement with the US, in which the US agreed to provide logistical support to the then Royal NA. As a result, the UK also started providing military aid to Nepal (Bhattarai, K., 2019).

After King Birendra ascended the throne of Nepal, he introduced a new foreign policy decision declaring Nepal a “peace zone” and pledging to uphold peace, non-alignment and peaceful co-existence policies (Uprety, 2015, p.197). 116 nations, including the four permanent members of the UNSC, have endorsed the proposal for a Nepal Peace Zone.

Following the policy of equiproximity with two giant neighboring countries, bilateral defense cooperation with China gained momentum, especially after King Gyanendra acceded to the throne in 2005, and especially after the end of the monarchy in 2008. In 2005, China pledged \$989,000 worth of military aid to Nepal, largely to help curb the Maoist rebellion. Similarly in 2008, after the first Constituent Assembly (CA) election of 2008, then-Secretary of Defense Ram Bahadur Thapa signed a \$2.6 million military aid deal with China to modernize the NA. (Bhattarai, K., 2019)

Foreign Policy 2020

The Communist Party-led government introduced the first-ever codified foreign policy in 2020. Enhancing national dignity through the preservation of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence, as well as advancing national interest through strengthening Nepal's identity and representation in international and regional fora, are the main goals of Nepal's foreign policy. This policy has also envisaged track-two diplomacy i.e. mobilizing retired army officers as needed (Foreign Policy, 2020, point 8.19). In explicit form, the policy fails to incorporate military diplomacy. Nevertheless, military diplomacy is guided by a foreign policy aimed at contributing to world peace, harmony, and security.

The practice of foreign policy and military diplomacy varies in different political periods. We can see the use of the military as hard power in maintaining the sovereignty of Nepal during unification period and Rana regime, and gradually using it as a soft power to contribute to world peace and harmony and meet the national interest of Nepal.

Provisions of Military Diplomacy

Nepal has no specific doctrine relating to promoting and regulating military diplomacy. On the broader spectrum, it is regulated by following the constitution and other relevant legal provisions including foreign policy to ensure its dignity, integrity, sovereignty and to maintain global peace and harmony.

Constitutional Provisions

The *Constitution of Nepal* has envisaged the meaning of national interest, state policies to maintain international relations and has made a provision of the National Security Council. Article 51 of the Constitution of Nepal has noted a state policy “to conduct an independent foreign policy based on the Charter of the UN, non-alignment, principles of Panchasheel, international law and the norms of world peace, taking into account of the overall interest of the nation, while remaining active in safeguarding the sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence and national interest of Nepal” and “to make all security organs, including the NA, Nepal Police and Armed Police Force Nepal, competent, strong, professional, inclusive and accountable to the people on the basis of national security policies.”

Article 267 provides for Nepali Army as an institution that is inclusive and committed to the Constitution and for the safeguarding of independence, territorial integrity, sovereignty and national unity of Nepal. The formation of a National Security Council has been authorized in order to develop security-related policies, mobilize, and command NA. (Const. of Nepal, art. 266).

Legal Provisions

- i. *Army Act 2006 and Military Service Rules, 2012*: It regulates the establishment, arrangement, use, control and mobilization of NA to make NA accountable to the Nepalese people.
- ii. *Procedure to Appoint for Peacekeeping Force, 2075 B.S.*: The procedure is formulated to organize and make transparent the selection of qualified military personnel of NA to participate in the peacekeeping missions at the invitation of the UN.

Policy Provisions

- i. *National Security Policy, 2016*: The major responsibility of NA endorsed by the policy in point 3.3.2. are:
 - To develop military technology and research and to be self-reliant in production of arms and ammunitions, explosives and other materials to be used by security agencies and to regularly assess the supply and need of NA and to acquire necessary materials.
 - To assist in developing military relationships with armies of neighboring countries.
 - To coordinate through the MoD the activities and interactions of military importance to be conducted by the Defense Attaché of the Embassies of the countries having diplomatic bonds with Nepal.

- ii. *Foreign Policy, 2020*: The objectives of the foreign policy of Nepal are the following:
- To expand and strengthen bilateral relations with all countries including neighbors on the principles of sovereign equality, reciprocal benefit and respect.
 - To promote the national interest by enhancing the identity and representation of Nepal in the international and regional forums.
 - To actively participate in multilateral forums to establish global peace and disarmament.
 - To enhance regional assistance, peace and cooperation.

Other Provisions

- i. *Diplomatic Code of Conduct, 2011*: The Government of Nepal has issued a code to conduct negotiations, official meetings, and communication of the government of Nepal with a foreign country, international organizations, their representatives and other authorities in a more orderly and dignified manner compatible with diplomatic standards and international practices.
- ii. *Protocol and Consular Handbook, 2018*: The handbook has mentioned the protocol to appoint Defense/Military Attachés/advisors to Nepal, both residential and non-residential (Protocol, 2018, p.6). It also mentions that in places other than the state capitals, the visiting dignitary and his delegation are received and seen off by the senior most civil, military and police personnel.
- iii. *Objectives of Long-Term Vision of Nepal Army, 2030*: It aims to increase Nepal's contribution to global peacekeeping by enhancing the efficiency of military diplomacy in line with Nepal's foreign policy (Neupane, 2020).

Military Diplomacy as a Tool of Foreign Policy

While the third part of this paper discussed the practice of military diplomacy in various foreign policy trends, this section of the paper focuses on the various forms of military diplomacy, used by the government of Nepal, as a tool to implement Nepal's foreign policy objectives in the present context. Nepal has expanded defense cooperation with neighboring and foreign countries including activities such as combined exercises, procurement, development, honorary visits and other forms of defense cooperation.

Military Attachés

The position of military attaché is closely related to military diplomacy. (Swistek, 2012). Defense attachés are members of the armed forces who serve in foreign embassies as representatives of their country's defense agency (DCAF Backgrounder, 2007) and facilitate military exchanges between countries (Singh, 2021). Their primary duties are to represent their country's military and security interests, supervise and manage military public affairs, defense diplomacy, and security cooperation activities, and provide military and/or security support to ambassadors and embassy staff (DCAF Backgrounder, 2007).

Nepal has established diplomatic ties with 176 countries and has established embassies in 30 countries. It has sent NA as military attachés to countries including Bangladesh, China, India, Pakistan, the UK and the US, etc. and also has been receiving military attachés from various countries (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021).

Joint Military/Disaster Exercises

Joint military exercises are one means of promoting military diplomacy. The NA has conducted joint military exercises with India, China and the United States. Surya Kiran is a bilateral joint military exercise between India and Nepal that began in 2011. The 15th India-Nepal Joint Military Exercise was held in 2021. During this exercise, both sides familiarized themselves with each other's use of weapons, equipment, tactics and techniques, and procedures in a mountainous counterinsurgency environment, as well as numerous academic expert discussions on various topics such as humanitarian aid, disaster relief, Highland Warfare and Jungle Warfare was conducted (India-Nepal, 2021).

Military exercises with China are undertaken under Exercise “Sagarmatha Friendship”. It took place in 2017 and 2018 covering topics including combat riots and terrorism. The exercise is part of regular bilateral and multilateral military exercises aimed at sharing experience, skills and expertise, which Nepal regularly conducts with countries with which it has diplomatic relations (Adhikari, 2020). Similarly, Exercise Balance Nail is a bilateral military exercise between the US Army and the NA that began in 2060 B.S. and focuses on law enforcement and military decision-making in conflict environments. The 39th edition of Ex-Balance Nail was held in 2022 (Joint Military, 2022).

In addition to bilateral military exercises, a multilateral military exercise which is called ‘Shanti Prayas’ (Endeavor for Peace) is conducted by the NA and the US Indo-Pacific Command. It was held three times in 2000, 2013 and 2017. The main purpose of this exercise is to professionalize the military forces, particularly for UN peacekeeping duties. In 2000, the number of participating countries was four, but in 2013, the number of participating member countries increased to 23 and the number of participating military personnel to 445 (Pankaj, 2019). This demonstrates NA's professionalism and intent to strengthen military diplomacy with forces of friendly foreign countries. In 2017, up to 1,000 military personnel from 28 countries participated in a two-week exercise co-hosted by NA and the US Pacific Command (Shanti Prayas III, 2017). A Civil-Military Disaster Preparedness and Response Initiative was jointly organized by the NA, the Ministry of Home Affairs of Nepal, and the US Army Pacific (Ray, 2018).

Military Recruitments

Apart from the significant NA contribution to UN Peacekeeping Missions, Nepali citizens are also serving in the UK and India, the Singapore Police Gurkha Contingent and the Brunei Gurkha Reserve Unit (Bhattarai, A., 2021).

Participation in UN Peacekeeping Missions

Nepal has actively participated in UN peace operations since its membership in the UN in 1955. Nepalese military's participation in UN peace support operations spans more than half a century and includes some 44 UN missions involving more than 1,41,525 personnel. As of 1

November 2022, the Nepalese Armed Forces are deployed in 12 missions around the world. As a military contributor, Nepal is the second largest in the world. Currently, the Nepali Army has approximately 5,609 soldiers, including 351 female soldiers, in 12 different missions around the world. Nepal has pledged to provide up to 10,000 peacekeepers in response to UN requests (NA in UN, 2022).

Bilateral and multilateral military assistance

Nepal had received bilateral and multilateral military assistance during political upheavals and natural calamities. As a counterinsurgency measure, the United States and China stepped up military cooperation with NA under King Gyanendra (US-Nepal Relations). China provided Nepal with \$1 million worth of military aid to fight the rebellion. In 2017, China has handed over the established National Armed Police Academy to the Nepal government. In a defense pact signed with China in 2008, China agreed to help to modernize the NA. Humanitarian assistance was provided to Nepal by India, China, the US, etc. during the 2015 earthquake.

Visits and Meetings

Since 1950, under the Treaty of Peace and Friendship with India, Nepal and India have been awarding honorary ranks to other Army Chiefs in recognition of the harmonious relationship between their armies. Exchanges of visits and meetings of Army officials and defense ministers or other concerned ministries aid in executing objectives of foreign policy. For instance, the unofficial blockade imposed by India was eased out following the visit of the Chief of the Army of Nepal to India. In 2017, the visit of China's defense minister to Kathmandu deepened military cooperation with China as he announced a US\$32.3 million grant assistance to Nepal to build Nepal's natural disaster response capacity and purchase equipment for Nepal's peacekeepers deployed in conflict areas (Chapagain, 2019).

Nepal purchases arms and ammunition required for security from India, China, the US, and other countries on a contractual basis. NA acquired M4, M-16 and A4 rifles from the USA in 2019 (Ghimire, 2019), and recently an Indian private company supplied 2 million of the 5.56x45mm rounds for the NA's assault rifles under a government-to-government contract route in 2022 (Philip, 2022). Nepal thus uses these various modes of military diplomacy as an instrument to strengthen bilateral and multilateral relations with all countries, including neighboring countries, based on equality of sovereignty, mutual benefit and respect, and to promote Nepal's engagement in international and regional forums.

Challenges of Military Diplomacy in Executing Foreign Policy Objectives

Military diplomacy can strengthen Nepal's regional and broader global ties, strengthens its defense infrastructure, builds the capabilities of its own armed forces, develops partnerships, promotes military transparency, reduces misunderstandings, promote awareness of common interests and strengthens Nepal's position in international forums. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on the celebration of the International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy in 2020 has said that "it is not enough to proclaim the virtues of multilateralism; we must continue to show its added value." The implication of military diplomacy can add value to multilateralism.

As discussed in Part III, Nepal has used various types of military diplomacy, but based on desk reviews and input from key informants, the author has come up with the following challenges of military diplomacy to execute the objectives of foreign policy, 2020.

No Explicit Incorporation of Military Diplomacy in Foreign Policy, 2020

In Nepal, the practice of military diplomacy has a long tradition. It has been used to preserve Nepal's sovereignty and enhance its national interests in bilateral and multilateral relations. However, unlike other forms of diplomacy such as economic diplomacy and labor diplomacy, Nepal's foreign policy does not explicitly integrate military diplomacy. The absence of explicit inclusion clearly hinders the regulation and promotion of military diplomacy.

All key informants expressed that the term military diplomacy itself was relatively new to us and the concerned stakeholders and therefore not explicitly mentioned in formal texts and documents. However, both AD and AE believe that foreign policy extends from contributing to world peace and international goodwill to adhering to Panchasheel and neutrality as the guiding principles to encompass broader aspects of military diplomacy.

Military Diplomacy is less prioritized

Military diplomacy, getting less priority in executing foreign policy itself is challenging. AD and AE further argue that, given the geopolitical status of Nepal and the relative size of the NA, it is reasonable for policymakers to use methods other than military diplomacy if they can achieve their foreign policy goals.

Retired Chief of Army Staff General Gaurav Shumsher Rana said at the Alice conference: “there is misunderstanding about the terms being studied as hard power tool. Military diplomacy is formulated and practiced under the umbrella and pursuit of larger foreign policy goals. Sadly in our case the scope, purpose and limitations of military diplomacy are misinterpreted or misunderstood thereby contributing towards creating a negative impression of military activism and militaries being dragged into unnecessary controversies” (CESIF Nepal, 2022).

The notion of military diplomacy is misunderstood among civilians and policymakers as hard power which is one of the causes of non-priority in foreign policy. Nepal has made the first attempt to codify the policy, leaving limited time to discuss and promote military diplomacy to implement the policy's goals and objectives. It has to be prioritized upon the consent of the government to strengthen its position in achieving national interest.

Violation of Diplomatic Code of Conduct

Diplomatic Code of Conduct, 2011 was enacted to govern the conduct of official meetings, contacts between the Nepal government with foreign governments, international organizations, their representatives and other authorities in accordance with diplomatic standards and international practices (Diplomatic Code, preamble). The violation of the diplomatic code of conduct by the concerned authorities time and again has obstructed the enhancement of military diplomacy in Nepal.

Lack of Coordination among NA, MoFA, and MoD

MoD, MoFA, NA and Ministry of Home are the concerned authorities that regulate military diplomacy in Nepal. Long Term Vision of NA, 2030 has envisioned increasing Nepal's contribution to global peacekeeping by making military diplomacy more effective in harmony with foreign policy of Nepal (Neupane, 2020). Similarly, in order to develop military technology and to assist in developing military relationships with armies of neighboring countries as per National Security Policy, 2016, NA should coordinate with MoD, MoFA and other concerned bodies. However, incidents such as the controversy of the last-minute pullout from the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) military drill (Ghimire, 2018) depicts the shortcoming of proper coordination among the concerned bodies. Such indecision and paucity of coordinated acts reflect the failure of diplomatic mechanisms in Nepal.

AC said Nepal is often criticized for not having clear national interest while working with international powers. Both AB and AC stated that political parties are not clear in their ideology of foreign policy and their stands differ when they are in the government and when they are not. Lack of leadership and political consensus among mainstream political parties on foreign policy is one reason diplomatic relations are hampered. Similarly, AA opined that military diplomacy cannot be conducted in isolation by NA only. NA should be assisted by the Nepal government to meet requirements such as logistics and facilities. For military assistance from and to foreign countries to enhance the objectives of foreign policy, the concerned ministry such as MoD and MoFA shall assist NA as required. However, the lack of transparency and coordination among these authorities is an obstacle to the promotion of military diplomacy in Nepal.

Nepal has enacted Government of Nepal (Allocation of Business) Rules which have clearly defined functions of each ministry. The existence of a gap between the law and its implementation is another cause of deplorable coordination among the concerned authorities. Likewise, National Security Council, which has a non-party mechanism, is not active and vibrant as required (CESIF Nepal, 2022).

Lack of coordination among concerned bodies, enforcement of laws by the concerned bodies and the passive nature of the National Security Council are hurdles to the expansion of military diplomacy.

Failure to Revise the Peace and Friendship Treaty, 1950 in a Timely Manner

A controversial provision in Article 5 of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship, 1950 states that “Nepal shall import any arms and ammunitions through Indian Territory according to the assistance and agreement of India.” This article shows Nepal's national security around the Indian security umbrella. Such provisions are an obstacle to accomplishing foreign policy goals and national interests. Recognizing the requirement to rectify the various bilateral relations between Nepal and India, the India-Nepal Eminent Person Group (EPG) was formed to study bilateral relations including the study of the treaty of Peace and Friendship, 1950. The group recommended the revision of the treaty. However, it has not been addressed. Wise Foreign policy is in the nation’s interest. The treaty amendment should be taken into consideration as quickly as feasible in order to safeguard national security.

AA and AB opined that the treaty had no actual effect because both parties, namely Nepal and India, had not complied with its provisions. All the key informants agreed on prompt revision of the treaty upon the publication of the EPG report in a publicly accessible manner and analyzing its positive recommendations. AC stressed Nepal's inability to articulate its interests and suggested exploring formal and informal channels to justify Nepal's national interests.

Inadequate Initiatives to lead the UN peacekeeping mission

The participation in UN Peacekeeping Operations has strengthened the position of Nepal in an international forum. Lately, Nepal has been unable to use it to foster its national interest. AC opined that Nepal has not made efforts to lead UNPKO. AA and AC suggested that both the executive branch and the military should seek an influential position in such missions. The lack of adequate lobbying and Nepal's own initiative to lead such missions poses challenges to strengthening military diplomacy via UN peacekeeping participation.

The politicization within NA, overwhelming individualism in institutions (CESIF Nepal, 2022), frequent changes in government and ministers in the concerned ministry, lack of political leadership and lack of agreement on foreign policy among the major political parties and Nepal's national interest are other challenges that Nepal is facing to promote military diplomacy.

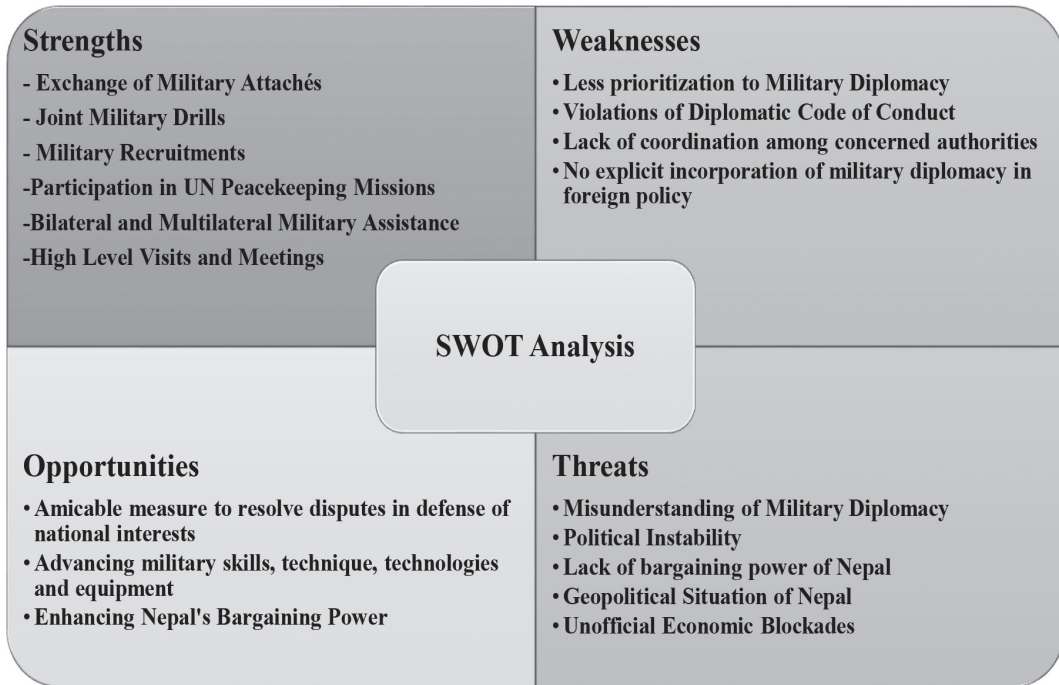


Figure: SWOT Analysis of Military Diplomacy of Nepal in light of its Challenges and Foreign Policy

Conclusion and Recommendation

With the change in the world politics after the end of the Second World War (1939-45) and the increasing utilization of the military as a soft power to advance the State's national interest, Nepal should strengthen its military diplomacy with neighboring and other foreign countries to position its national interest in the international fora while duly considering its geo-political situation. Military diplomacy has long been practiced in the implementation of foreign policy goals but in the paucity of a proper doctrine regarding military diplomacy, misunderstandings about it among policymakers, lack of adequate coordination between Nepali Army, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nepal, and other agencies (due to frequent changes in the government), challenges persist.

In order to mitigate these challenges, the paper recommends the following on the basis of inputs of key informants:

1. Foreign policy should be revised timely, analyzing the importance of military diplomacy in Nepal. Policymakers need to research thoroughly to avoid misinterpretation of military diplomacy as a hard tool.
2. There should be clear procedures for the division of work/business and each concerned authority should be aware of the procedures to mitigate the lack of coordination among authorities.
3. All mainstream political parties should have a common consensus on foreign policy and the national interest of Nepal in regional and international forums.
4. Nepal should actively participate in the UN Peace Building Commissions and lead UNPKO where relevant.
5. All the representatives and the concerned institutions should be aware about Diplomatic Codes of Conduct.
6. Nepal should expand its diplomatic connections for sending and receiving military attachés.
7. Nepal should help create more amicable conditions between China-Nepal-India through trilateral military exercises so that the tension between China and India can be reduced.
8. The NA should remain vigilant against internal politicization and institutional interest should continue to take precedence.
9. The National Security Council should be made active and vibrant in regulating defense mechanisms.

Annex

Checklist for Key Informants Interview

- a. In Nepal, the practice of military diplomacy has a long tradition. It is used as a means or tool to accomplish foreign policy objectives. However, Nepal's foreign policy does not include the term "military diplomacy". What do you think about this?
- b. There are numerous examples of military diplomacy helping to maintain international relations with neighboring countries and other countries. [Example: India's unofficial economic blockade imposed on Nepal in 2015 was eased through military diplomacy.] Nevertheless, why is this form of diplomacy less of a priority in the operation of foreign policy?
- c. Has the Strategic Partnership Program controversy cast a bad spotlight on the MoD, MoFA, and the NA, resulting in lamentable coordination between these agencies in military diplomacy? What are the reasons for this lamentable adjustment? How can it be mitigated in order to promote military diplomacy?
- d. Article 5 of the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship is one of the obstacles to the promotion of military diplomacy, which stipulates that Nepal imports all arms and ammunition through the Indian Territory, subject to India's support and consent. The article shows India's dominance over Nepal's security. The report of India-Nepal Eminent Person Group (EPG), which was formed to study bilateral treaties, has recommended the revision of this treaty. However, it has not yet been officially adopted. What is your opinion in this regard?
- e. UNPKO is one of the most important military and diplomatic instruments to improve the goals and objectives of Nepal's foreign policy. Nepal has served as a non-permanent member of the UNSC twice. However in the present context, Nepal has been unable to use it to enhance its positions in the UN. Why?

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