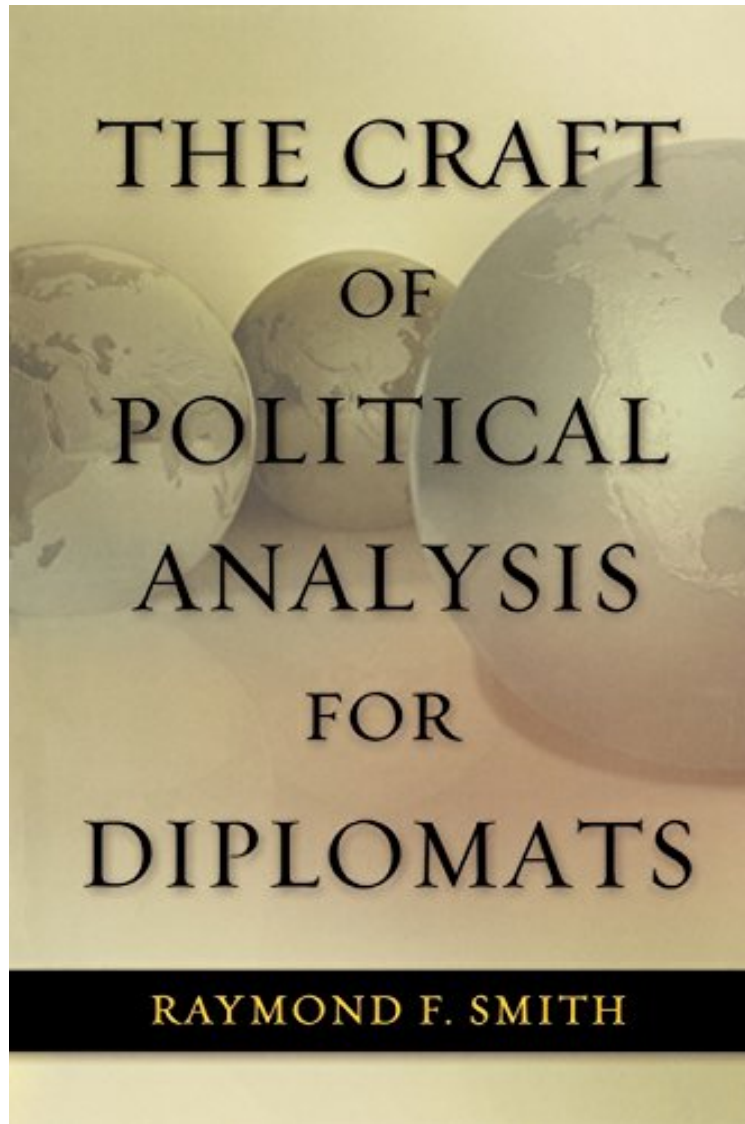


The Craft of Political Analysis for Diplomats (ADST-DACOR Diplomats and Diplomacy)

Raymond F. Smith

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Raymond F. Smith : The Craft of Political Analysis for Diplomats (ADST-DACOR Diplomats and Diplomacy) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Craft of Political Analysis for Diplomats (ADST-DACOR Diplomats and Diplomacy):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Good combination of the conceptual and practicalBy CarloThis is a unique description of how political analysis actually functions at the U.S. Department of State, written from the point

of view of a highly experienced, (retired) senior practitioner. The author was a career Political Officer in the Foreign Service had during the course of his career had plum, high-profile assignments in Moscow, from which the bulk of the examples in the book are drawn, including some of his own declassified cables. Despite the Soviet/Russian focus of the material presented, the broader conceptual framework the author presents is universal, well thought out, and should be understandable to both the layman and foreign affairs professional. The central point is that political analysis in diplomacy is most akin to a craft - it is not a hard science, nor a soft science, but an informed synthesis of available facts, judicious weighing of the importance of different societal and individual power dynamics, and explanatory context. In this respect, it is a lot like intelligence analysis (about which much more has been written). The crucial difference is that the reporting officer in the field is at the same time both a firsthand witness and an analyst, rather than a "pure" analyst sitting in a cubicle in Washington trying to interpret others' reporting. In fact, what the author is talking about in this book is political reporting in a diplomatic context, but he since he emphasizes the responsibility of the reporting officer to analyze, interpret and present policy options/recommendations/implications, the book title's focus on political analysis is fair. Foreign affairs professionals who are in the early or middle phases of their careers will probably get the most practical use out of this book, which also describes in-depth the realities of Washington and how the policy sausage gets made; political reporting needs to be timely, relevant and - if not biased - at least cognizant of the policy context in which it will be received. Those readers who are not directly involved in the foreign affairs policy process and who are looking for a cogent presentation of the art of political reporting and analysis will not be disappointed, though. A few minor criticisms/observations for the reader to keep in mind:-- The example base is not broad, but is adequate enough and interesting enough even for those readers (like myself) who are not Sovietologists or Russian specialists.-- The author seems to draw almost exclusively from his own work and experience. A broader sample, for example drawing on the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) historical series, would have been welcomed. The author also seems to have toed the official line on not using any Wikileaks material, which obviously would have been of much more current relevance and interest.-- Some general allusions to internal State Department policy conflicts may sail over the heads of the reader. Readers of the Foreign Service Journal (available online) will know there has been a lot of debate about policy bias.-- This is not a memoir, but does focus almost exclusively on the author's life experience, which has the same pluses and minuses that one may find in (say) a blog. Ego is present in some fashion, even if downplayed. In summary, the incisive conceptual framework and practical observations and advice given in the book are well worth the time invested by the reader, even if they already have experience in the field.

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars
By GodfreyGreat advice from a man who knows his craft. A must read for all foreign service officers.

0 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Book rate - 1
By Glenns Thaddeus Etyang EkisaThe book was and still is valuable to my studies. That's why I rate it five stars, and also for who delivers the book in the shortest time possible. Glenns

Until the recent unauthorized release of thousands of classified State Department cables, public attention was rarely drawn to the frequently outstanding political analysis done by American diplomats abroad. The existing literature on diplomacy has heretofore been limited to memoirs of former diplomats and analyses of international affairs by diplomats, academics, and think tanks. The Craft of Political Analysis offers a fresh approach, one that provides a context for interpreting this embassy reporting and a guide to understanding the work that went on behind the scenes to produce it. Author Raymond F. Smith combines a practitioner's personal view of what is required to do good diplomatic political analysis with his understanding of the social conflict and change that informed his work for the State Department. Smith clearly explains everything the Foreign Service candidate or professional, as well as the interested layman, needs to know about crafting political analysis, including how to write for the analyst's intended audience, how to make best use of the intellectual and analytical tools of the trade, what happens when the analyst's views differ from government policy, and why political analysis risks becoming irrelevant, even though it is still urgently needed. In addition, The Craft of Political Analysis for Diplomats features two case studies using legally declassified cables not included in the Wikileaks release. The first is built around four highly restricted Embassy Moscow cables on the collapse of the Soviet Union; the second includes two cables on the Arab-Israeli conflict that received the State Department's highest award for political analysis. Selected for the Diplomats and Diplomacy Series of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training (ADST) and DACOR, an organization of foreign affairs professionals.

"A candid and insightful introduction to the diplomatic profession, this handbook explains how to use one's personal compass to navigate the winds of politics and bureaucracy. Smith reveals much about the obstacles, biases, and games that limit the reach of our finest reporting officers and sheds light on the unique cultural and relationship tools they possess. Richly illustrated with cases and quotes—including examples from his own Soviet and African experiences—this book sets an analytical standard to which his former colleagues and successors should aspire."—Chester Crocker, former assistant secretary of state for African affairs and professor of strategic studies,

