



American Statecraft: The Story of the U.S. Foreign Service

J. Robert Moskin

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This magisterial work on American diplomacy by a veteran journalist and historian is the first complete history of the U.S. Foreign Service

American Statecraft is a fascinating and comprehensive look at the unsung men and women of the U.S. Foreign Service whose dedication and sacrifices have been a crucial part of our history for over two centuries. Fifteen years in the making, veteran journalist and historian Moskin has traveled the globe conducting hundreds of interviews both in and out of the State Department to look behind the scenes at America's "militiamen of diplomacy."

As the nation's eyes and ears, our envoys pledge a substantial part of their lives in foreign lands working for the benefit of their nation. Endeavoring to use dialogue and negotiation as their instruments of change, our diplomats tirelessly work to find markets for American business, rescue its citizens in trouble abroad, and act in general as "America's first line of defense" in policy negotiations, keeping America out of war. But it took generations to polish these skills, and Moskin traces America's full diplomatic history, back to its amateur years coming up against seasoned Europeans during the days of Ben Franklin, now considered the father of the U.S. Foreign Service, and up to the recent Benghazi attack. Along the way, its members included many devoted and courageous public servants, and also some political spoilsmen and outright rogues.

An important contribution to the political canon, *American Statecraft* recounts the history of the United States through the lens of foreign diplomacy.

American Statecraft: The Story of the U.S. Foreign Service Details

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From Reader Review *American Statecraft: The Story of the U.S. Foreign Service* for online ebook

Nicholas Aune says

THE BIG BOOK OF AMERICAN DIPLOMATIC HISTORY. This book examines everything. Politics at home, America's rocky start with France and Pirates, the development, deterioration and rebirth of American diplomacy. Every treaty, Every gaff. Every big dog and spoils system diplomat. Their all featured in an engrossing and colorful narrative. A must have for any political or history junkie.

Richard Fox says

This books is a remarkable view of America's history in terms of our engagement with the world. It is worth noting that this book is called a story rather than a history. Unlike conventional history, This narrative follows something of a spiraling time line, tangentially pursuing specific themes, such a growing professionalism, diversity, etc, as the overall story unfolds. I found this books fascinating both for the overall story as well as the numerous vignettes highlight the adventures and frequent heroism of these often unsung diplomats. I heartily recommend this books to everyone interested in learning how America's role in the world has grown and matured.

James says

A written account (it's more anecdotes than history) of America's diplomatic corps. An interesting idea, but perhaps too unwieldy to be practical. In fact, unwieldy is a good word to describe *American Statecraft*. There is some fascinating material here, but, overall, I was distracted by the lack of focus, absence of analysis, and what appears to be some hasty editing.

First, there are absolutely fascinating depictions of American diplomats at work throughout American history. The American Revolution, the War of 1812, establishment of relations with Japan, both World Wars, and the Cold War are highlights. It is amazing to see how consistently American diplomats have grasped the prevailing political winds at posts abroad and correctly predicted the advent of conflict or political instability. It's also sobering to see the limits of American diplomacy (and military power) in places like Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan, where the "bench" of experts, so to speak, wasn't heeded or simply didn't exist ahead of time.

However, this book suffers from the multifaceted nature of American foreign policy. It's difficult to comprehensively discuss major happenings in U.S. foreign relations without looking at the military, intelligence bodies, and, increasingly, the National Security Council, among others. There's also very little analysis. The descriptions of historical events get bogged down in tangents that, often, seem to come at the cost of depicting the role of the State Department or the Foreign Service--the purpose of this book. The names and positions of prominent diplomats are shared, but often they are mentioned only in passing and it's difficult to determine their impact on events. For this reason, it almost appears that this material would be better served as an anthology, where the identities and roles of some of the less well-known diplomats during important periods of American foreign policy could be fleshed out in greater detail and analyzed.

The chapters on the formations of and reforms to the Foreign Service are unlikely to be very engaging to those outside the system, but they do provide some interesting background on administrative history of American diplomacy. However, often these sections are awkwardly inserted between or even within chapters that seem to bear little relation to their content.

In addition, there are some glaring inaccuracies and jumps in chronology, giving the impression the book was hastily edited. For example:

When the Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan in 1986, the State Department sent special envoy Peter Thomsen ... to work with the victorious Afghans. The black-turbaned Taliban, puritanical "students of Islam," imposed Islamic rule in Kabul. (p. 628)

The inaccuracies (Soviets withdrew in 1989, not 1986) and lack of context (Taliban didn't capture Kabul until 1996) here make it impossible to determine when this envoy was sent to Afghanistan or with whom he met. Unfortunately, this is not the only time I was left scratching my head by this book.

In the end, a worthy read for those particularly interested in the Foreign Service. But one that is hobbled by the sheer scope of the material and some awkward editing.

A. Lieberson says

Robert Moskin writes a well-documented, detailed history of the U.S. Foreign Service chronicled from its inception in 1781 through 2012. While it was originally known as the U.S. Department of Foreign Affairs, once the Constitution was ratified, the U.S. Department of State was formed. Thomas Jefferson was the first Secretary of State.

Moskin takes us through the evolution of the department over the next 200 years. The book is well organized into three parts with a substantial bibliography. Each part is divided into titled sections which contributes to the organization. While scholarly in scope, Moskin engages the reader with his appealing narrative.

In the third part of the book, which for some will be the most interesting, Moskin describes the changes that have taken place in the Foreign Service since 1946 which included a more diverse group of Foreign Service Officers and the threat of terrorism worldwide. The book ends with a list of the Foreign Service members who lost their lives in the line of duty. Many of their stories are told throughout the book.

The book would appeal to those who are interested in foreign affairs and/or American history.

P.e. lolo says

This is a book that takes a look at our foreign service from the revolution thru Benghazi. He goes starts off mainly with the idea that our foreign service at one time was very strong for the type of people that were selected to their posts. Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, to name just a few. Then once after the revolution you had Thomas Jefferson as Secretary of State and then John Quincy Adams who went to school in Europe and spoke different language's become an ambassador. The author goes on to show that for up through WWII men and women that were being selected for posts were people that had experience in some form of government or came out of an area that instead of leaving government service all together they

would go on to a foreign post. They had a sense of how diplomats were to conduct themselves and could tell when a problem was going to happen in the country that they were in. It was after WWII that when posts started slowly being given to people who had no knowledge of how things took place and were given these assignments or posts as a way of saying thank you for a campaign contribution. Once this practice started it became more common place to the point where Foreign Service are now and for years is weaker than ever. I do disagree with the author's take on Benghazi, he glossed over it and really said that there was nothing that could be done. I have read other books about the subject and they showed documents that should have been a red flag by at least our State Dept. Who oversees over things and still nothing was done. I thought over all it was a good book except for the 20 pages or so. I got this book from NetGalley.

Lisa B. says

I have always been fascinated by the men and women who are willing to serve in the U. S. Foreign Service. Mr. Moskin has provided the reader a finely detailed and informative book on this very topic. I found this to be educational and sometimes humorous. To have made a book of this size come across as very readable was no small task, and yet the author handled it quite well.

Many thanks to St. Martin's Press, via NetGalley, for allowing me to read this in exchange for an unbiased review.

Travis Starnes says

After a brief intro Moskin starts at the beginning of the service during the Revolutionary war and makes his way forward, hitting all of the major and a couple of minor points along its history. He examines the agencies' leaders and key players in its developments as well as notable events that in some way helped shape the service into what it is.

It should be clear that this is a pro-foreign service book. As with most books that in some way examine part of our government, Moskin has a point of view. It is clear he is a fan of the US Foreign Service and he spends nearly the entire book explaining why the agency does such "fine work", although to be fair he does bring up a few dark spots for the agency to give the rest of the book somewhat of a counterbalance.

Even though there is a definite skew to how the material is presented, not that I am saying I disagree with him just that it is fair to point out the book's bias, this is still worth reading. He is without a doubt completely conversant on the organization and has put together an impressive amount of research on it as well. His writing style is easy to read, for a history book at least, and he has a narrative way of writing history that I find preferable to the more dry and quote-heavy styles you sometimes find.

<http://homeofreading.com/american-statecraft/>

Aisling says

I'm not sure it has ever taken me longer to finish a book--all 944 pages--but I was fascinated by most of them. To say this book is comprehensive is putting it mildly. Moskin's unbelievably detailed research is a

thing of joy and he manages to write in a pleasant and easy style. This is a must read for anyone who loves American history or is interested in the Foreign Service. My only complaint was the last 15 or so pages when he glossed over recent history (including Benghazi) in an attempt to bring the book right up to current day. I just don't think we can have the information or perspective to summarize those events the way Moskin does. But truly the first 930 some pages are worth reading; by turns funny, fascinating, horrifying and instructive. My hat is off to Mr. Moskin for this epic piece of research and writing.
