

What is Analytical Tradecraft?

How does good tradecraft help us serve our reader? How does it help us as analysts protect our own equities? How does it make our lives as analysts easier and more interesting?

1. It is the CONSCIOUS and DELIBERATE process of evaluating and transforming raw data into descriptions, explanations, and conclusions for our readers –
 - reduce bias (ours or theirs)
 - reduce manipulation (the reporting agency's, source's or sub-source's)
 - reduce intellectual limitations (linear thinking)

2. Tradecraft is what enables us to look our reader in the eye and say:

I have examined the information and evidence, and I believe that ___ is occurring; ___, ___, and ___ are driving it; trends indicate ___ ; it appears likely to ___; and it has ___ implications. Although less likely, the situation could evolve in ___ manner if ___ occurs, which would have ___ implications.

3. Tradecraft is also structured humility – the willingness to concede that
 - any issue worth analysis is difficult
 - our information rarely (or ever) is good enough
 - our speculation is “informed” by our expertise, but we admit the gaps in our information
 - if our “probable” scenario doesn't materialize, we also offer alternative scenarios