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## APPLIED ANALYSIS OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN USA

INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR **BEAR F. BRAUMOELLER**,  
DIRECTOR OF GRADUATE STUDIES IN THE DEPARTMENT  
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Bear F. Braumoeller (Ph. D., University of Michigan), Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of Political Science of Ohio State University, is a leading American expert both in international relations, especially international security, and statistical methodology. His book-length systemic theory of international relations is a winner of the 2014 International Studies Association Best Book Award and the 2014 J. David Singer Book Award. In his interview he is talking about contemporary methods of applied research of international relations and its efficiency. As recent LaCour-Green scandal demonstrates, political science in general and international studies in particular are becoming more about science. Dr. B. Braumoeller touches on the issue of efficient IR research methodology and speaks about the role of quantitative methods in IR and especially about statistics. He speaks about the evolution of quantitative methodology in American IR science. Some decades ago, a few pioneers in the field (David Singer, Bruce Russett, Karl Deutsch, Dina Zinnes) published their papers in fairly obscure journals and now the IR journals are dominated by quantitative studies. But for better quantitative studies, a better formal theory of IR is needed. He discusses also epistemological aspects of quantitative studies. Though the mainstream formal modeling in IR is traditionally associated with neorealist and neoliberal approaches, agent-based modeling (ABM) could be brought to bear very effectively on constructivist questions.

**Key words:** IR methodology, quantitative methods, statistical methodology, epistemology, agent-based modeling, “salami tactics”.



*Bear F. Braumoeller (Ph.D., University of Michigan) is Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of Political Science. He previously held faculty positions at Harvard University and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is or has been on the Editorial Boards of five major journals or series, and he is a past Councilor of the Peace Science Society. In the summer of 2016 he will be a Visiting Fellow at the Nobel Institute in Oslo, Norway.*

*Professor Braumoeller's research is in the areas of international relations, especially international security, and statistical methodology. His substantive research includes a new, book-length systemic theory of international relations, *The Great Powers and the International System* (Cambridge University Press; winner of the 2014 International Studies Association Best Book Award and the 2014 J. David Singer Book Award) as well as various works on international conflict, the history of American isolationism, and the problem of so-called “politically irrelevant dyads.” He is currently involved in projects on evaluating the end-of-war thesis and on addressing the problem of endogeneity when estimating the impact of political institutions.*

*His primary statistical research revolves around an original estimator, Boolean logit/probit, which is designed to capture the idea of causal complexity, or multiple causal paths to the same (non)outcome. He has also written on the methodologies of necessary conditions and qualitative comparative analysis (QCA), the study of variance-altering causes, and the use and abuse of multiplicative interaction terms. More recently, he has created a course titled “Data Literacy and Data Visualization” that has reached a wide online audience via iTunes U.*

— ***How do you think, IR is more about ideology, art or science?***

— IR is less about ideology than it was in the 1980s, when the “isms” dominated our discourse. It is becoming more and more about science, as the recent LaCour-Green scandal demonstrates: two researchers published some very improbable findings in a top science journal [1], other researchers failed to replicate them, and when those researchers pointed to serious irregularities in the data the senior author issued a retraction [2]. This is how a real science works: transparency, replication, and objective standards won out.

— ***According to you, what are the most efficient methods of research in modern IR studies?***

— Statistical methods offer an unparalleled combination of speed and flexibility—really, they can be tailored to just about any problem, as long as there’s enough information. So I’d have to say statistics. But if the applied researcher lacks a fundamental understanding of the methodology, all it does is increase one’s efficiency at making mistakes.

— ***Can we divide American community of IR researchers into two large groups — loyal to quantitative methods and reluctant to these methods? What is the share of each group? Whether the share of those how are loyal to quantitative methods is increasing?***

— I think the division into two groups is a somewhat artificial one. I use both statistics and historical case studies in my recent book [3] — and to my surprise I got more positive feedback about the case studies! And increasingly, the best researchers are able to do both, and do them well. That said, the share of researchers using quantitative methods is definitely increasing. In the 1960s and 1970s there were just a few pioneers — J. David Singer, Bruce Russett, Karl Deutsch, Dina Zinnes — and their work was published in fairly obscure journals. Now the top general and IR journals in the field are dominated by quantitative studies.

— ***How can we integrate within the university quantitative methods more closely with international relations theories? Math departments and IT departments have to become more applied, practically-oriented and learn more about IR, or IR departments have to learn more about math and IT?***

— First, we need better theory. One of the very best things about the trend toward formal theory in IR is that it shows how incomplete most of our existing verbal theories

are, in the sense that the outcomes don't necessarily follow from the premises. We need to know *exactly* how the outcomes follow from the premises if we're going to execute meaningful statistical tests! Once we do, IR researchers really have two choices: learn enough statistics to find or devise the best test, or collaborate with a statistician. Either one of these roads is possible. The first is more certain, of course, and the second is generally much more efficient.

— ***Though the share of articles with quantitative analysis at top-ranking journals is permanently increasing and today is more than 50%, these are mostly articles with mathematical statistics which helps us to prove or disprove some simple hypothesis. The part of formal modeling is stagnating at 10—20%. Is there some extra potential for formal modeling and systemic analysis?***

— I hope so. John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt wrote a piece in the European Journal of International Relations in 2013 entitled “Leaving theory behind: Why simplistic hypothesis testing is bad for International Relations” [4]. The argument was fairly dramatic, but their fundamental claim was that, once IR scholars started using quantitative methods, they started answering simpler and less interesting questions. I have to say that I have a hard time disagreeing with that point. I'm not sure that formal modeling has the capacity to save us from that fate, but it can at least focus us on the testable implications of more complex (and interesting) theories.

— ***Whether formal modeling and quantitative methods are associated with neorealistic and neoliberal paradigms mostly or we can use it both within constructivist and postmodernist perspectives which are becoming more and more popular nowadays?***

— Neorealists and neoliberals share a positivist epistemology, for the most part, so they're equally at home with formal modeling and quantitative methods (at least in principle). Neoliberals tend to rely on game theory a bit more, probably because it allows them to explore a variety of ways in which cooperation can be achieved in settings in which preferences conflict.

Rational choice theory seems to be fairly uninteresting to constructivists. That makes sense: it just isn't how they see the world. Similarly, the quantitative methods that we have adopted in IR are designed for use with causal questions. That can make them a bit challenging to use in constructivist and postmodern studies, which focus more on constitutive questions. But I think that's more a question of habit than it is of any inherent constraints on the methods. Quite a few lesser-known methods, like agent-based modeling, could be brought to bear very effectively on constructivist questions. It just isn't done very much.

— ***What is your favorite metaphor in IR theory and why?***

— Thomas Schelling's idea of “salami tactics”. The idea is simple: I don't tell you that I want your salami—I just ask for a small piece. Then I come back a few minutes later and say, “My, that was delicious—could I have another bite?” Then another, and

another. No single request is unreasonable, so you oblige, but before you know it I've eaten your whole salami. Even though the metaphor is 50 years old, I find that I use it quite often when describing present-day international relations.

**Interviewed by Denis Degterev**

## REFERENCES

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## ПРИКЛАДНОЙ АНАЛИЗ МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫХ ОТНОШЕНИЙ В США

ИНТЕРВЬЮ С **Б. БРАУМЕЛЛЕРОМ**, ДИРЕКТОРОМ  
МАГИСТЕРСКИХ ПРОГРАММ ДЕПАРТАМЕНТА ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИХ НАУК  
ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОГО УНИВЕРСИТЕТА ОГАЙО (США)

Б. Браумеллер (доктор философии, степень получена в Мичиганском университете), директор магистерских программ департамента политических наук Государственного университета Огайо, является одним из ведущих американских экспертов в области международных отношений, в частности в сфере международной безопасности и методологии статистического анализа. Его монография о системной теории международных отношений стала номинантом премии 2014 г. Ассоциации международных исследований, а также премии Дэвида Сингера 2014 г. В своем интервью он говорит о современных методах прикладных исследований международных отношений и их эффективности. Как недавно продемонстрировал скандал с публикацией М. Лакура-Д. Грина, политология в целом и международные исследования в частности становятся все более близки к науке. Доктор Б. Браумеллер затрагивает вопрос о роли количественных методов анализа в международных отношениях, в особенности статистических методов. Он показывает эволюцию количественных методов анализа в американской международно-политической науке. Если несколько десятилетий назад работы нескольких пионеров в этой области (Дэвида Сингера, Брюса Рассета, Карла Дойча, Дины Зиннес) печатались в не самых престижных журналах, то теперь в топовых журналах по международным отношениям доминируют количественные исследования. Но для качественных количественных исследований необходимы новые формализованные модели международных отношений. Он обсуждает также гносеологические аспекты количественных исследований в международно-политической науке. Хотя формализованное моделирование международных отношений традиционно идет в русле неореалистических и неолиберальных подходов, агент-ориентированное моделирование может очень эффективно решать исследовательские задачи в рамках конструктивистских подходов ТМО.

**Ключевые слова:** методология международных отношений, количественные методы, статистические методы, эпистемология, агент-ориентированное моделирование, «тактика салями».

#### ЛИТЕРАТУРА

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