

Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce (2009) *The Predictioneer's Game: Using the Logic of Brazen Self-Interest To See and Shape the Future*. New York: Random House. xxii + 250 pp. ISBN 9781400067879.

Prediction should be part of any discipline that wants to influence policy decisions. Fortunately, international relations scholars have started to live up to the task of anticipating rare events such as the onset of war. Bruce Bueno de Mesquita is undoubtedly the pioneer in the usage of expected utility and, in recent years, in applying game theoretic models to forecast world affairs. His new model promises to take the dynamics of the strategic interaction between contending political forces fully into account. Empirically, these models rely on the input of experts; they assess *ex ante* where the interests are located within a conflict space. Bueno de Mesquita has over the years documented, in scholarly outlets, how accurate such predictions can be. In this monograph, he now spreads the gospel that rational choice models can provide accurate forecasts to a wider, not necessarily academic readership. The popularization of important research findings is a laudable undertaking from which many conflict researchers unnecessarily shy away. Bueno de Mesquita presents entertaining anecdotes and shows through case studies where his forecasts have been successful

and where not. The parallel employment of the author as a university professor and as a political consultant explains why he stresses the accurate predictions. The applications of the book range from medieval history, over current political affairs (North Korea and Iran for instance) to business conflicts. This embarrassment of riches might frustrate some readers who would like to see a more in-depth treatment of specific cases or a detailed presentation of the game-theoretic model. However, the smorgasbord approach also indicates that model-based forecasts can be useful in many different settings.

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