

[PDF] Prisoner's Dilemma

William Poundstone - pdf download free book

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Description:

From Publishers Weekly When it flourished in the 1950s, game theory, the construct of Hungarian-born mathematician John von Neumann (1903-1957), was the dominant metaphor for nuclear war debates. Game theorists today operate on more modest economic and organizational models but this reevaluation of game theory's development is nevertheless interesting. Poundstone's three-dimensional outline of the mathematics of game theory sketches von Neumann's life and offers game theory scenarios of Cold War history. The "prisoner's dilemma" is the classic model of conflict situations in which strategies leading to either individual gain or the common good are examined. Featuring much of the think tank/parlor game quality that makes game theory so seductive, Poundstone (*The Recursive Universe*) wisely restricts his discussion of von Neumann to that which serves his theme. The West's Cold War policy was formed around the structure of game theory at the RAND Corporation and other think tanks; Poundstone makes essential connections among the theory, von Neumann's politics and historical forces.

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From Library Journal This very readable book is partly a biography of John von Neumann, partly a nontechnical history of the branch of mathematics known as game theory, and partly a description of some of the paradoxical findings that arise from that theory. Von Neumann was a brilliant mathematician who was the major figure in the Manhattan Project and later an active public figure. Thus, those portions of the book that deal with his life are interesting and informative. Those sections that deal with game theory use no mathematics beyond simple arithmetic and are thus fascinating, thought provoking, and easily accessible to the layperson. For all biography and science collections.

- *Harold D. Shane, Baruch Coll., CUNY*

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