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978-0-521-48121-2 - The Amateur Strategist: Intuitive Deterrence Theories and the Politics of the Nuclear Arms Race

James Denardo

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In *The Amateur Strategist*, James DeNardo explores how the everyday person reasons about nuclear strategy. His data reveal surprising patterns of thinking on basic issues from the Strategic Defense Initiative, arms control, and proliferation to the end of the Cold War. The book describes a fascinating cast of players, including “Nice Hawks” like Ronald Reagan, who wanted to give SDI to the Russians, and the “NIFFs,” whose procurement rule, expressed simply, was: “If they have it, we don’t want it, but if they don’t have it, we should get it.” To explain his remarkable evidence, Professor DeNardo presents an innovative theory of intuitive deterrence reasoning. He then confronts the theory with data from professional nuclear strategists. His sophisticated demonstration that professional strategists reason like novices – that we are *all* Amateur Strategists – challenges the intellectual foundations of modern deterrence theory, public opinion studies, and game theory.

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JAMES DENARDO

University of California, Los Angeles



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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by
Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521481212

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First published 1995

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data

DeNardo, James, 1949–

The amateur strategist : intuitive deterrence theories and the politics of the nuclear arms race / James Denardo.

p. cm. – (Cambridge studies in political psychology and public opinion)

Includes index.

ISBN 0-521-48121-X (hard). – ISBN 0-521-48446-4 (pbk.)

1. Nuclear arms control. 2. Deterrence (Strategy) – Psychological aspects. I. Title. II. Series.

JX1974.7.D444 1995

327.1'74 – dc20 94-40411
CIP

ISBN 978-0-521-48121-2 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-48446-6 Paperback

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For my favorites,
Laura and Carol

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Acknowledgments

As you will shortly discover, *The Amateur Strategist* does not fit neatly into any of the conventional niches that organize academic life in the social sciences. It combines security studies, game theory, cognitive psychology, democratic theory, and social statistics in a rather unconventional blend. Such research would be difficult to pursue in many universities, where resources are allocated to narrowly focused “fields” and short time horizons preclude efforts to immerse oneself in new things. I have been lucky to find a home at UCLA that actively encourages boundary-crossing research. My work has been nurtured by wonderfully supportive colleagues and friends, who worked together to create an exceptionally stimulating intellectual atmosphere. It is a pleasure, now, to recall their kindnesses and to express my gratitude to them.

For stimulating discussions and thoughtful readings of the manuscript: Stephen Ansolabehere, Robert Axelrod, Kathleen Bawn, Jan DeLeeuw, Michael Doyle, Joshua Epstein, Jeffrey Frieden, Andrew Gelman, Terri Givens, Miriam Golden, Jack Hirshleifer, Michael Intriligator, Shanto Iyengar, Ker Chau Li, Susanne Lohmann, Mathew McCubbins, Robert Powell, Robert Putnam, Douglas Rivers, Ronald Rogowski, Richard Rosecrance, Thomas Schwartz, David Sears, George Tsebelis, Michael Wallerstein, Kenneth Watman, Dean Wilkening, Don Ylvisaker, and John Zaller.

For engaging forums and group discussions: Institute des Hautes Etudes, Geneva, Switzerland; Princeton Center for Environmental and Strategic Studies; The Jacob Marschak Colloquium; The Princeton Seminar for the Study of Political Change; The University of Lisbon; The CISA Seminar Series; UCLA’s Political Economy Luncheon Group; the Executive Lunch Seminar at TRW Corporation; the UCLA Seminar in Statistics and Data Analysis; The RAND Corporation Seminar in International Studies.

For painstaking research assistance: Rob Mellen, Devi Bricker, Rupen Cetinyan, John Medearis, and Kevin Hashizume. Terri Givens went far beyond the call of duty in preparing the tables and figures for publication.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For guiding the manuscript toward publication: Alex Holzman, Susan Thornton, and Janis Bolster.

For research and financial support: The Academic Senate of UCLA; The Center for International and Strategic Affairs, Michael Intriligator and Richard Rosecrance, directors; Richard Sisson; David Sears; Ronald Rogowski; and Leonard Binder.

And, of course, for their love and kindness, my two favorites, Carol and Laura.