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Introduction by James Sheehan

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**Zachary Shore. *A Sense of the Enemy: The High-Stakes History of Reading Your Rival's Mind*.** Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. ISBN: 9780199987375 (hardcover, \$33.95).

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## Introduction by James Sheehan, Stanford University, Emeritus

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**A** *Sense of the Enemy* opens with a description of the United States' attempt in 2010 to jumpstart negotiations with Afghan insurgents by enlisting the help of Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Monour, who was paid handsomely to persuade the Taliban that it was time to make peace. The project collapsed when it turned out that the Mullah was an imposter, a Pakistani shopkeeper without any affiliation with the insurgents, who pocketed the Americans' money and promptly disappeared. The war in Afghanistan is still going on. Although Afghanistan does not reappear in Shore's book, it is easy to imagine how the United States' apparently interminable misadventure in the Middle East might have inspired the author's efforts to suggest how policymakers can better understand their enemies (and would-be friends).

The key to better understanding is what Shore calls "strategic empathy," which he defines as "the skill of stepping out of our own heads and into the minds of others. It is what allows us to pinpoint what truly drives and constrains the other side." *A Sense of the Enemy* seeks to uncover the source and character of strategic empathy by examining a series of case studies on world leaders—Mahatma Gandhi, Gustav Stresemann, Joseph Stalin, Franklin Roosevelt, Le Duan—and by assessing the usefulness of recent work on cognitive psychology for historians and political scientists.

All four reviews applaud Shore's efforts. James Blight and Janet Lang were "amazed, impressed, and occasionally frustrated." This was, they are convinced, "a book, author, and perspective that must be dealt with." Eliot Cohen calls Shore's argument "original, intriguing, and important." Fiona Hill finds *A Sense of the Enemy* to be "an insightful book, as well as an invaluable framework for approaching international affairs and understanding world leaders." Tuong Vu also views the book as "interesting and insightful," recommending it to "both academics and non-academics and for undergraduate courses on decision-making." While all the reviewers are positive, some of them have some reservations about Shore's conceptual framework and all raised questions about one or more of his cases.

By far the longest and most sustained analysis is by Blight and Lang, the only reviewers who were trained as psychologists, even though they now teach in a History Department and School of International Affairs. Like the native speakers of a difficult language, Blight and Lang are pleased that Shore has attempted to learn their language even though they recognize he sometimes does not get it quite right. Most of their review is devoted to working out the implications of Shore's approach, connecting it to the theoretical literature on cognitive psychology, and offering some critical suggestions about his use of certain concepts. Among his cases, they focus their attention on Le Duan and Vietnam, the historical example to which they bring particular expertise as the scholarly collaborators with Robert McNamara's reflections on the war. In the end, they reject Shore's fundamental point about the reasons for Le Duan's success: "The war in Vietnam," they write, "was not decided by strategic empathy. Instead, because empathy was almost completely absent, the outcome was driven by the brutal facts on the ground."

While Cohen appreciates the value of Shore's book, he is what might be described as respectfully skeptical about his historical cases. Alone among the reviewers he looks at all of them and raises some questions about each case. He is, moreover, not sure that Shore's concluding chapters "mesh with the previous argument." Chapter nine, which is an extended critique of quantitative analysis, seems to Cohen "plausible," but does not seem to advance Shore's central arguments. Although he concludes that Shore's book "deserves a wide readership," Cohen's is the most critical of the four reviews.

Hill begins her review by suggesting how Shore's methods might be applied to Russian President Vladimir Putin, who is, she argues, too often viewed as simply a "kleptocrat, whose actions are dictated by how much he and his friends and family can steal." Instead, Hill, following Shore, calls for an analysis of Putin's "core drivers," that is, "the ambitions that propelled that person to seek and maintain a leadership role. They are the *raison d'être* of leadership, and they are specific to each statesmen." And, again applying one of Shore's key insights, she emphasizes that we must be alert to those "pattern breaks" that "reveal the underlying motivations, hidden drivers, and invariant aspects of the person's self. The most revealing pattern break of all is one where the leader assumes long-term costs as a direct result of the behavior—demonstrating what they value most—as Putin did in annexing Crimea in March 2014." Hill praises Shore for "his framing and analysis" of the case studies, which she finds largely convincing, even though she expresses some skepticism about his treatment of Le Duan.

The Vietnamese case dominates Vu's contribution. After a few positive comments on the book as a whole, Vu focuses his attention on the actions of Le Duan, an architect of Vietnamese foreign policy who, Shore argues, correctly assessed the constraints on America's willingness and ability to prevail in Vietnam. Based on his own extensive research in the primary sources, Vu questions both the chronology and the substance of Shore's account. If Le Duan did in fact acquire strategic empathy for the United States it was, Vu argues, in 1962 and 1963, not, as Shore suggests, in 1964 and 1965. Far from being an example of effective strategic empathy, in 1964 and 1965, Le Duan "misread American commitments and took the reckless actions of escalating the war and provoking the US into intervention." Despite his skepticism about Shore's treatment of the Vietnamese case, Vu commends him "for offering a rich and stimulating study of high-stakes decision making."

Shore writes with admirable grace and clarity. His historical accounts are based on a careful selection of primary sources and a command of the scholarly literature. He is open to the deployment of psychological theories, but aware of their limitations. And while he clearly hopes that the acquisition of strategic empathy will help leaders navigate the treacherous seas of international relations, he recognizes the difficulties they must confront and is properly cautious about how much one can learn from both history and theory. Surely most readers will agree with his conclusion that "Even a modest refinement in our ability to think like others could have substantial payoffs both in winning wars and, more crucially, in sustaining peace."

### Participants:

**Zachary Shore** is Professor of History at the Naval Postgraduate School and Senior Fellow at the Institute of European Studies, University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of four books on international history. His most recent fifth book, *Grad School Essentials: A Crash Course in Scholarly Skills* (University of California Press, 2016), offers practical approaches to elevate one's academic performance. He earned his doctorate in modern history at Oxford, performed postdoctoral research at Harvard, and held a fellowship at Stanford's Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences.

**James J. Sheehan** is Dickason Professor in the Humanities and Professor of History emeritus at Stanford University. He has published widely on German and European history, including *Where Have All the Soldiers Gone? The Transformation of Europe* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2008) and, most recently, *The Second Generation: émigrés from Nazi Germany as Historians* (co-edited with Andreas Daum and Hartmut Lehmann, New York: Berghahn, 2016). He is now working on a volume of essays about the making of the modern political order.

**James G. Blight and Janet M. Lang** were trained originally as cognitive psychologists. In the early 1980s, provoked by the nuclear war scare arising between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, they retrained in nuclear strategy and arms control at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, where they worked closely with Joseph S. Nye, Jr., Graham Allison and Thomas C. Schelling, all of whom played key roles in the launch of what has become Jim and Janet's nearly thirty-year investigation of the Cuban missile crisis. Jim and Janet have written fifteen books on the recent history of U.S. foreign policy, including seven on the Cuban missile crisis. They have also been involved in the production of many documentary films, including the 2004 Academy Award-winning Errol Morris film, *The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons From the Life of Robert S. McNamara*; and the multiple award-winning 2008 film by Koji Masutani, *Virtual JFK: Vietnam if Kennedy Had Lived*. The paperback edition of their most recent book, *The Armageddon Letters*, appeared in December 2015. Jim and Janet, husband and wife for forty years, are on the faculty of the Department of History, and the Balsillie School of International Affairs at the University of Waterloo, in Waterloo Ontario, Canada.

**Eliot A. Cohen** is Robert E. Osgood Professor of Strategic Studies at Johns Hopkins SAIS. He has written on military history, civil-military relations, and American foreign policy, his most recent book being *The Big Stick: The Limits of Soft Power and the Necessity of Military Force* (New York: Basic, 2017).

**Fiona Hill** is director of the Center on the United States and Europe, and senior fellow in the Foreign Policy program at the Brookings Institution. She is most recently co-author of *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin*, which was published in an expanded second edition by Brookings Institution Press in 2015. From 2006-2009, Hill served as the National Intelligence Officer for Russia and Eurasia at The National Intelligence Council. Prior to joining Brookings, Hill was director of strategic planning at The Eurasia Foundation in Washington, D.C. From 1991-1999, she held a number of positions directing technical assistance and research projects at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. Hill has researched and published extensively on issues related to Russia, the Caucasus, Central Asia, regional conflicts, energy, and strategic issues.

**Tuong Vu** is director of Asian Studies and professor of Political Science at the University of Oregon, and has held visiting fellowships at Princeton University and the National University of Singapore. His books include *Vietnam's Communist Revolution: The Power and Limits of Ideology* (forthcoming, January 2017), and *Paths to Development in Asia: South Korea, Vietnam, China, and Indonesia* (2010), both published by Cambridge University Press. The latter book received an Honorable Mention in the competition for the 2011 Asia Society Bernard Schwartz Award. Vu is also a co-editor of *Dynamics of the Cold War in Asia: Ideology, Identity, and Culture* (Palgrave, 2009) and *Southeast Asia in Political Science: Theory, Region, and Qualitative Analysis* (Stanford, 2008). His articles have appeared in many scholarly journals, including *World Politics*, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, *Studies in Comparative International Development*, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, *South East Asia Research*, and *Theory and Society*.

**Review by James G. Blight and Janet M. Lang, Balsillie School of International Affairs and the Department of History, University of Waterloo**

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*You yourself may vividly feel the terrible fear you have of the other party, but you cannot enter into the other man's counter-fear, or even understand why he should be particularly nervous. You know that you yourself mean him no harm, that you want nothing from him save guarantees for your own safety; and it is never possible for you to realize or remember properly that since he cannot see the inside of your mind, he can never have the same assurance of your intentions that you have. As this operates on both sides, the Chinese puzzle is complete in all its interlockings and neither party can see the nature of the predicament he is in, for each only imagines that the other party is being hostile and unreasonable.*

Herbert Butterfield<sup>1</sup>

When we agreed to respond to Zachary Shore's *A Sense of the Enemy*, we were unfamiliar with this work. In reading his book, we were amazed, impressed, and occasionally frustrated. But we had the overwhelming sense that this is a book, author, and perspective that must be dealt with. Shore's book directly or indirectly touches on issues that go to the core of what the history of foreign policy is (or should be) about, of what history's connections to other disciplines should be, and what might be done to fulfill history's potential to provide teachable moments by which the risk of conflict, killing and catastrophe might be significantly reduced. Accordingly, the length and complexity of what follows is, in our view, commensurate with the importance of Shore's work.

*The Template and the Tempest: An Author Downloads His Empathy Heuristic Onto Twentieth-Century Conflicts*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Herbert Butterfield, quoted in Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 69.

<sup>2</sup> What Zachary Shore has done, essentially, is to provide a *heuristic* for deploying strategic empathy in foreign policy decision-making. Heuristics are mental short cuts toward which we all have a proclivity in certain situations. Many represent departures from the kind of classic rationality required by most economists when they are endeavoring to predict economic or other trends. The study of heuristics began as the exploration by a few cognitive psychologists in the 1950s to identify ways in which people regularly, and predictably, side-step classic rationality. It has grown since then into one of the most dynamic and influential fields of cognitive science. The pioneering giants in the field have been Daniel Kahneman, who is a Nobel Laureate in economics (though he a Princeton psychologist), and his collaborator, the late Amos Tversky, a Stanford psychologist. The classic in the field is Daniel Kahneman, Paul Slovic, and Amos Tversky, eds., *Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986). See also Kahneman's *magnum opus*, *Thinking Fast and Slow* (New York: Doubleday, 2011). The book is dedicated to the memory of Amos Tversky. The field they more or less invented is often called Behavior Decision Theory. We have discussed some of the heuristics that are closely associated with foreign policy decision-making in James G. Blight, Janet M. Lang, and David A. Welch, *Virtual JFK: Vietnam if Kennedy Had Lived* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 269-273. To take one example: "the fundamental attribution error" ("FAE" to aficionados of Behavior Decision Theory) refers to the tendency, often very powerful, to attribute the behavior of adversaries to their intrinsically sinister (even evil) nature or character, rather than to anything we might have done to provoke it. This mental short cut leads to the convenient conclusion that the enemy's hostility is unprovoked, while our hostility is just a reaction to the enemy's hostility.

The innovative and intrepid Zachary Shore sets out on two tracks at once: (1) to provide well-told historical vignettes illustrating his hypothesis that *strategic empathy* (or its absence) is the best indicator of whether the decisions are better (or worse); and (2) to augment his historical narratives with a conceptual overlay in which he endeavors to connect the specific cases to some general principles derived from cognitive psychology. He looks at several good decisions, and one terrible decision, from within this psychological prism. By observing these episodes in the history of twentieth-century statesmanship in this way, he makes his case for strategic empathy being the heart and soul of foreign policy decision-making, and he suggests why the absence of it can lead to disaster.

Shore's historical vignettes, like all narrative history, are focused on particular circumstances and individuals, and the book is a thoroughly humanistic endeavor. He is a fan of Isaiah Berlin's artful elucidation of grappling with the difficulties of communication across cultural, national, and personal divides. Far from coincidentally, Berlin also placed empathy at the heart of his philosophical enterprise. We are encouraged by Shore's relatively brief, but lucid and compelling case histories to sit back and enjoy some vicarious mindreading of five notable leaders, and to follow Shore as he walks us through their decision-making with war and peace on the line.

In *A Sense of the Enemy*, Shore's statesmen are: Mohandas Gandhi, the proponent of India's independence from Great Britain, whose deep understanding of British politics led him to correctly judge how far, and how fast, he could push the British toward Indian independence; Gustav Stresemann, the German Foreign Minister throughout most of the 1920s, who laid the basis for German rearmament under the Nazis in the 1930s; Joseph Stalin, the Soviet leader whose lack of strategic empathy—Shore strikingly characterizes Stalin's decision-making as an example of "strategic autism" (186)—led to his catastrophic misreading of Nazi leader Adolph Hitler's intentions toward the Soviet Union and ultimately contributed to the deaths of twenty million Soviet citizens in the war; President Franklin D. Roosevelt, whose considerable empathetic gifts permitted a more clear-eyed understanding of Hitler's intentions; and Le Duan, the shadowy, driven mastermind of Hanoi's strategy in its war with the United States, leading in 1975 to the military victory of one of the world's poorest nations, Vietnam, over the U.S., which possessed the most powerful military machine ever assembled.

In our response to *A Sense of the Enemy*, we will focus only on what we know (or think we know) something about, and leave it to others to pick up our slack.

First, we will give considerable attention to the results of Shore's innovative shopping spree in the burgeoning intellectual mall that is *cognitive science*. Both of us were originally trained in cognitive psychology; in fact, we both have our Ph.D.'s from a psychology department, even though we reside professionally in a history

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We refer to Shore's *strategic empathy* as a heuristic for this reason: strategic empathists do not empathize with one another as, say, ethnographers empathize with individuals belonging to alien cultures. There is neither time nor opportunity for endlessly reiterated exploration, face to face, in order to plumb the depths of individual and collective consciousness. Nor is Shore's concept an algorithm, because the practice of empathy is nothing like mathematics, and cannot be reduced to a set of fixed act sequences that reliably yield the real thing. Rather, it is a heuristic, *because* foreign policy decision-making involves strategically empathizing with an enemy via a lot of mental short cuts that approximate the real thing, but does so in a way that Shore believes accommodates the spatial and temporal estrangement from the enemy in which most foreign policy decision-making occurs.

department and a school of international affairs. We have been in the intellectual import-export business for more than thirty years: importing psychology into our Cold War histories; and exporting the result to former and present policy-makers, as well as other non-academics.

Second, we will analyze in some detail Shore's central concept, *strategic empathy*, and try to situate it in a context that is accessible to historians. For more than twenty years, we have been writing, speaking and making films illustrating the significance of empathy when leaders must decide in the crunch on issues of war and peace.<sup>3</sup> Shore was still in high school when we began our mission of bringing empathy into the discussion of Cold War crises. Thus, it is frankly thrilling for us to discover in Shore a scholar who is willing take up the torch, quite independently of us. In what follows, we offer two cheers for Shore's heroic effort to mix the oil and water of narrative history and cognitive psychology to yield a workable, believable notion of strategic empathy. We say two cheers, not three, because we think that Shore's concept of strategic empathy causes him to stray from the historical facts in one of his cases.

Third, that case—how the resource-poor Vietnamese Communists, led by Le Duan, were able to defeat the U.S. military behemoth—is an episode we first began to study two decades ago, and on which we have worked intermittently ever since.<sup>4</sup> We believe Shore gets it wrong on Vietnam because he places too much

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<sup>3</sup> Ralph K. White was the godfather of our generation of scholars who, for various reasons, focused on empathy (and its lack) as a touchstone of the danger of nuclear war between the U.S. and Soviet Union. The time was the early to mid-1980s, and the various media were filled with a lot of loose talk, some of it from the President of the United States and his circle, about fighting and winning a nuclear war with the USSR. In this context, White offered something unique: an approach to misperception, honed by nearly two decades in the foreign policy establishment of the U.S. government, and almost as long as a practicing psychologist and professor of international relations at George Washington University. White's key concepts were: (1) most conflict arises out of fear—fear of being attacked, fear of being surpassed, fear of being surrounded by hostile forces; (2) fear was driving the U.S.-Soviet arms race, and fear was ratcheting up demands among politicians and ordinary citizens to do something to eliminate their mutual fear of one another; and (3) the way to reverse the psychological momentum toward violence is to empathize with the enemy. White called his brand of empathy "*realistic empathy*," by which he meant not sympathy (or agreement with the adversary), but a realistic appraisal of the adversary's fears, and the degree to which one has contributed to it. This is where we began our own journey into the psychological dimensions of the threat of nuclear war, focusing especially on the Cuban missile crisis. Ralph K. White's major contributions are in two influential books: *Fearful warriors: A Psychological Profile of U.S.-Soviet Relations* (New York: Free Press, 1984); and a book he edited, *Psychology and the Prevention of Nuclear War* (New York: New York University Press, 1986). Ralph White's work informs all of our work. A good place to start is with James G. Blight and Janet M. Lang, "Lesson Number One: 'Empathize With Your Enemy,'" in *Peace and Conflict: The Journal of Peace Psychology* 10:4 (2004): 349-368. The title refers to the first lesson Robert McNamara draws from his life and career in Errol Morris's film, *The Fog of War*.

<sup>4</sup> See Robert S. McNamara, James G. Blight, and Robert K. Brigham, with Thomas Biersteker and Col. Herbert Schandler, *Argument Without End: In Search of Answers to the Vietnam Tragedy* (New York: PublicAffairs, 1999). *AWE* is the product of four critical oral history conferences, with senior decision-makers from the North Vietnamese government, and the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, as well as senior scholars from the U.S. and Vietnam, and augmented with relevant declassified documents from Vietnam, the U.S. and other countries. In addition, we were involved in three feature-length documentary films made on the basis of our Vietnam War project: (1) *Missed Opportunities? Dialogue of Enemies in the Vietnam War*, a film by Daisaku Higashi, which first aired on the Japanese NHK Television Network in August 1998; (2) *The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons From the Life of Robert S. McNamara*, a film by Errol Morris, which won the Academy Award for best documentary feature in 2004; and (3) *Virtual JFK*:

emphasis on his theory of empathy, and too little on the available facts concerning the motives and capabilities of the Hanoi government and their southern ally, the National Liberation Front, aka the 'Vietcong.' We also believe that in light of the mis-fit between his notion of empathy and the victory of the Vietnamese communists, Shore's particular theory of strategic empathy should be rethought. We say: Empathy, yes. Shore's brand of Strategic Empathy? Maybe, maybe not.

We do not comment at any length in what follows on the substance of Shore's other historical cases: Gandhi, Stresemann, Stalin, and Roosevelt, leaving that to other members of the H-Diplo roundtable and readership who are better informed than we are about these cases.

*A Sense of the Enemy: A Two-Track Approach to the History of Diplomacy*

In *A Sense of the Enemy*, Shore sets out an ambitious, interdisciplinary agenda: he wants to celebrate the centrality of empathy in diplomacy and foreign policy-making; *and* he wants to take it apart with help from cognitive psychology, figure out what makes it tick, and provide lessons for present and future statesmen that, if applied, might result in better decisions, made with greater sensitivity to what an opponent actually is trying to accomplish.

Accordingly, *A Sense of the Enemy* has two tracks: a *Historical* Track and a *Policy* Track. The historical track is in the tradition of the humanities, focused on telling stories of unique, unrepeatable episodes in twentieth century diplomacy, experienced by particular people, in particular circumstances, based on the best evidence available to scholars. The second track, the policy-oriented track, is especially indebted to cognitive psychology, and looks for insights from experiments conducted by social and behavioral scientists who attempt to arrive at general conclusions about how the human mind works when people make decisions. In Shore's adaptation of cognitive psychology, military-political decision-making is simply a subset of human decision-making.

Scholars traveling along the two tracks are, in most cases, unfamiliar with each other, and with one another's conceptual tools and outlook. In fact, there is considerable tension built into any analysis, like Shore's, that toggles back and forth between one unique, historical decision after another, on the one hand; and, on the other hand, an effort to interpret those decisions as instances of some general theory of decision-making, derived from cognitive psychology. The author of *A Sense of the Enemy* understands that he has chosen a rocky road. One senses him from time to time trying to anticipate the responses of members of each group, and to trying to preemptively address their concerns. It's a tall task. But a scholar's reach should, at least occasionally, seek to escape the grasp of academic departments and other professional pigeonholes for isn't this, pray tell, what interdisciplinary research should be about?

*The Historical Track*

Shore seeks to anchor his inquiry into foreign policy decision-making in the humanistic, philosophical tradition of Isaiah Berlin and other philosophers who celebrate the mystery of empathy, while emphasizing its importance. Berlin's favorite luminaries included the Russian essayist and a founder of Russian socialism

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*Vietnam if Kennedy Had Lived*, a film directed by Koji Masutani, which received its theatrical premiere at the New York Film Forum in September 2008.



Alexander Herzen, Russian essayist and a founder of Russian socialism; the German philosopher and poet Johann Gottfried Herder and the Italian political philosopher Giambattista Vico. One quote from Isaiah Berlin can stand in for dozens in which he asserts that Zachary Shore's subject, the history of statesmanship, lay outside the boundaries of science, no matter whether the discipline is called political science, cognitive science, or neuroscience:

Obviously what matters is to understand a particular situation in its full uniqueness, the particular men and events and dangers, the particular hopes and fears which are actively at work in a particular place at a particular time: in Paris in 1791, in Petrograd in 1917, in Budapest in 1956, in Prague in 1968, or in Moscow in 1991. We need not attend systematically to whatever that these have in common with other events and other situations, which may resemble them in some respects, but may happen to lack exactly that which makes all the difference at a particular moment in a particular place ... What makes statesmen ... successful is that they do not think in general terms ... Their merit is that they grasp the unique combination of characteristics that constitute this particular situation—this and no other.<sup>5</sup>

Science, *schmyence*, Berlin says. Political science and related endeavors are, in his view, unhelpful to a historian of statesmanship because politics deals with the unique and unrepeatable, while scientific knowledge consists of general principles derived from replicable experiments. End of story. Thus in Berlin's view, a discipline like cognitive science, which Zachary Shore cites liberally throughout *A Sense of the Enemy*, whether or not it is correctly categorized as a science, is irrelevant to our understanding of Shore's subject, which is the history of statesmanship—i.e., decision-making at the highest levels when war and peace are on the line.

### *The Policy Track*

Yet Shore is somewhat in awe of cognitive psychology, which its practitioners believe fervently is a cutting edge science, experimentally based, armed with repeatable, corroborating evidence for some of its cardinal findings. Shore wants to derive lessons from his research and apply these to present and future cases. He wants his research to be *relevant*. He proposes to accomplish this via integrating into his analyses of historical cases

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<sup>5</sup> Isaiah Berlin, "Political Judgment," in *The Sense of Reality: Studies in Ideas and Their History* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1996), 40-53, 44-45. Berlin harked back to the grand tradition of European humanism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. To him, as to his heroes Vico, Herder and Herzen, the art of history has nothing to do with the procedures of science. Although he would not have put the matter this way, Berlin denied the possibility of a heuristic of empathy, of the sort that Zachary Shore provides. Like Shore, we love Berlin. Reading the master is itself a humanistic experience. But, also like Shore, we see an urgent need to mine empathy for whatever policy-relevant ore can be found and, however partial or otherwise imperfect it may turn out to be in practice, we believe that some empathy, some of the time, deriving from a heuristic that seems plausible and empirically interesting, is a lot better than giving empathy no attention at all, and just rolling the psychological dice and hoping that you, as a foreign policy decision-maker, get lucky in figuring out what the devil your enemy is up to. Robert McNamara and JGB discussed a kind of rough heuristic for deploying empathy in foreign policy decision-making in *Wilson's Ghost: Reducing the Risk of Conflict, Killing and Catastrophe in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, expanded post-9/11 edition (New York: PublicAffairs, 2003), 230-276. McNamara and Blight describe what they call *The Empathy Imperative* of the post 9/11 world, involving "curiosity, leading to a deeper understanding of an adversary's mindset, as a prerequisite to resolving differences and eliminating threats to peace and security" (234).

insights from contemporary cognitive psychology and associated disciplines such as philosophy of mind, and even neuroscience. He tangles with, among others, such heavyweights in the psychology of decision-making as “the three Dan’s”: Daniel Kahneman, Dan Ariely, and Daniel Gilbert. In his historian’s variant of panning for gold, Shore sifts his historical data through a grid of cognitive science concepts, in search of principles with which he can generalize across historical space and time.

One of the several virtues of *A Sense of the Enemy* is its author’s sense of humor. And he is nowhere funnier than in his “Afterword,” in which he takes his readers into some of the deep weeds of contemporary cognitive science, the endeavor that lies at the heart of Shore’s unusual enterprise. The “Afterword,” like movies with excessive violence or explicit sex, comes with a warning. “If you are not an academic,” he writes, “you might want to avoid this afterword altogether. Alternatively, if you are not a scholar but you suffer from severe insomnia, please read on. This chapter might be just the cure you’ve been searching for” (190). Alas for the insomniacs, Shore includes in this chapter a fairly detailed account of Dan Ariely’s study of UC-Berkeley undergraduates who “watch[ed] sexually arousing videos while masturbating—in the privacy of their dorm rooms, of course” (196-197). (*Of course!* Even *Berkeley*, we may infer, must have some standards of decorum.) This may well be a first: a book reviewed on H-Diplo that seeks to link twentieth century decision-making at the highest levels with war and peace on the line, on the one hand; with, on the other hand, self-reports of masturbating undergraduates watching videos of people having—umm—unusual, and unusually explicit—sexual encounters.

But Shore’s “Afterword” is not all, or even mainly, about the kinky pleasures of Berkeley students who volunteer for psychology experiments. He has a difficult task, and he knows it. He sees his book is a contribution to the scholarship of diplomatic history, and also—in the “Afterword,” but far from limited to the “Afterword”—he operates in what is, for most diplomatic historians, something of an alternate universe, full of terms, findings, authors, and arguments that will seem, to many historians, to have arrived from another planet, or at least an alien academic department.

For example, even a cursory, quite incomplete listing of some of the concepts Shore refers to in his text—not just in the notes, but in the text itself—reveals the peculiarity of the ingredients from his spice rack that he sprinkles liberally into the stew of his historical narratives. Here is a starter kit to get you going (in alphabetical order): computer subroutines; heuristics (there are at least a half dozen different ones); mentalization; mental modules; motivational drivers; pattern recognition; signal to noise ratio; simulation theory; and (our personal choice for the concept most likely to drive stark raving mad the ghost of that most rational philosopher, Isaiah Berlin) theory-theory. “Theory-theory” is not a typo. In one of several hilariously understated reflections on the jargon of cognitive psychology, Shore admits that the term “theory-theory” is “rather awkward (81). We rather agree.

#### *Historical Art AND Science?*

Throughout the book, the historical and policy tracks intersect. Some awkwardness inevitably results. Cognitive psychologists will likely be unfamiliar with even the outlines of Shore’s historical portraits. Historians may be perplexed, or even offended, by the jargon of cognitive psychology. The historical art of the particular and the cognitive psychology that yields generalizations about mental life have rarely appeared as unapologetically in such close proximity as they do in *A Sense of the Enemy*. We cannot doubt that the author possesses a sense of intellectual adventure. He is to be admired for that.

He is well aware that every time he chooses the path of the methodological hybrid, he must face the scrutiny of thought police from both disciplines. Oh my, the historians will say, whatever happened to this guy? What are all these vulgar, jargon-ridden concepts doing in a work of comparative history, anyway? Does not he know that history is the art of telling stories using only the documentary trail as our guide? He says he reveres the likes of Isaiah Berlin—the title, *A Sense of the Enemy*, is in fact a riff on Berlin’s *A Sense of Reality*—but just observe how he pollutes an otherwise respectable monograph with conceptual gobbledygook. And as to strategic empathy—yes, it is Berlin’s key idea, but he and others like him have provided all the framework anyone needs—*einführung!*—“being with” another leader, nation, era or tradition. A scholar like Shore, who aims to be thoroughly interdisciplinary, must try to anticipate criticisms like these from more traditional scholars who work mainly within well-established boundaries of a single discipline

But Shore is also in deep trouble with cognitive scientists. He is a one man raiding party, swooping seemingly at random into the psychological literature and pilfering whatever he can find on the shelf that seems to him helpful in framing his inquiry within a prism of empathy. Sure, he can *say*, for example, that Weimar Germany’s Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann was a “masterful strategic empath” because he “succeed[ed] in sensing his rivals’ drivers,” thereby laying the groundwork for German rearmament without inviting military interventions by Russia or Great Britain” (26). Or he can *say* that Stalin’s catastrophic misreading of Hitler, in the run-up to the Nazi invasion of the USSR, resulted from Stalin’s reliance on “simulation theory” (81); whereas Roosevelt read Hitler more accurately because he relied on “theory-theory” (88-106). But it is acceptable that Shore cherry picks just those concepts that he feels help him to make his case for the centrality of empathy in the decision-making of statesmen? He does not discuss the complicated array of assumptions and conundrums in the field, to say nothing of the frequent internecine warfare among cognitive scientists that make the application of cognitive psychology to diplomatic history, or any history, seem highly arbitrary, even a little presumptuous<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> We recall vividly when, back in the 1970s and 1980s, we were card-carrying cognitive psychologists, and a brouhaha over the policy-relevance of the field threatened to split the discipline down the middle. On the one side were the purists, who felt that the (then) relatively new endeavor of the computer modeling of the mind—what was called ‘human information processing’—need not concern itself with applications to what others called ‘the real world.’ While on the other side were cognitive psychologists who felt the field had failed both scientifically and morally, by embracing computer simulation to the exclusion of the human beings whose cognition was the putative object of their study. The scholar driving the debate was Ulric Neisser, whose book, *Cognitive Psychology* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967), was regarded as *the* magisterial synthesis of the burgeoning enterprise of using computer programs to simulate human cognition. But shortly after completing this book—yes, this was the 1960s, after all, when many people rethought some of the fundamentals of what they had been taught—Neisser asked himself: what difference does all this modeling really make? So what, he wondered, if I am right and so and so is wrong about which computer subroutine seems to best track human problem solving? How do I connect all this cogitation about cogitation to real-world problems, like war and peace, for example? In fact, Neisser was a peace activist. Even with this brief context, it is perhaps possible to begin to grasp the provocativeness of Neisser’s next book, *Cognition and Reality: Principles and Implications of Cognitive Psychology* (San Francisco: Freeman, 1976). Even the title got people all riled up, with its implied question: does what we are doing have any connection to the world we all live in, and if it does not, are we satisfied chasing our own tails, irrelevant to difficult social problems? Hasn’t the field been reduced to an absurd flow chart in which retinal image, leads to processing, which leads to more processing, which leads to still more processing (ad infinitum), which leads to consciousness, which leads to decisions, or whatever else is floating through consciousness at a given moment? (See Neisser, *Cognition and Reality*, 17 for the flow chart.) At that moment of ferment in cognitive psychology, and at many subsequent such moments, anyone borrowing from cognitive psychology, for whatever reason, would have been

Here is Shore, deep into a soliloquy that illustrates the inner tension that arises when a scholar who is *both* historical and policy oriented tries to locate his methodologic center of gravity: “Like many historians, I am skeptical of sweeping generalizations drawn from limited data. Yet we cannot allow skepticism to produce obscurantism. We simply know more today about how the mind works than we did ... “(205). He does this throughout this fascinating book: he asserts the relevance to diplomatic history of selected endeavors in cognitive psychology; but then he qualifies his assertion with the reassurance that cognitive science does not have all the answers either.

It takes a brave young scholar like Zachary Shore to wander this far off his academic turf in search of usable ideas from disparate disciplines. There are at least as many silos filled with academics as there are with unshucked corn. We salute his courage, and his willingness to go public with both his doubts about whether the art and science of statesmanship can be effectively conjoined, and also his alertness to the potential pitfalls of trying to merge them to create a history that is demonstrably policy-relevant. We applaud his curiosity and his dedication to reducing the odds of catastrophic war.

*Empathy Über Alles: How to Read the Minds of Foreign Policy Mindreaders*

From this diverse array of sources, Shore concludes that *strategic empathy*—the capacity to dwell and decide vicariously in the psychological and physical space in which an adversary actually dwells and decides—is the key to unlocking the puzzle of why statesmen sometimes make good decisions, while at other times they make bad decisions. Shore believes that if he can fit his empathy template to examples of both kinds of decisions in the past, he and others should be able to lay out some ground rules, with empathy at their center, that promote good decisions and reduce our regrettable proclivity toward bad ones.

The formula is simple, although implementing it is not. He believes that if strategic empathy is present to a significant degree, then the odds rise for a good decision. If it is not, then the decision is likely to be the poorer for it, because the decider lacks an accurate view of the opponent’s view of the issue, and to that extent is deciding on the basis of fantasy rather than reality—psychological reality, aka an adversary’s mindset, point of view, beliefs, assumptions, and expectations. Call this cluster of psychological variables what you will, together they denote an adversary’s mental and emotional life at a given moment, with a given decision at hand. It is what the situation we confront looks like and feels like to someone with whom we are at odds to such a degree that we believe it may be necessary to use military force to protect our interests.<sup>7</sup>

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advised to specify which branch, or school of cognitive psychology was being enlisted as one’s psychological motherboard for an application outside the field. And the minute one school was identified, rejection by other schools would be guaranteed.

<sup>7</sup> One of the problems faced by cognitive psychologists over the years is how to integrate into their accounts of human information processing the powerful emotional life of human beings, and the ways our emotions can often drive us to behaviors that are not in our interests, or that are even disastrous. We are all perfectly aware of this, and our everyday speech is full of injunctions such as: ‘don’t lose your temper,’ ‘don’t let your emotions carry you away,’ ‘don’t let her get under your skin,’ and so on. Cognitive psychologists, drawing heavily on the routines and subroutines of computer software to simulate human cognition are, to make the obvious point, up the mental creek but without an emotional paddle. So far as we know, computers don’t get scared, angry or envious. At least not yet. For an attempt to short-circuit the problem deriving from the absence of emotion in models of cognitive psychology, see James G. Blight,

Because it is usually a novel idea to some of our readers as well as most of our students, we often find the following shorthand “equation” useful:

$$E=MC^2$$

Where: the presence of **E**mpathy increases the odds of **M**uddling through **C**risis and **C**onflicts successfully.

As mentioned, we have been promoting the importance of empathy in just this way for nearly 30 years. In 2010, we convinced the editors of *The Journal of Cold War Studies* to allow us to append to an article of ours on the collapse of U.S.-Soviet détente in late 1970s two graphs derived from the above equation.<sup>8</sup> At first, they thought we were joking. After all, we could not really believe that empathy is the be all and end all of decision-making on war and peace. We said we could and we did—sort of. At a minimum we said that we favored using the empathy/absence of empathy dimension as a first approximation to an explanation: ask first whether empathy explains the phenomena. If you have to resort to other frameworks, fine. But give empathy a shot first.

Here are the two graphs—we call them “humanistic graphs—since they are numberless—that, together, constitute an argument for empathy being the next really big thing in the history of foreign policy decision-making.<sup>9</sup> (This is not a joke. It may well be an exaggeration. The key question, in our view, and we believe in Zachary Shore’s view as well, is: how large an exaggeration is it?)

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*The Shattered Crystal Ball: Fear and Learning in the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1989). When during the Cuban missile crisis it appeared as if the world could be destroyed, decision-makers in Washington and Moscow *felt* the terrible load on their shoulders, as well as thought about it. They got scared; they bolted for the exits; and they got there just in time to pull the plug on Armageddon.

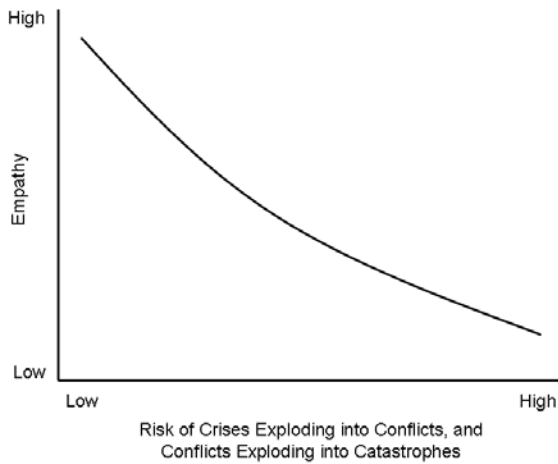
<sup>8</sup> James G. Blight and Janet M. Lang, “When Empathy Failed: Using Critical Oral History to Reassess the Collapse of U.S.-Soviet Détente in the Carter-Brezhnev Years.” *Journal of Cold War History* 12:2 (Spring 2010): 29-74, with invited commentaries by Mark Garrison, Raymond L. Garthoff, Jack F. Matlock, Jr., Robert A. Pastor, and Thomas W. Simons, Jr., and replies to the commentaries by Blight and Lang. The commentaries and our reply are on 75-109.

<sup>9</sup> Our attachment to empathy as the key element in whether catastrophic war occurs or is avoided derives mainly from a research method we devised, called *critical oral history*. Using this method, we have investigated several critical moments in the history of the Cold War. These have included the Cuban missile crisis, the U.S. War in Vietnam, the collapse of U.S.-Soviet détente in the late 1970s, and the role of the Iran-Iraq War in the evolution of U.S.-Iran relations.

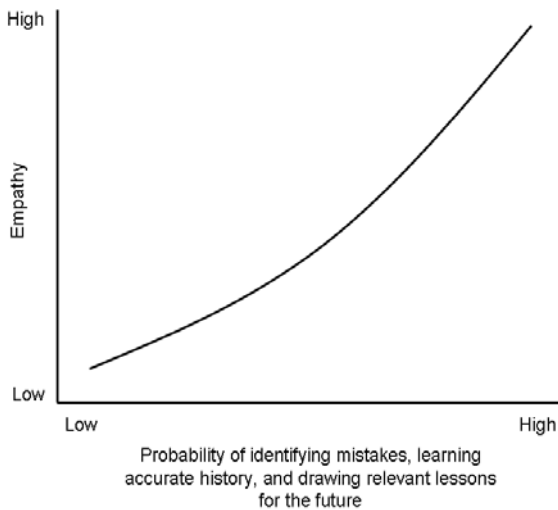
We developed critical oral history to build a bridge between the confusion of experience and the relatively cut-and-dried rendering of that experience. It does so by combining, in structured conferences, (1) decision-makers, (2) scholars, and (3) declassified documents (which provide added accuracy and authenticity to the conversation). Critical oral history often yields rich and surprising insights into what it was really like for decision-makers, then and there, thus yielding more accurate analyses and applicable lessons for decision-making, here and now.

Participants in a critical oral history exercise are present for a variety of reasons. Scholars, armed to the teeth with declassified documents, are eager to ask questions of former officials based on their scholarly understanding of the

**HISTORY:**



**POLICY:**



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events under investigation. The former officials are present for several reasons. It is a chance to be reunited with former colleagues. A strong motive, perhaps the strongest for the former officials, is the chance they will be given to ask the kinds of questions of former adversaries that they probably believed they would never be given the opportunity to ask. But everyone around the table has at least one motive in common: *they believe something went wrong*. For what we believe is a highly accessible introduction to critical oral history see James G. Blight and Janet M. Lang, *The Fog of War: Lessons From the Life of Robert S. McNamara* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 3-26. The book is based on the 2004, Academy Award-winning documentary feature film by Errol Morris, *The Fog of War*, a film for which we served as the principal advisers to Errol Morris, and to his subject, the former U.S. Defense Secretary, Robert McNamara.

In the early going, Shore cites Isaiah Berlin, from a paper collected in Berlin's *The Sense of Reality* (1996).<sup>10</sup> Shore quotes approvingly Berlin's view that the development of the kind of empathy that leads to good political judgment requires the ability to make sense of, "the fleeting, broken, infinitely various wisps that make up life at any level" (3). We agree with Berlin and Shore: the thing about empathy is that it is ineffable—which the dictionary defines as "indescribable" or "inexpressible." What does it really mean to walk a mile in the shoes of an adversary, or get inside her head, or pick his brain, or—in the slightly scary, Star Trek-like locution from cognitive psychology favored by Shore—to *mentalize* the opponent? We must resort to metaphor, in which we agree contingently to believe that an adversary's mind is something like, in the metaphors just listed, personal accessories one can put on, or the act of exploring the inside of a room, or like picking fruit off a tree. Traditionally, metaphors for empathy, like these, derive from everyday experience. But because we live and work in an age in which cognitive science is ascendant, Shore prefers metaphors from there.

Since it is so difficult to say what empathy *is*, we have found it helpful over the years to list some of the things we are pretty sure empathy is *not*. No endeavor gets to the heart of the matter as directly and unambiguously as rock n roll. Simplicity is both the agony of its heartbreak and the thrill of its true romance. While philosophers sprout distinctions, rockers (when they are on their game) confront us with simple, raw truths, and provide a throbbing baseline and pounding drums as emotional facilitators, to boot.

To these distinguished authors—Isaiah Berlin and Zachary Shore—empathy is all about a sense of the heart, and has less to do with the rational calculation of the mind. It is not a deduction from some set of scientifically derived first principles. Each judgment is unique because each situation is unique. Arriving at a sound political decision is therefore more art than science.

Essentially, how we empathize with other human beings is unknowable, even though it happens all the time and in some sense our civilization crucially depends on it. It is supremely important but it is also, to Isaiah Berlin and Shore, a mystery. No philosopher ever described that mystery with greater verve and historical literacy than Berlin. The author of *A Sense of the Enemy* deeply admires Berlin. "As a historian of international relations," he writes, "I find myself deeply planted in Berlin's camp. I am dubious about the value of international relations theories, and I seek no predictive models of behavior" (3).

*The Elements of Strategic Empathy: Expect the Fast Ball; Look for the Curve; Be Aware of the Slider, etc.*

One of the outstanding features of Shore's approach is his emphasis on the importance for statesmanship of recognizing discontinuities in the behavior of adversaries. A rumor has reached us that Shore is a baseball fan.<sup>11</sup> In fact, his advice to decision-makers, based on his analysis of the historical cases in his book, is the foreign policy equivalent of every baseball manager's advice to a slumping hitter: "expect the fast ball, look for the curve, and be aware of the slider (and any other pitch in the pitcher's repertoire)." This emphasizes one of Shore's cardinal points: reading an adversary's mind is very, very difficult. Shore's injunction, derived from the statesmen he investigates, and directed toward present and future foreign policy decision-makers, can be

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<sup>10</sup> Berlin, "Political Judgment," 40-53.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Zachary Shore by Daniel Frye, Braille Monitor, <https://nfb.org/images/nfb/publications/bm/bm09/bm0910/bm091006.htm>, November 2009.

put like this: *Expect* the adversary to behave more or less as he has in the past (and plan accordingly); but *look* for the adversary to act differently than he has done in the past (and plan accordingly); and *be aware* that the adversary might act very differently than he has done in the past—in fact, he may reverse course and act so differently that he appears to you to have lost sight of what his true interests actually are (and plan accordingly).

According to Shore, this mindset is both exceedingly difficult to develop and maintain, but it is also the beginning of the wisdom that distinguishes his “masterful strategic empathists” (26) like Mohandas Gandhi, Gustav Stresemann, Franklin Roosevelt and Le Duan, on the one hand; from, on the other, a “strategically autistic” (186) decision-maker like Stalin.<sup>12</sup>

But, the credibility of Shore’s reliance on strategic empathy depends crucially on the success of his extraordinary strategic chutzpah. In effect, he admits that empathy, ‘reading the mind’ of an adversary, is ineffable and unknowable. But, unlike Isaiah Berlin, Shore wants to say something here and now about how leaders can make better decisions in a dangerous and complicated world, and he wants to attribute it to strategic empathy. Having read the cognitive psychology literature, he believes he has identified a means for recognizing its effects in the historical cases he presents: when it is present, and when it is absent—facilitating better and worse decisions, respectively, when war and peace are on the line. He then retrofits his analysis of the effects of empathy onto something like a prototype of any statesman in an analogous situation, thus providing a step-by-step guide for achieving it: first you do this, then you do that, then you decide. This is the endpoint toward which Shore points all through *A Sense of the Enemy*.

As presented, Shore’s layer of cognitive science can look awfully arbitrary: why this concept and not that one, and so on. It can also get ugly, at least to those who are unused to reading history by a historian whose method is a variegated assemblage of document-based history, and ideas plucked from cognitive science. A wisecrack sometimes attributed to Mark Twain states that “Wagner’s music isn’t as bad as it sounds.” Well, it seems to us that Zachary Shore’s hybrid enterprise is not as arbitrary or as ugly as it might at first appear to scholars unused to having historical figures appraised on the basis of their “mental modules,” to say nothing of “theory-theory.” What it lacks is a coherent presentation of its essential ingredients, in one place—a

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<sup>12</sup> This is hardly the place to pursue in detail the roots and plausibility of Shore’s epistemology, but we note that his core insight—statesmen empathize with their adversaries commensurate with their capacity to identify fundamental shifts in their actions—is consistent with the ‘falsificationist’ tradition of the British philosopher of science, Karl Popper, and the influential contemporary scholar of decision-making, Nassim Taleb. Popper and Taleb both ask us to imagine a continuum at one pole of which is ideology—blind, thoughtless, egocentric, rigid, preprogrammed perception and action; while at the other pole, we find selective, critical, empirically-based, perception and cognition. Ideologues wear their theories like suits of armor to insulate them from falsifying data; critical thinkers wear their theories very lightly, and are constantly testing them to determine how well they explain the data at hand. See Karl R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (New York: Harper, 1963); see also Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable*, second expanded ed. (New York: Random House, 2010). To return to the baseball metaphor one more time: if the pitcher throws a fast ball at the head of an ideologue, who cannot imagine that the pitcher will try to hit him, he will easily get ‘beaned,’ to use the baseball term indicating getting hit in the head with a hard spherical object travelling nearly 100 mph; whereas, the batter who has mastered critical thinking and knows that however improbable he may think a ‘bean ball’ is, it is nevertheless possible, and thus he is more likely to ‘hang loose,’ and duck, before the ball arrives at his head.



chapter, a section, an appendix—somewhere the reader can go to get a comprehensive view of how Shore understands his enterprise. If at some point a second edition of *A Sense of the Enemy* is in the offing, we think readers would appreciate a general introduction to the author’s unusual perspective that ties together the lengthy list of concepts from cognitive psychology that Shore deploys to explain the empathetic abilities of his historical statesmen.

To practice what we are preaching, here is our rough and ready crack at the sort of thing we have in mind. It seems to us that the decisions of these statesmen, as analyzed by Shore, describe a classic feedback loop. There is input; the input is processed; there is output; then these phases are followed by an exit from the loop if the operation is successful, or just too hard. If it is unsuccessful but success is mandatory, the decision-maker reenters the loop.<sup>13</sup> An adversary acts; the action is interpreted; a response is given; and the decision-maker exits from the loop, or reenters it.

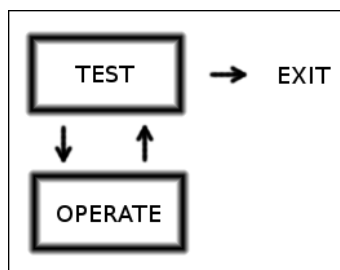
The following constitute what seem to us the fundamental elements of Strategic Empathy 101, as framed by Zachary Shore. All the terms are Shore’s, and they are scattered like psychological fairy dust all through his book. The arrows are meant to give a sense of the general trajectory that must be followed, if significant strategic empathy is to occur. We do not mean to imply that these are necessarily discrete steps in a serial

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<sup>13</sup> The information-processing feedback loop entered the common parlance of cognitive psychology with the publication of one of the most influential books ever published in the field: George A. Miller, Eugene Galanter and Karl Pribram, *Plans and the Structure of Behavior* (New York: Wiley, 1960) It is now available as a free download at <https://archive.org/details/plansstructureof00mill>. This book was a wrecking ball tossed straight at the reductionist, behaviorist crowd who then ruled experimental psychology. Ironically, *PSB* brought the human mind back into the conversation via the metaphor of computer programs and the infinite variety of their subroutines. Their basic unit of analysis became a byword in the field, and led to an avalanche of modeling human information processing via the construction of computer programs. It is called the “TOTE”—like the bag in which you carry your picnic lunch.

T→O→T→E

Here is the simplest feedback loop (17)”



There is nothing magical about this particular configuration. Our point is that the logic of Zachary Shore’s *strategic empathy* requires some sort of feedback loop. We do not believe that Shore believes that statesmen strategically empathize with their enemies on their first try, like a riverboat gambler rolling the dice with everything on the line. It must be a process that involves learning, and in order to learn, reiteration is involved, using feedback from each iterative test of the leader’s informal theory of who the enemy is and, based on the situation, what he will do next. And so on, as decision-makers go totting into the sunset, hoping for the best, preparing for the worst.

order of the strategically empathetic process. They may be, or they may not; the decision-maker may begin at any point. The order below, however, seems consistent with the scheme suggested by Shore.

*A Heuristic for Deploying Strategic Empathy*<sup>14</sup>

*Perception of Threat*

*Phase I. Assess Constraints*

Shore writes that, “The first step in strategic empathy involves a cold assessment of constraints” (201). (Alas, this statement occurs more than 200 pages after we first encounter the concept, which is too late to clarify the historical cases that precede it.) So: first, forget about worst-case scenarios, or best-case scenarios, or any scenarios that involve assumptions about an adversary’s motives. According to Shore, the derivation of motives can wait, and should wait, until an objective assessment is made of what seems possible for the opponent to do. By focusing on constraints in the early going, Shore believes, a limit is established on the construction of the kind of outlandish fantasies that often grip statesmen, under pressure, receiving conflicting advice from subordinates, and unsure how far to trust their assessments. In these circumstances, Shore finds, strategic empathists stick to their knitting and try hard to determine what, exactly, is the reality “on the ground.” Can their planes really fly that fast? Can they really move their forces that far in that amount of time? And so on. (See esp. 199-202.)

*Phase II: Recognize Patterns*

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<sup>14</sup> We want to reemphasize a point made earlier: Shore’s heuristic is not an algorithm, but a mental short cut, an approximation, a reasonable facsimile of what is involved in the deployment of strategic empathy in foreign policy decision-making. This is not a criticism of Shore; it is rather a statement of fact. Foreign policy decision-making, often in crises in which time is short, information is unreliable and conflicting, and the stakes are sky-high, is nothing like the practice of that branch of anthropology called ethnography—the interpretation of cultures that are often wildly different from the Western culture from which ethnographers have traditionally come. Clifford Geertz was probably the best known popularizer of the way his fellow ethnographers thought about empathy, and about how it was (or was not) established in the course of ethnographical research. (Geertz himself did pioneering work in Bali and North Africa in the 1950s and 1960s.) According to Geertz, empathizing is an extremely difficult and uncertain enterprise, even for a single ethnographer, carrying his notebook into the forest in an effort “to figure out what the devil they think they are up to ... The ethnographer does not, and in my opinion largely cannot, perceive what his informants perceive. What he perceives, and that uncertainly enough, is what they perceive ‘with’—or ‘by means of,’ or ‘through’ ... or whatever the word should be.” Clifford Geertz, “From the Native’s Point of View: On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding,” In Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 55-70, 58. If communicating empathetically is this hard and uncertain for ethnographers, sitting on their stools taking notes, day after week after month in a single village, then what are we to say about strategic empathy, Shore’s project, in foreign policy-making, when split second decisions may be needed, the outcomes of which could be devastating for vast numbers of people. Three things, it seems to us: (1) even a little empathy is better than none; (2) we absolutely, positively need a heuristic for proceeding in the direction of greater empathy; and (3) the feedback loop of any strategic empathy heuristic is full of blind spots. *The heuristic is as fallible as the decision-maker.* As Geertz writes of himself and his fellow ethnographers: “In the country of the blind the one-eyed is not king, he is spectator.” (*Ibid.*, 58.)

Begin to assess the opponent's motives by asking: What is the dominant pattern of the opponent? What has the adversary done lately? Does he seem trigger-happy or laid back in dealings with other leaders and states? What should I expect if the adversary continues along the path he seems to have followed for whatever seems to be a relevant period of time? We'd call this feature of Shore's model of strategic empathy "*the art of the probable*"—what seems likely based on the assessment of past behavior. Cognitive psychologists often refer to this feature as the intellectual "baseline rate," or simply, "base rate." (See esp. 1-13.)

*Phase III: Beware of the Continuity Heuristic*

*But beware!* When we expect the future to mimic the past, we may often be right, but we can also be catastrophically wrong, if we over-use what Shore calls "the continuity heuristic." Strategic empathies, he argues, are resilient when encountering the shock of the new because they are intuitively aware of what Nassim Taleb famously calls "Black Swans"—events that are improbable but, when they occur, can fundamentally alter almost everything, often for the worse.<sup>15</sup> Examples: global shock at the 9/11 attacks; the Kennedy administration's shock at the appearance of Soviet missiles in Cuba; disbelief in the Johnson and Nixon administrations at the refusal of the North Vietnamese to be "bombed to the negotiating table." (See esp. 147-166.) In the first line of the next to last of her immortal *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, the poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote: "*My future will not copy fair my past.*"<sup>16</sup> She wrote these lines on the heels of her theretofore totally unexpected, utterly life-altering, marriage to Robert Browning. This is precisely the state of mind Shore's "masterful strategic empathies" evince.

*Phase IV: Identify Pattern Breaks*

Shore's strategic empathies are sensitive to pattern *breaks* in the behavior of adversaries: discontinuities with past behavior in which the opponent seems suddenly and surprisingly willing to impose significant costs on himself. These occasions provide decision-makers who are paying attention with what we'll call, "what the hell?" moments. The initial surprise, given the high stakes that are usually involved in foreign policy decision-making, leads immediately to follow-up questions (if there is time, if someone is available who can answer the questions, if the decision-maker believes in the capacity and veracity of the advisers), in particular: "why in the world is the adversary doing *that!*" And: "what should *we* do in response?" These are moments when decision-makers come to doubt what they have believed about an adversary; actions of the adversary disrupt what was believed to be the previous pattern.

In light of the pattern-breaking behavior, leaders may quickly come to doubt whether what they previously took to be the enemy's pattern of behavior was based on reality or fantasy. An example from our own work on the Cuban Missile Crisis provides a trifecta of misperception and pattern-breaking disruption: President John

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<sup>15</sup> Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable*, expanded ed. (New York: Random House, 2010). We have recently applied Taleb's innovative framework to the question of how, and why, John F. Kennedy was successful not once, but at least six times, in resisting his hawkish advisers who wanted him to take the nation to war. See James G. Blight and Janet M. Lang, "Black Swans/White House: Why John F. Kennedy Matters, 50 Years after Dallas," <https://www.cigionline.org/sites/default/files/no20.pdf>. (An Occasional Paper of the Centre for International Governance Innovation, November 2013).

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth Barrett Browning, "Sonnets from the Portuguese." In Peter Washington, ed., *Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning* (New York: Knopf, 2003), 175-199, 197. (The line quoted is italicized by the poet.)

F. Kennedy thought that Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev would never put nuclear weapons into Cuba, but he did; Khrushchev thought Kennedy would accommodate himself to nukes in Cuba, but he did not. Cuba's Fidel Castro believed Khrushchev would go all the way to war with the U.S. in support of Cuba, but he wouldn't. Each leader had constructed a complex and compelling narrative to support his pattern-based prediction but compelling or not, each was dead wrong, and the consequences of this triple psychological disruption sent the world spinning toward Armageddon.

It is worth asking: why, with all these patterns being broken did the world avoid Armageddon? Kennedy's Defense Secretary Robert McNamara had an answer, after participating in six international conferences on the crisis with his opposite numbers from Moscow and Havana. This is the analysis of a man once referred to by a pundit as "an IBM Machine with legs."<sup>17</sup> This is the view of a man regarded as so overtly rational and calculating that he was downright scary, with his command of facts and figures, and his relentlessly objective, unemotional delivery:

I want to say, and this is very important: at the end, we lucked out! It was luck that prevented nuclear war. We came that close to nuclear war at the end. [Gestures by bringing thumb and forefinger together until they almost touch.] Rational individuals: Kennedy was rational; Khrushchev was rational; Castro was rational. Rational individuals came that close to the total destruction of their societies.<sup>18</sup>

We should ask: what has been the role of luck in other foreign policy outcomes—the salutary, the disastrous, and everything in between—outcomes that, for various reasons, have not been studied as extensively, or as diligently, as has the most dangerous crisis in recorded history?

Still, the concept of "pattern break" is Shore's most innovative conceptual breakthrough, it seems to us. Examples from *A Sense of the Enemy*: In 1986, Mikhail Gorbachev invited foreign assistance into the USSR after the Chernobyl disaster, shocking the West, because the decision reversed the policy of all Soviet leaders before him; in 1934, Hitler ordered the murder of his longtime friend, Ernst Röhm, leader of the notorious "Brown Shirts," and embraced the (then) militarily weak *Reichswehr*, signaling to those who were paying attention that Hitler had outsized territorial ambitions, for which a huge military machine would be a prerequisite. The following year, the *Reichswehr* gave way to the soon to be feared *Wermacht*, the unified German Armed Forces. (See esp. 1-13, and 88-106.) We regard this as Shore's heart-of-the-heart of the matter of strategic empathy in foreign policy decision-making—the core action required by his "masterful strategic empathies." It is the device Shore uses to reduce the tension between the Historical Track and the Policy Track. The identification of pattern breaks provides him with a technique that, he believes, can be taught, learned and improved, such that the mystery of strategic empathy, celebrated by the likes of Isaiah Berlin and others, gives way to less celebration and more rigorous analysis.

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<sup>17</sup> "IBM Machine with legs" is mentioned in Errol Morris's Academy Award-winning documentary film, *The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons From the Life of Robert S. McNamara* (New York: Sony Pictures Classics, 2004) as part of an interview of Robert McNamara by Harry Reasoner of CBS News.

<sup>18</sup> McNamara made this comment in *The Fog of War*. See also our book, based on the film, also called *The Fog of War* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), especially 58-85. The passage in the text is quoted on 59.

Yet, it is not clear to us that Shore has fully accounted for the (often) mind-boggling difficulty of identifying pattern breaks in the confusing cauldron of *real time*, and connecting the break to a prediction of an adversary's action that seems totally improbable, or maybe even ridiculous, to advisers or other colleagues who may be ensnared in the continuity heuristic. A leader must be open to possibility, sufficiently shrewd to discover what others have missed, courageous enough to act on the perception of a pattern break, and strong enough to prevail, knowing full well that all of these steps are not enough to guarantee success. In addition, of course, the leader must be *right*. But even this is not enough. A leader must be *lucky* as well.

*Phase V: Derive the Drivers*

Shore borrows the term 'driver' from cognitive psychology, whose practitioners had previously borrowed the concept from computer science (which is the source of nearly all the concepts and models in the field). Drivers are programs that provide the interface between the hardware and the software of devices like computers and smart phones. Although Shore doesn't quite put it this way, he seems to us to see *drivers*, in foreign policy decision-making, in an analogous way: drivers link the deep-seated, perhaps only half-conscious, make or break motivation of statesmen with their overt behavior, such as in their diplomacy, their authorization of military forces, and so on.

In *A Sense of the Enemy*, the term "driver" probably appears more often, and in more contexts, than any other of Shore's borrowings from cognitive psychology. It may strike some as a dodgy concept, more or less equivalent to Freud's unconscious mind, minus the details about the polymorphous perversity—sexual and otherwise—of the unfulfilled wishes that Freud believed lurk in the tangled thickets of each of our own private underworlds. An analogy that comes to mind is the Rosetta stone. The driver, for Shore, is the key that unlocks the door beyond which lay the explanations of the actions of statesmen that help us to make sense out what might otherwise appear to be a chaotic, sometimes contradictory array of behaviors.

In one of Shore's most intriguing examples, he focuses on identifying the driver—interestingly, in all his examples there seems to be only *one* driver—of Gustav Stresemann, Weimar Germany's "masterful strategic empath" (26). The question is this: how did Stresemann succeed in creating the foundation for the massive re-arming of Germany by Hitler, when the Great Powers both East and West of Germany were trying to prevent it? Put another way: how did he pull the wool over the eyes of the Russians, the British and the French? According to Shore, Stresemann possessed a rare combination of deep insight into the drivers of his adversaries, and also a clear-eyed understanding of their constraints. He negotiated artfully, as if he were born to it, and made friends even among his opponents. He even won the Nobel Peace Prize for his work at the 1925 Locarno conference, in which Germany agreed to join the League of Nations, settle its disputes with its eastern neighbors, including the USSR, and preserve the post-war arrangements with the West—i.e., Germany would make no effort to reclaim certain areas of which the Allies had stripped it via the Treaty of Versailles. Stresemann had figured out that the Russians were really more interested in selling weapons to Germany than in high-minded dispute mediation; whereas in the West, there was no stomach for sending armies into German territory, as long as the German military buildup was done subtly and not too fast, with much winking and nodding all round. This was the essence of what Shore calls "Stresemann's policies of overt cooperation and covert defiance" (63).

Stresemann's "one underlying driver," according to Shore, "was to restore German greatness by any reasonable means" (67). He lied often and effectively in this cause. He categorically stated on 28 February 1928, for example: "Germany is disarmed" (67). In one of the most hilarious understatements in the book,

Shore drolly tells his readers: “this statement was not entirely truthful” (66). Stresemann had driven Germany’s foreign affairs exactly where he wanted them to go. When Hitler became chancellor on 30 January 1933, the German military machine was big, growing and it would soon, alas, be ready to roll toward both the East and the West. (See 25-28 for a general introduction to “driver.”)

*Phase VI: Mentalize the Adversary*

As Shore tells us, mentalization is what cognitive psychologists are now calling the ability to understand the mental state of oneself or others, which underlies overt behavior. Not to put too fine a point on the concept, it refers to mindreading. Mentalization, as Shore adapts the term from psychologists, is “thinking about the thinking” of an adversary. Metaphorically, the term is “shorthand for placing ourselves into someone else’s head” (81).

Shore believes that there are two principal ways of mentalizing: one bad, one good. If I ask myself what I would do if I were in the adversary’s shoes, I gain little or nothing because, in fact, it is not I who is in the adversary’s shoes. It’s the adversary, stupid! This seems so elementary as to hardly be worth stating, but Shore rightly points out how difficult it is to avoid “mirror-imaging,” or imagining that the fears, hopes, and perceptions of others are truly theirs, not our own, so pervasive is our human tendency to take ourselves as the gold standard for apprehending reality. But if we conscientiously build a theory of the adversary, whether we call it that or not, based on demonstrable traits of one’s opponent, we stand a chance of predicting behavior with some degree of accuracy. (See 81-105 for Shore’s comparison of Stalin, who was incapable of getting inside Hitler’s head, and Roosevelt, who “mentalized” much more effectively about Hitler’s intentions.)

We presume that Shore prefers to use the term “mentalize” instead of the more familiar “mindreading” because he believes “mentalizing” is embedded in a scientific framework of empirical research and careful theorizing; whereas, “mindreading” is usually thought of as the domain of fortune-tellers and other wing nuts claiming extrasensory or even supernatural powers. Shore speaks almost with awe at “The scientists in this field [who] have coined the term “mentalizing” (81).

We think Shore should be more careful when he goes shopping for psychological trimmings for his historical narratives. The term “mentalize” derives from developmental cognitive psychology, and seems to us to touch only marginally, if at all, on Shore’s enterprise. Psychologists have carried out studies to determine at what age pre-school children “mentalize” false beliefs. The most famous paradigm involves a Punch and Judy puppet show. The kids already know that Judy has escaped from the box that Punch says he is about to throw over the cliff. Children as young as four recognize that Punch’s threat to throw Judy off the cliff, is baloney.<sup>19</sup>

We wonder what this has to do with strategic empathy between statesmen. What has been gained by the invocation of yet another bit of jargon from psychology? If “mindreading” is too mystical, why not just say: “empathizing?” When you import a concept from psychology into your historical narrative, you may be asked to open your bags at customs, and show the inspectors what else are you bringing in from that alien

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<sup>19</sup> See Heinz Wimmer and Josef Perner, “Beliefs About beliefs: Representation and constraining function of wrong beliefs in young children’s understanding of deception, *Cognition* 13:1 (1983): 103-128.

psychological country. Often it is best to stay under the radar of the academic border guards by sticking close to ordinary usage, unless there is a compelling reason to depart from it.

*Phase VII: Decide and Act, or Start Over*

In his “Afterword,” Shore quotes the economist John Maynard Keynes: “When the facts change, I change my mind. And what do you do, sir?” (199). Here is Shore’s adaptation: “When the pattern breaks, I change my behavior. How about you” (199)?

This may sound pretty cut and dried, but in practice it often involves almost superhuman effort, a lot of talent, and more than a dash of luck. You may think you have read the enemy’s mind correctly. But have you? The threat is still perceived—this is, after all, foreign policy, and everywhere you look, there are threats, present and future, real and imagined. Are the adversary’s constraints intact? Is the behavior pattern altered significantly? Are what may seem like pattern breaks, and thus like keys to strategically empathizing, *really* breaks in the pattern you previously identified? Have you, as President George W. Bush claimed to have done with Vladimir Putin, looked deeply into the soul of your adversary and located his supreme driver? Are you confident that you are truly mentalizing with your opponent, and not fantasizing or projecting your own wishes and fears onto the enemy?

If the answer to each of the above is an enthusiastic ‘yes,’ then decide. If the answers to any of them are ‘no,’ or ‘I’m not sure,’ then start over. And keep grinding through the process until you are sure you have read the adversary’s mind, or until you run out of time to decide. In the real world of foreign-policy decision making with war and peace on the line, unlike the unreal world of analyzing decisions after the fact, you are almost guaranteed to run out of time. And what is even scarier than running out of time is the sneaking suspicion that the adversary knows he is also running out of time. When this happens, we say we are in a *crisis*.<sup>20</sup> The sum of all these fears is often a slide toward preemption. Leaders are like the rest of us: they can stand only so much pressure, before they resort to the sub-optimal cognitive shortcuts that have been so well documented by psychologists.

*A Sense of the Enemy’s Hammer: Constraints > Drivers > Pattern Breaks > Empathy > Victory in Vietnam?*

The American psychologist Abraham Maslow is credited with popularizing a bit of folk wisdom that highlights our human weakness in the face of the new, the unfamiliar, and the unexpected. “If all you have is a hammer,” he wrote, “everything looks like a nail.”<sup>21</sup> Accordingly, among generations of psychologists, this venerable morsel of folk wisdom is known as “Maslow’s hammer.” Maslow himself differentiated worse, and better scientists according to how hammer-prone they are: those who are uncomfortable confronting the unknown that lay beyond the reach of their current knowledge tend to go whack, whack, whack until they bloody their figurative thumbs, step back, and as they are wiping the blood away, they take another look at the phenomena with which they are dealing. Others, who are more open to surprise and genuine novelty are

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<sup>20</sup> For a quick but, we think, pretty comprehensive introduction to the psychology of crisis, see the short, partially animated film by Koji Masutani, *Who Cares About the Cuban Missile Crisis?*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zObCklM5LPw>.

<sup>21</sup> Abraham Maslow, *The Psychology of Science: A Reconnaissance* (New York: Maurice Bassett, 2002), 15.

less likely to bloody themselves in pursuit of knowledge, because they know, or are at least open to the proposition, that everything is not a nail.

On the Vietnam War, we think that Zachary Shore has wielded his ideas of strategic empathy rather like Maslow's hammer. He has developed an interesting and fruitful theory, but—at least as regards the war in Vietnam—the theory goes too far. When he turns his attention to the war, Hanoi's pursuit of the war is whacked and squeezed into his theoretical framework. He does this with his characteristic ingenuity, but also with inattention, in our view, to the brutal reality faced by the Vietnamese Communists. He has extracted some ideas from Le Duan's statements and letters from Hanoi to his Southern comrades, and concluded, in effect, that the Vietnamese Communists won, and the U.S. lost, due to there being more and better "masterful strategic empathies" in Hanoi than in Washington. Because Shore so zealously applies his theory of strategic empathy, he has not given enough attention to the ways Le Duan and his colleagues were wrong about the Americans. (Of course, as is heavily documented, the Americans were also wrong about the Vietnamese communists). As far as we know, the war that Shore filters through his theory did not happen. The war that did happen was far more chaotic, surprising, brutal, longer, and more devastating than that predicted by any theories Le Duan may have constructed about the Americans.

Here, in sum, is our view of Shore's view of how Le Duan's strategic empathy produced Hanoi's victory in its war with the United States:

(1) "Underdogs must know their enemies better than their enemies know them. Without that knowledge the underdog's chances of success are slim" (108); (2) "[Hanoi's] leaders knew their enemy better than their enemy knew them" (108); and, (3) "Le Duan's strategic empathy for America stemmed from a careful consideration of enemy behavior and the context within which the Americans had to function" (110).

Shore is especially impressed with Le Duan's fine-tuning of Hanoi's war effort, on the basis of which Shore believes Hanoi won the war. Le Duan "mentalized" effectively with the Americans. According to Shore, he read their minds, while he remained inscrutable to Washington. Le Duan certainly tried. As he wrote to his Southern comrades early in the U.S. war, "How far we win, how far they lose, must be calculated and measured precisely."<sup>22</sup> The idea was to steadily degrade the U.S. war effort, but not so massively or so quickly that the U.S., in a convulsion of retribution, utterly destroyed Vietnam to an irreversible extent. The problem for Shore's theory is that, although Le Duan, et al. "calculated and measured precisely," they were wrong a good deal of the time. They won the war, all right, but not because they calculated U.S. behavior "precisely."

Here are two examples of Shore's whacking the historical reality with his theory of strategic empathy. Our own views of this history are based on eyewitness accounts by North Vietnamese civilian and military leaders during the war, backed by declassified documentation.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Le Duan, Thu Vo Nam ["Letters to the South"] (Hanoi: Nha Xuat Ban Su that, 1986), 52. Quoted in McNamara, Blight and Brigham, et al., *Argument Without End*, 32.

<sup>23</sup> See McNamara, Blight and Brigham, et al., *Argument Without End*. The U.S.-Vietnamese dialogues on the war make up the bulk of the book. You can open the book, virtually at random, and find yourself reading about a difficult, sometimes very testy and emotional, face-off between the Americans and the Vietnamese. You can feel the



*After Tonkin Gulf*

First, why did Hanoi order the attacks on U.S. vessels on 2 August 1964? And second why, in the aftermath of the events, did Hanoi antagonize the Americans with several bloody attacks on U.S. personnel throughout late 1964 and early 1965? Shore's answer to the first question is that someone in Hanoi's High Command made a mistake, or, (perhaps) that this was a case of "the fog of war," where confusion reigned. His answer to the second question is that Le Duan and his colleagues spotted a pattern break: the U.S. had now decided on a sustained campaign of bombing the North, and the several dozen sorties in early August 1964 constituted only the beginning. That being their conclusion, they had little to lose and everything to gain by taking the initiative. The first answer bypasses the strategic empathy of Le Duan & Co. The second answer proves that Le Duan was almost preternaturally strategically empathetic. Since the bombing of the North had now begun, Hanoi would attack Americans whenever and wherever possible.

This is all hypothetical. None of this happened. The attacks on the *USS Maddox* in Tonkin Gulf were ordered by a local commander, who was fed up with the raids of the U.S.-backed and trained South Vietnamese commandos north of the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the Johnson administration had *not* decided to launch a sustained bombing campaign against the north—not yet. There were people in Lyndon Johnson's inner circle who strongly opposed bombing the North as a matter of policy. In fact, what the U.S. believed were Hanoi-sanctioned attacks in late 1964 and early 1965, were used in Washington by the hawks who were arguing for bombing.<sup>25</sup> For a leader who was trying to avoid an all-out war with the U.S., Le Duan was heading 180 degrees in the wrong direction.

*Attack on Pleiku*

Why did Hanoi order the attack on the U.S.-South Vietnamese base at Pleiku, in the Central Highlands, on 7 February 1965, in which nearly two dozen Americans were killed, and more than a hundred wounded? This attack was followed quickly by what the U.S. called, deceptively, "sustained reprisals"—bombing North Vietnam—and Hanoi referred to as "The War of Destruction"—which became the longest and most intense

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emotion, as well as note the avalanche of facts that anchors the discussions. In fact, you can actually begin to label, as we did in parallel to reading Shore's *A Sense of the Enemy*, the patterns and pattern-breaks that constitute such important components of Shore's strategic empathy heuristic. One example that occurs throughout the book: the Americans say, over and over again, we bombed the North so you in Hanoi would cease and desist supplying your southern comrades in the National Liberation Front. The Vietnamese response, given with great vigor on occasion, is this: when you bombed us in the North, we knew we were winning, so we increased our support for the NLF. At first the Americans just sat mute, unable to process what they were hearing, or anyway, unwilling to believe it. But that changed. By the conclusion, the North Vietnamese point of view began to make sense to the Americans. See especially 190-195, for "The Dialogue of the Colonels." Col. Quach Hai Luong and Col. Herbert Y. Schandler, both retired from their respective military services, engaged in a dialogue over lunch, in a Hanoi restaurant, each with his own interpreter. The conversation is an example of two former military officials struggling to make sense in retrospect of behavior of the enemy in real time that was beyond puzzling, virtually incomprehensible.

<sup>24</sup> McNamara, Blight and Brigham, *Argument Without End*, 201-204.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 201-204.

sustained bombing campaign in history. According to Shore's calculus, if Le Duan thought Hanoi could deter further attacks on the North by acts like the one at Pleiku, then he was alas more like the strategically "autistic" Stalin, than his "masterful strategic empaths" like Gandhi, Stresemann and Roosevelt. So Shore speculates: Le Duan was trying to raise morale in the Southern comrades, and he had already figured out that the U.S. was unwilling to absorb casualties to any significant degree. So Shore's Le Duan reasoned, the more Americans his forces killed, the quicker the Americans would capitulate and withdraw.

As with the Tonkin Gulf and events in its aftermath, the problem is that what Shore's theory needs to have happened, never happened. The group attacking Pleiku did not even know Americans were present at the base. Moreover, they did not attack on an order from Hanoi. They were on their own except for infrequent, hand-carried instructions they received from commanders north of the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel. Second, the attack at Pleiku was not the *effect* of a U.S. decision to escalate; instead, the attack at Pleiku was, for various reasons, an important *cause* of that escalation.<sup>26</sup> There was no little or no empathy involved in these events, strategic or otherwise.

In fact, the psychological space in which Hanoi and Washington operated during the run-up to the war was an empathy-free zone. Robert McNamara drove our interpreters almost to apoplexy when he said, while discussing these matters with his Vietnamese counterparts in Hanoi: "neither side knew shit from Shinola about the other." The comment drew a smile and a nod from Nguyen Co Thach, the former foreign minister (and a fluent English speaker), as well as an outburst of laughter from the Americans.<sup>27</sup>

And so it went. The war in Vietnam was not decided by strategic empathy. Instead, because empathy was almost completely absent, the outcome was driven by the brutal facts on the ground. The great unknown was this: would the U.S. be willing to commit genocide, by totally destroying North Vietnam and its people, or would the U.S. pull back, its leaders and people unwilling to risk a Chinese or Soviet intervention, and also unable bear the burden that the generation of U.S. leaders involved with the war associated with Adolf Hitler and the Nazis? We know the answer. The outcome of the war that left something like three million people dead in one of the world's smallest, poorest countries, was decided by this fact: the Vietnamese communists were willing to risk genocide, an outcome that the U.S. was, for various reasons, unwilling to countenance.

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 205-212.

<sup>27</sup> On Sunday evening, 22 June 1997, the Vietnamese team hosted a lavish reception for the American visitors at the Government Guest House, at 2 Le Thach Street, next to the former residence of the French colonial Viceroy. (The Guest House was Henry Kissinger's residence during his on-site diplomacy with the Vietnamese during the latter phases of the war.) The U.S. interpreters had no idea how to render McNamara's comment into Vietnamese. Moreover, the Vietnamese interpreter, Mr. Le Hong Truong, from the Foreign Ministry's Institute of International Relations, did not do much better. He later told us that he had spent a year of his college days in San Diego, but had never encountered "*shit from Shinola*." Truong knew what "shit" meant, but not Shinola. After being told that "Shinola" was an American brand of shoe polish, Truong's response was "why is that funny?" It took the rest of the evening to bring him up to speed such that he laughed at the joke. The episode offered some welcome (scatological) humor, after three brutal days of discussions at the Hotel Metropole, a block or so from the Guest House.

This is a brilliant book, sparkling with the intelligence of its creative author. We eagerly await his next chapter in his pursuit of the impact of empathy on the history of decision-making with war and peace on the line. His ideas on the centrality of empathy are important. We share his sense of urgency of his task: placing empathy at the center of the enterprise of foreign policy decision-making.

Meantime, we have this suggestion: lay your hammer down. Pick up a copy of any one of a number of anthologies of the writing of the psychologist, William James (1892-1910), and turn to his “Bergson and His Critique of Intellectualism,” until you get to the following passage: “[Let us] turn our back on our winged concepts altogether and busy ourselves in the *thickness* of those passing moments over which they fly.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> William James, “Bergson and His Critique of Intellectualism.” In J.J. McDermott, ed., *The Writings of William James: A Comprehensive Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 573, emphasis added.

Review by Eliot A. Cohen, Johns Hopkins University

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This book is more than the sum of its parts. That is to say that although some of the case studies the author adduces to prove his point do not necessarily convince, his argument overall is original, intriguing, and important.

The thesis is that the key to reading a diplomatic or military opponent's mind is recognizing 'pattern breaks'—understanding first how they understand the world, and then seeing when they are diverging from their regular modes of conduct. In making his argument, Shore brings to bear an interesting array of sources from the field of cognitive psychology, and—gently—suggests that the infatuation many of us have felt for Daniel Kahneman's *Thinking Fast and Slow* is a bit overdone.

Shore is an historian doing a kind of political science: a general proposition about the world supported by a series of case studies, and then backed up by a broader social scientific literature. He writes clearly and forcefully in support of his central contention that empathy is one of the cardinal strategic virtues, and he explains how that is the case.

It all makes intuitive sense, but his cases do not always support the argument as fully as they might. For example, India's leader Mahatma Gandhi surely understood the limits of where the British would go in the use of force, but was this a unique quality of empathy on his part? Did not many other Indians understand that just as well, and not surprisingly, given their ready access to British political elites and their culture? And did Gandhi's personal insights matter as much as the activities of millions of Indians, and an Indian political elite which was generally quite shrewd in its handling of the British?

For that matter, were the British all that behind in empathizing with the Indians? That large numbers of Indians wanted independence (or at the very least the kind of deal that had been given the white Dominions) was clear to many British politicians. The ensuing struggle had to do not just with how power would be handed over, but to whom at what time and in what ways. It is not clear that Gandhi's strategic empathy mattered a whole lot here.

The same holds with the very interesting chapters on the 1920s German leader Gustav Stresemann, it having to be said that two chapters for that remarkable statesman seem a bit much. He did a masterful job of playing off the Russians and the Allies against each other for the benefit of Germany, understanding the constraints on both, and figuring out what he could get away with. Is this empathy understood as recognizing pattern breaks, or simply shrewd political judgment by another name? Moreover, is there not a danger here of attributing successful gambles to empathy, when they may also have some portion of luck about them as well?

The thesis-and-case-studies approach always runs the risk of skipping over important matters. Thus, the chapter on Soviet leader Joseph Stalin does not deal very much with Stalin's massive military buildup in the 1930's, his reactions to the Munich agreement, or the large scale redistribution of Russian forces in the East following the Polish campaign of 1939, all of which have some bearing on the misjudgments that led to the debacle of 1941. That Stalin was thus impervious to data that contradicted his views does not necessarily mean that he lacked all empathy—how else should we understand his handling of the Allies later in the war?

Empathy is undoubtedly a cardinal virtue for a politician, but it takes many forms, and not just the recognition of 'pattern breaks'. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill could understand German

Chancellor Adolf Hitler better than Hitler could understand Churchill, as John Lukacs has put it, not so much because Churchill was looking for ‘pattern breaks,’ than because he could imagine what it was like to be tormented by Germany’s predicament during and after World War I; and, perhaps, because he could imagine evil far better than Hitler could imagine liberal democracy.<sup>1</sup>

The uneven empathy that Shore describes in the mysterious North Vietnamese leader Le Duan, the mastermind of the Tet Offensive in 1968, may be a variant of the quality exhibited by many authoritarians, to include dictators like Stalin, Mao Zedong, and Hitler, as well as their less pernicious successors of current times. That form of empathy is most often a kind of feral sensitivity to weakness particularly on the part of liberal opponents. It is the quality that enabled Hitler to best British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain in the Czech crisis of 1938, but that blinded him to the steely side of the British Prime Minister’s character that was there below the surface. In this case, it was the instinct which made Le Duan and company think that American opinion was weak. But let it be noted that the general uprising envisioned in 1968 was intended to succeed in taking South Vietnam, and it failed to do so.

Similarly, there is something reductive about the conception of empathy as pattern break. When the head of Israeli military intelligence in 1973 refused to believe in an impending Egyptian attack it had to do with all kinds of misunderstandings, including expectations of an immediate warning that never came, and a conceptual framework that was not about Egyptian patterns, so much as Israeli judgments about their enemies’ circumstances.

How do leaders gather the information from which they read their counterparts? Shore makes mention here and there of various techniques, from reading their books (Stalin) to relying on the impressions of trusted observers (President Franklin D. Roosevelt). Some undoubtedly go on the basis of first hand impressions, as did British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher when she concluded that Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev was someone she could ‘do business with.’ Are some methods more reliable than others? It would have been interesting to see something more systematic on this score.

Shore’s book ends with two chapters that do not quite mesh with the previous argument. As an alumnus of the Office of Net Assessment I was very glad to read his tribute to Andrew W. Marshall, and to the work that was done there on ‘understanding the other.’<sup>2</sup> () It might have been better, however, to weave some of that material into the earlier part of the book. Similarly, the case against the quants—mathematically inclined analysts of everything from baseball to politics like Nate Silver being a particular target—is plausible, but it is not clear why it belongs in a book that is largely about individual psychology, a subject on which Silver and his ilk claim no expertise.

The above are, if not quibbles, minor reservations about a book that is important and deserves a wide readership. Shore has done a particularly useful service in bringing into conversation the analytic minds of the diplomatic historian and the cognitive psychologist. In the long run, there will be limits to how far those two

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<sup>1</sup> See John Lukacs, *The Duel: 10 May-31 July 1940: The Eighty-Day Struggle Between Churchill and Hitler* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1991), 36.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the interesting collection of essays sponsored by Marshall and edited by Ernest R. May, *Knowing One’s Enemies: Intelligence Assessment before the Two World Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

worlds can meld: historians cannot run experiments with prime ministers or presidents the way psychologists can (and do) with college sophomores. But the insights of systematic students of individual behavior have a great deal to offer those of us who are preoccupied with the successes and failures of individual statesmen, and all credit to Shore for bringing them to our attention.

Review by Fiona Hill, The Brookings Institution

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Zachary Shore's fine book is a guide to understanding the behavior of political opponents in the international arena. In essence, it is a statesman's handbook for delving into the motivations and intentions of an enemy, or a difficult friend. Statesmen need to figure out what drives their opponents, and what their opponent values or wants the most. One current international dilemma—how to change the behavior of Russian leader Vladimir Putin—aptly illustrates this point. In March 2014, Russia seized the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine and formally annexed it, on the grounds that Crimea had been unjustly transferred to Ukraine in 1954 and then 'lost' after the dissolution of the USSR in 1991. The United States and European Union imposed sanctions and visa bans on individuals in President Putin's inner circle, who had been associated with the annexation.<sup>1</sup> Additional sanctions were imposed on Russia after Moscow instigated a war in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region, and after Russian-backed rebel forces shot down Malaysian airlines flight MH17, flying from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur over Ukraine in July 2014. In the wake of the MH17 disaster, it was revealed that Putin's oldest daughter and her Dutch husband had a residence in The Hague. Reports suggested that the couple were subsequently forced to relocate to Moscow.<sup>2</sup> U.S. and European officials anticipated that Putin would change course to reverse the sanctions.<sup>3</sup> To date, he has not done so.

Western officials' assessments of Putin's likely behavior were shaped by a commonly-held view that Putin is a kleptocrat, whose actions are dictated by how much he and his friends and family can steal.<sup>4</sup> Putin and his immediate circle may well have enriched themselves, but, as Russian President, Putin has taken many actions—including, in addition to annexing Crimea, launching a war against Georgia in 2008, and a military intervention in Syria in 2015—that have had negative consequences for the businesses and personal freedoms of those around him as well as for Russian foreign policy. Clearly, Putin's opponents failed to appreciate and understand that these actions and their concrete results were critically important for Putin, for domestic political, security and other, perhaps, more personal reasons. He was prepared to withstand the costs.

Shore's book underscores the importance of digging deeper into the individual opponent's behavior to understand their motivations. All statesmen have their own personal quirks and leadership styles that influence their decision-making, but these are not their core drivers. Shore identifies these as: "the ambitions that propelled that person to seek and maintain a leadership role. They are the *raison d'être* of leadership, and

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<sup>1</sup> Stefan Wagstyl, "U.S. targets Vladimir Putin's inner circle: EU takes new steps to punish Russia," *Financial Times*, 21 March 2014, <https://next.ft.com/content/635bf2b4-b013-11e3-b0d0-00144feab7de>.

<sup>2</sup> Philip Oltermann and Shaun Walker, "MH17: Dutch mayor wants Vladimir Putin's daughter Maria deported," *The Guardian*, 23 July 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/23/mh17-dutch-mayor-vladimir-putin-daughter-deport>.

<sup>3</sup> Author private discussion with senior former U.S. Treasury and White House official on the United States government and other European expectations that Putin might reverse course in Ukraine after the imposition of sanctions on his associates, 13 April 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Karen Dawisha, *Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 2014).

they are specific to each statesman. At times of crisis, when the stakes are highest, a statesman's drivers are revealed. Strategic empathy is the skill one needs to spot and comprehend them" (163-164).

Shore's analytical frame is primarily derived from the work of evolutionary and cognitive psychologists, who examine the way that beliefs and ways of thinking take hold. This provides a very different perspective on statecraft. Shore relates how inconsistent and contradictory people's beliefs and preferences actually are, and how leaders can be 'of many minds' rather than being driven solely by ideology or long-term plans. He also lays out the different approaches people use for understanding how others think: either by imposing a theory about what another person believes, based on biographical information; or by asking how we might act in their place. This latter approach, simulation theory, Shore argues, is especially flawed: "it assumes that others will think and act as we do, and too often they don't" (81). As Shore points out, one of the greatest mistakes that statesmen make when looking at an opponent's actions is to assume that there is an inexorable, almost linear, logic to their behavior—they keep on doing what they always do. When the opponent behaves 'out of character,' the leader wonders what they missed in the opponent's past behavior. The statesman is unable to reconcile their old understanding of the opponent with the behavior break.

Shore deftly dissuades the reader from latching on to these prior patterns of behavior. Although these are present, it is the *breaks* that really matter. Past patterns are poor predictors of future action, because they occur in specific temporal and situational contexts. They are only predictive if the conditions are roughly the same. In international affairs, the course of events typically creates dramatically new settings. When old patterns and procedures are upended, people are forced to adapt their behavior to pursue their goals. Pattern breaks reveal the underlying motivations, hidden drivers, the invariant aspects of the person's self. The most revealing pattern break of all is one where the leader assumes long-term costs as a direct result of the behavior—demonstrating what they value most—as Putin did in annexing Crimea in March 2014.

Shore carefully selects seven historical case studies to emphasize and illustrate his points. In each, world leaders either successfully or unsuccessfully attempted to read their rival's mind and shape their own behavior in response. Shore draws on a wide range of secondary sources and first-hand historical accounts rather than his own work. The originality of his book lies in his framing and analysis. The first case study examines the celebrated proponent of Indian home-rule, Mahatma Gandhi's, response to the massacre in Amritsar, when British troops open fire in a public gathering in 13 April 1919, killing around 400 people and wounding more than 1,000. As Shore notes, Gandhi correctly read the public reaction across the rest of the British Empire, recognizing the widespread regret and shame caused by the episode at both the popular and elite level. Gandhi saw the Amritsar massacre as a pattern break that was unlikely to be repeated. He assessed that the British would not respond with such overwhelming force again when confronted with non-violent protests. This assessment paved Gandhi's way to leading the protest movement that would ultimately culminate in Indian independence.

In his second and third case studies, Shore examines how Gustav Stresemann, the German Chancellor and Foreign Minister after World War I, succeeded in reading Germany's allies and enemies alike to conclude the Locarno Agreements of 1925 (for which he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize together with the Foreign Ministers of Great Britain and France, Austen Chamberlain and Aristide Briand), and also to arrange an audacious illicit German armament production program with post-revolutionary Russia. Stresemann accurately concluded that the new Soviet Bolshevik government was far more concerned with its survival than with the ideological achievements of the 1917 Russian Revolution: their "commitment to revolution was context deep, not fundamental to their nature" (47). After the secret program was revealed in the German



Parliament in December 1926, Stresemann was confident that he could exploit the embarrassment of the British and the French Foreign Ministers, who had just shared the Nobel Peace Prize with him. As a result of others' underlying priorities and personal embarrassment, Stresemann was able to conceal his direct role in Germany's secret remilitarization, and to ensure that the program could continue without risk to the Locarno Agreements and Germany's broader European policy.

Shore's fourth and fifth case studies form the real substantive heart of the book. They look at two different leaders' attempts to read Nazi Party Leader and German Chancellor Adolph Hitler and judge his intentions in World War II—Josef Stalin of the USSR, and American President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The studies provide a means of comparing and contrasting the approaches to reading opponents that Shore introduces. In the first, Shore questions why Stalin failed to see Hitler's plans to attack the Soviet Union in spite of reports from his own intelligence services outlining the contours of Operation *Barbarossa*. Shore argues that Stalin lacked "strategic empathy" (74-75). Stalin believed that both he and Hitler were driven by a similar quest for power. Stalin consistently projected his own intentions and drivers (for power) onto others. In Shore's view, Stalin "misread Hitler because he almost exclusively practiced simulation theory" (81).

Shore relates how instead of seeing revealing pattern breaks in Hitler's behavior, Stalin saw continuity. The prime example Shore offers is the so-called "Night of the Long Knives" in June 1934. Hitler removed the head of the German Nazi Party's paramilitary *Sturmabteilung* (SA) units, his close personal friend Ernst Roehm, to defang the SA as a parallel and competing structure so he could focus on transforming the regular German army, the *Reichswehr*, into a disciplined, professional fighting force. In Shore's analysis, Stalin saw Hitler's action as similar to his own steps to remove former friends and associates who challenged his power. Stalin failed to see that Hitler was making preparations for eventual war and had sacrificed his ideological impulses and friendship with Roehm for long-term geopolitical goals.

In contrast, Shore describes how Roosevelt grasped the real motivation behind Hitler's actions in the "Night of the Long Knives;" and, later, understood the significance of *Kristallnacht* ("The Night of Broken Glass") in November 1938. For Roosevelt, *Kristallnacht* "marked another pattern break in which Hitler imposed costs upon himself and thereby revealed something about his underlying aims" (93). *Kristallnacht* came only a month after the Munich Agreement, which Hitler hoped would smooth the way for German territorial expansion by convincing foreign leaders of Germany's peaceful intentions. Instead, *Kristallnacht* spotlighted Hitler's "anti-Jewish, anti-Bolshevist obsession." In this case Hitler's ideology was the primary driver of his actions. As Shore underscores: "A hardened realist would never have permitted *Kristallnacht* to occur at such a sensitive a time. On November 9, Hitler's racism collided with his realism, and his realism was momentarily pushed aside" (94-95).

Shore's final two cases are less illuminating than the contrasting studies of Stalin and Roosevelt. They focus on the ability of the North Vietnamese to correctly identify and exploit major U.S. military weaknesses, as well as the opportunities created by U.S. domestic opposition to the Vietnam war. North Vietnamese leaders understood that the U.S. military was spread too thin globally and its forces were not well-positioned to contend with an irregular army. Consequently, the North Vietnamese concluded that they could gain time and win through attrition with protracted guerilla warfare. They miscalculated in their assessment of the amount of forces the Americans would send to Vietnam. Although these final cases are weaker than the others, they do not undercut the overall analysis. Zachary Shore has produced an insightful book, as well as an invaluable framework for approaching international affairs and understanding world leaders.

Review by Tuong Vu, University of Oregon

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Zachary Shore's *A Sense of the Enemy* develops the notion of "strategic empathy" that can be simply understood as the skill to think like one's opponent. Based on that skill, Shore argues, a national leader can do a better job at predicting an enemy's likely behavior at crucial moments of war and peace when the stakes are very high. The key to gaining strategic empathy is neither to collect as much information as possible about one's enemy, nor to predict his next move based on his past behavior. Rather, the key is to observe the enemy's behavior at pattern breaks or times when he deviates from the routine or pattern of past behavior. As Shore writes, "It is at these moments when statesmen typically reveal their underlying drivers—those goals that are most important to them. These episodes can also expose much about a leader's character, showing the kind of measures he is willing to employ" (6). Shore illustrates his arguments through several detailed case studies of national leaders at critical moments in conflict, including Indian leader Mohandas Gandhi, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, American President Franklin D. Roosevelt, North Vietnam's Communist Party leader Le Duan, and others. The book also contains two chapters that use various examples and anecdotes to criticize the tendency to rely on the patterns of past behavior of an opponent to make predictions about his future course of actions.

Shore writes lucidly and demonstrates a very broad grasp of international history and politics. His book will be useful for both academics and non-academics and for undergraduate courses on decision-making. His case studies are informative and carefully constructed, with parts of the story relying on primary documents. I found the arguments in the book both interesting and insightful. Of course, scholars may challenge the originality of the concept of 'strategic empathy,' (is this really something new or simply common sense?), or its practical application (how can one identify 'meaningful pattern breaks' and distinguish them from those that are meaningless?).

As a student of the Vietnamese revolution, however, I am less convinced of Shore's account of this particular case. In the conclusion of the book, Shore summarizes his argument as follows,

On the eve of American escalation in Vietnam, Le Duan accurately grasped America's most salient underlying constraints: its vulnerability to high numbers of casualties, its difficulty in maintaining support for a protracted war, and its distracting global commitments... The Party leader further identified American actions surrounding the Tonkin Gulf incident as a provocative prelude to escalation. Yet while he was successful in spotting America's constraints, there is little evidence that he truly comprehended what drove President Johnson and his advisors (186-7).

Shore is generally correct about Le Duan's understanding of major constraints on American policy, but there are two problems in the way the historical evidence is connected to Shore's argument about Le Duan's strategic empathy. First, Duan's mention of America's vulnerability to high numbers of casualties cannot be found anywhere before late 1965 in all the documents Shore cites and those that I have. Duan cannot be given credit for a 'foresight' in 1964 based on what he first mentioned only in late 1965. Second, the 'pattern break' in American behavior, according to Shore, was American actions surrounding the Tonkin Gulf incident in August 1964. But Duan's understanding of the other two constraints (difficulty in maintaining support for a protracted war and distracting global commitments) on American actions had already been voiced in his letter sent to the southern Party leadership (COSVN) in 1962 and in the Ninth Plenum's

resolution in late 1963, thus they clearly could not have resulted from Duan's observation of American actions *after* the Tonkin Gulf incident one or two years later.

If indeed Duan possessed strategic empathy of his enemy, I argue that it was gained in 1962, 1963, and 1964 at three other pattern breaks (in fact, blunders) in American policy that Shore does not discuss: President John F. Kennedy's concessions at the 1962 Geneva Conference on Laos, the Kennedy-supported coup against President Ngo Dinh Diem in November 1963, and President Lyndon Johnson's announcement of a bombing campaign in retaliation to the Tonkin Gulf attacks.

At the Geneva Conference on Laos, Washington accepted a 'neutral' Laos, which means that Hanoi's access to the Ho Chi Minh Trail was not blocked. This concession broke from Kennedy's tough stance up to then, and it revealed to Le Duan an American weakness that could be exploited. American policy in Laos gave rise to Duan's idea in 1963-65 that Hanoi could manipulate Saigon politics through coups and military pressure to create a similarly 'neutral' government that would request the withdrawal of American forces and turn to Hanoi for guidance and eventual control. This idea was premature in 1962, but became more realistic with the coup against Diem in 1963. This coup obviously revealed serious internal conflict not only within the Saigon government but also between it and Washington. It broke the pattern of Washington's unflinching support for Saigon and for the Ngo regime in particular. Le Duan seized the opportunity to escalate the war with the goal of a quick victory in 1964-1965.

The third pattern break in my view was American actions in response to the Tonkin Gulf incident, but these actions are not those that Shore discusses. Prior to the incident, Hanoi leaders feared not only American intervention in South Vietnam, but even more, an invasion of North Vietnam by American ground forces.<sup>1</sup> American policy up to that point had been ambiguous, while the covert actions under Operation Plan 34A-Alpha must have fueled Hanoi's fear of such an invasion.<sup>2</sup> Although Hanoi began to send troops to the South in 1959, those were primarily Southern units which had earlier regrouped to North Vietnam in 1954. In his announcement of the bombing of North Vietnam in retaliation to the incident, Johnson declared that "the United States intends no rashness and seeks no wider war."<sup>3</sup> His statement broke the pattern of earlier covert actions and must have been reassuring to Hanoi leaders, who immediately dispatched their main force units into the South.<sup>4</sup> If Johnson had kept open the possibility of escalating the ground war to North Vietnam, he might well have kept the infiltration of North Vietnamese troops into the South to a level that the Saigon military could have managed without the need for sending American troops to South Vietnam.

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<sup>1</sup> "Thu cua dong chi Le Duan," 18 July 1962, *Van Kien Dang Toan Tap* (Hanoi: Chinh Tri Quoc Gia, 2004), vol. 23, 719.

<sup>2</sup> On those covert actions, see Edwin E. Moise, *Tonkin Gulf and the Escalation of the Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> North Vietnamese boats did attack the U.S. ship on 2 August but not on 4 August. The statement is available at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/primary-resources/lbj-tonkin/>

<sup>4</sup> Bui Tin, *From Enemy to Friend: A North Vietnamese Perspective on the War*, transl. Nguyen Ngoc Bich (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2002), 81-82.

My second point of dispute is about Shore's claim that Le Duan anticipated an American escalation in late 1964, and probably earlier. He bases his argument on the Politburo's Directive of 7 August 1964, which indicated such anticipation. Shore does not consider as wholly reliable the Ninth Plenum resolution of December 1963, in which Duan specifically discounted the possibility of escalation. Shore observes that much of this document reads like "a calculated effort by Hanoi to reassure its supporters that victory against the Americans was not only possible but in fact certain" (124). Shore similarly contends that Duan's letter sent to COSVN in February 1965, which also did not anticipate an American escalation, as not reliable because it contradicted the above-mentioned Politburo's Directive of 7 August (133). Shore goes on to propose that Hanoi may have ordered the attacks on American bases in South Vietnam during 1965 to boost morale and even to reap certain benefits from an American escalation such as a surge of popular support for the regime (135-138). In Shore's opinion, Le Duan correctly read not only the minds of his American enemy but also those of his Vietnamese subjects too.

In contrast, Lien-Hang Nguyen, Pierre Asselin, and I have made the opposite argument, that Le Duan failed to grasp American commitments to defend South Vietnam, and his ambition to achieve a quick military in 1964-1965 ended up provoking Johnson to send U.S. troops into Vietnam.<sup>5</sup> This was a big failure, not a success. What motivated Duan to make this risky move? At the Ninth Plenum of the Party in December 1963, following the deaths of Ngo Dinh Diem and John Kennedy, Duan was able to overcome opposition and to persuade the Party leadership to approve a military campaign to achieve a quick victory in South Vietnam before the U.S. was able or made up its mind to intervene. This victory would be achieved by sending Northern troops into the South to engage and defeat the Armed Forces of the Republic of Vietnam and seize power in Saigon. In Hanoi's calculations, after Saigon collapsed, the Americans would be in a difficult position to intervene even if they wanted to. The plan was primarily to preempt the Americans, not to deter them from intervention. Hanoi had in fact ordered paper money to be printed and sent to the South in preparation for that victory.<sup>6</sup> Up to early 1965, I believe that Hanoi leaders still expected that quick victory, until Johnson showed that they were wrong by sending American marines to South Vietnam.

Following the logic of my argument, Hanoi's authorization of the attacks on American bases in late 1964 and early 1965 can be explained by either one or both of the following explanations. One is Duan's and General Nguyen Chi Thanh's reckless attitude. This was clearly shown in their disregard of the possibility of Washington's using nuclear weapons that Shore does discuss. This attitude was to be shown again in Duan's authorization of the Tet Offensive of 1968 and the Easter Offensive of 1972. Another possible reason is Duan's hope to impress Beijing and Moscow with those daring attacks. In the 1950s, both Moscow and Beijing wanted to avoid American direct intervention in Vietnam, but by 1963, unlike Moscow, Beijing no longer restrained Hanoi from escalating the insurgency in South Vietnam to the point of risking direct American intervention. It was likely that Duan and Thanh had ordered the attacks to show off Vietnamese

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<sup>5</sup> Lien-Hang Nguyen, *Hanoi's War: An International History of the War for Peace in Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Pierre Asselin, *Hanoi's Road to the Vietnam War, 1954-1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), esp. 198; and Tuong Vu, *Vietnam's Communist Revolution: The Power and Limits of Ideology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), chapter 5.

<sup>6</sup> Huy Duc, *Ben Thang Cuoc* [The winner], vol. 2 (Los Angeles: Osin Books, 2012), 150. Huy Duc is a journalist from North Vietnam who had access to many important leaders and documents.

revolutionary prowess and to reward Beijing for supporting the Vietnamese revolution while shaming the Kremlin for not daring to stand up against American imperialism.<sup>7</sup>

Shore's argument misinterprets Le Duan's actions because it is based on a misjudgment of the relative importance of the three sources on which both Shore's and my accounts are based: the 7 August 1964 directive of the Politburo, the Ninth Plenum resolution issued in December 1963, and the letter Le Duan sent to the COSVN in February 1965. The latter two documents are far more important and reliable than the first, which was a directive to be sent to lower units in the state and Party bureaucracies to carry out measures to defend the coast from possible American infiltration and attacks. Along with the top three dozens of leaders, only very high ranking cadres were informed of the latter two, whereas the first one was clearly to be sent in full to the provinces, and perhaps even lower administrative levels. The latter two were obviously not written to boost troop morale as Shore claims (135-138), whereas that was part of the purpose of the first one. Based on the contents of the latter two, it can definitively be concluded that Le Duan misread American commitments and took the reckless actions of escalating the war and provoking the US into intervention.

Despite these issues with the Vietnamese case in *A Sense of the Enemy*, Shore is to be commended for offering a rich and stimulating study of high-stakes decisionmaking that deserves to be read by historians, practitioners, and students of international relations.

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<sup>7</sup> Fredrik Logevall argues against the possibility that Hanoi wanted to draw Moscow into the conflict; he leans toward the explanation that Hanoi leaders miscalculated. Logevall, *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 325.

## Author's Response by Zachary Shore, Naval Postgraduate School

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I want to thank the reviewers for their probing commentaries on my work. Each of these scholars has provided thoughtful reflections, and I am grateful for their insights. *A Sense of the Enemy* presents a complex and challenging thesis, one that is easy to misunderstand. When a text is misinterpreted, the fault lies with the book's author, not its readers. I should have made a greater effort to communicate the book's concepts more clearly. I would like to use this opportunity to do so. If I am able to clarify the thesis and related points, I believe that most of the reviewers' criticisms will no longer apply.

Both James Sheehan, who wrote the introduction, and Fiona Hill have accurately grasped the book's intentions and thesis. I will therefore focus my remarks on the other reviewers' comments. James Blight and Janet Lang deserve special thanks for their in-depth, 13,500-word review. I am honored that two noted experts would devote so much time and effort to thinking about my work. Tuong Vu and Eliot Cohen have also generously provided valuable comments. I appreciate all of the reviewers' praise for the book, and I will concentrate here only on the few major points over which we disagree.

### *I. Applied History*

To begin, I should explain that *A Sense of the Enemy* is a work of history, not political science or cognitive science. It differs from traditional works of diplomatic history in that it falls within the category of applied history. Niall Ferguson and Graham Allison are among the most recent scholars to call for more works of applied history: the effort to use historical scholarship to help solve problems of statecraft.<sup>1</sup> This has been the aim of each of my four books. My first book, *What Hitler Knew*,<sup>2</sup> not only sought to understand how the Third Reich's climate of fear affected German foreign policy, it also suggested that other violent dictatorships, such as Saddam Hussein's Iraq or Kim Jong-un's North Korea might exhibit similar degrees of chaotic information flows. My second book, *Breeding Bin Ladens*,<sup>3</sup> tried to apply historical context to understand why American and European governments were alienating the people they most needed to attract: moderate, religious European Muslims—and then provided policy prescriptions as well. In one of the recommendations I advanced the idea of a Council of Historical Advisors to be modeled on the Council of Economic Advisors—a proposal that might find support among the H-Diplo community. My third book, *Blunder: Why Smart People Make Bad Decisions*,<sup>4</sup> ranged across historical cases to ask why leaders so often shoot themselves in the foot, pursuing solutions that sabotage their own success. *Blunder* hoped to make policy makers more cognizant of their cognition traps and how they might be avoided. Each of these books asked how and why

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<sup>1</sup> Niall Ferguson and Graham Allison, "Why the U.S. President Needs a Council of Historical Advisors," *The Atlantic* (September 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Zachary Shore, *What Hitler Knew: The Battle for Information in Nazi Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> Zachary Shore, *Breeding Bin Ladens: America, Islam, and the Future of Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Zachary Shore, *Blunder: Why Smart People Make Bad Decisions* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2008).

decision makers undermine themselves by misreading their enemies. *A Sense of the Enemy* asked how they read them right.

## *II. Clarifying the Argument*

My central contention was not, as Cohen writes, “that empathy is one of the cardinal virtues.” Instead, I asked how leaders read their enemies right and found that they often did best by scrutinizing their enemies’ behavior at pattern-breaking moments.

In order to express what I mean by the phrase ‘reading one’s enemies right,’ I employed the term strategic empathy, which I defined as the ability to discern someone’s underlying drivers and constraints. This is not equivalent to simply getting into someone’s mind and learning how they think. We could call that act “mental empathy.” If emotional empathy is the ability to feel what another is feeling, and if mental empathy is the ability to know what another is thinking, then strategic empathy is a more specific form of mental empathy. Too often in statecraft leaders focus on an enemy’s intentions and capabilities. Strategic empathys dig deeper. If intentions are what an enemy wants to do, then drivers are why they want to do them. And if capabilities are what an enemy could potentially do, then constraints are what inhibit those capabilities. Both drivers and constraints operate sub rosa. They are the less obvious yet more significant factors that shape behaviors. And they are the fodder for a strategic empath’s success.

*A Sense of the Enemy* asks two questions. First, what produces strategic empathy? Where does it come from, and how do you get it? Second, how has strategic empathy, or the lack of it, shaped pivotal conflicts in the twentieth century and beyond? One answer, and I stressed that it is only one, is crystalized in the book’s main thesis, which I articulated as follows:

“One key to strategic empathy comes not from the pattern of past behavior but from the behavior at pattern breaks” (4).

Because this thesis is new and unfamiliar, it understandably led to some confusion. The most frequent misunderstanding involved the way that leaders achieved strategic empathy.

### *1. Focus on the Behavior, Whether Constant or Changed*

Some reviewers mistakenly believe that I was arguing that we should focus on a change in an enemy’s behavior for clues to his underlying drivers and constraints. That is incorrect. The enemy’s behavior need not change at all. Instead, I noted that the statesmen who read their enemies best did so by focusing on the enemy’s behavior (whatever that behavior was) at pattern breaks. By pattern breaks I am referring to those moments when the routine norms of daily business are completely upended and standard operating procedures are wholly overturned. Pattern-breaking moments might be any exogenous shocks such as a nuclear disaster, a sudden spike in violence, a massacre, or a peaceful uprising. They are the dramatic, high-impact events unplanned by leaders, but to which they must respond. How leaders behaved at those pattern-breaking moments often revealed more about their underlying drivers and constraints than did their long patterns of past behavior. I tried to articulate this point in the introduction as follows:

“To summarize, meaningful pattern breaks are those episodes that expose an enemy’s underlying drivers or constraints. Those less obvious factors become apparent when an opponent behaves in a way that imposes

genuine costs upon himself—costs with long-term implications. *The enemy need not change his behavior at those times. He might continue on exactly as he had done before.* The pattern break simply provides an opportunity for revealing what he values most” (8, emphasis added).

Some reviewers thought that I was arguing that a change in behavior is necessary for strategic empathy to occur. Cohen writes that the key was “... understanding first how they [leaders] understand the world, and then seeing when they are diverging from their regular modes of conduct.” Tuong Vu writes that “the key is to observe the enemy’s behavior at pattern breaks or times when he deviates from the routine or pattern of past behavior.” James Blight and Janet Lang write: “One of the outstanding features of Shore’s approach is his emphasis on the importance for statesmanship of recognizing discontinuities in the behavior of adversaries.” And elsewhere they note: “Still, the concept of ‘pattern break’ is Shore’s most innovative conceptual breakthrough, it seems to us. Examples from *A Sense of the Enemy*: In 1986, Mikhail Gorbachev invited foreign assistance into the USSR after the Chernobyl disaster, shocking the West, because the decision reversed the policy of all Soviet leaders before him...”

On the contrary, I have not argued that strategic empathy comes from an enemy’s change in behavior. The Gorbachev case is a useful example of a leader who did not diverge from his prior behavior. What mattered in the Gorbachev example is not that his behavior differed from that of prior Soviet leaders. What mattered is that his behavior was *exactly the same* after the pattern-breaking moment—Chernobyl—as it had been before it.

When Gorbachev came to power, many wondered whether his talk of glasnost (openness in Soviet society) was rhetoric or real. Was he a true reformer, or just the same old Soviet autocrat with a really good PR machine? Then came Chernobyl, a pattern-breaking moment: a dramatic, exogenous shock with serious, long-term repercussions to which the leader must respond. Unlike previous Soviet leaders who were notorious for concealing flaws in Soviet society, Gorbachev went on national television to reveal the extent of the disaster. And then he went a step further. He invited American medical experts into the Soviet Union to help treat those suffering from exposure to radiation. The fact that he behaved differently from prior Soviet leaders was important, but far more significant was the consistency of his behavior before and after the pattern-breaking event of Chernobyl.

Long before the Chernobyl disaster Gorbachev had spoken about the need for reform, and during the pattern-breaking event of Chernobyl he continued to speak and act as a reformer. At this crucial pattern-breaking moment his behavior did not change. And by scrutinizing his behavior around this pattern-breaking moment, foreign observers could have gained valuable insight into Gorbachev’s underlying drivers. His behavior at this time offered powerful evidence to help solve the question: was his talk of reform rhetoric or real?

The key is not to search for a change in behavior; it is instead to scrutinize the behavior (whatever that behavior might be) around a pattern break. In each of the book’s many cases, the statesmen who focused on the enemy’s behavior at pattern-breaking moments succeeded in reading their enemies well.

## *2. Strategic Empathy Is Just One Factor*

Further confusion about the book’s thesis concerns its putative reductive nature. To reiterate the thesis in a single sentence:



“One key to strategic empathy comes not from the pattern of past behavior but from the behavior at pattern breaks.”

Note that I say that strategic empathy is one key, not the only key. Some of the reviewers overstate the role I assign to strategic empathy, misbelieving that I claim it is the sole determinant in a conflict’s outcome. For example, Cohen observes that “... there is something reductive about the conception of empathy as pattern break.” To support his assertion that many factors contribute to decisions, Cohen goes on to suggest that the Israeli failure to foresee Egypt’s attack in 1973 stemmed from a host of factors. I agree, and I would never suggest otherwise.

The mistaken belief that I have turned strategic empathy into a monocausal explanation for success is most evident when some of the reviewers discuss the chapters on the Vietnam War. Blight and Lang write:

“He [Shore] has extracted some ideas from Le Duan’s statements and letters from Hanoi to his Southern comrades, and concluded, in effect, that the Vietnamese Communists won, and the U.S. lost, due to there being more and better ‘masterful strategic empathys’ in Hanoi than in Washington. Because Shore so zealously applies his theory of strategic empathy, he has not given enough attention to the ways Le Duan and his colleagues were wrong about the Americans.”

At the conclusion of my section on Le Duan (the Vietnam Workers’ Party General Secretary) I tried to stress that strategic empathy was one among several major contributing factors to North Vietnam’s victory, and I listed those other factors in the penultimate paragraph: “Obviously there were many causes of Hanoi’s ultimate victory, primary among them being the support it received from China and the Soviet Union, its ability to continue sending arms and material south via the Ho Chi Minh trail, and its willingness to allow its people to endure extraordinary suffering. We must add to that list Hanoi’s strategic empathy for America. Despite its failings, that empathy proved an equally important factor in its final triumph” (146).

I also pointed to Le Duan’s failures, portraying his strategic empathy as mixed, rather than masterful. “Although Le Duan ultimately triumphed, he and other Party leaders still failed on numerous occasions to read their enemies correctly, most notably with their prediction that the South Vietnamese would rise up in revolution” (146).

If the book should have a second edition, I will contemplate how I might make this point clearer.

### *3. Caution toward Cognitive Science*

As mentioned above, *A Sense of the Enemy* is primarily a work of applied history. Some of the reviewers seem to have either misunderstood or overstated my use of cognitive science to shed light on historical debates. Cohen comments: “In the long run, there will be limits to how far those two worlds can meld...” I agree. Blight and Lang state that I am “somewhat in awe of cognitive psychology.” Rather than being awed, I am quite skeptical, as I tried to demonstrate in a nearly twenty-page afterword. In my opinion, too often the social scientists exaggerate their findings, extrapolating generalizations from remarkably limited experiments. I find this frequently to be the case with many works of international relations as well as in the cognitive sciences.

In the afterword I attempted to highlight this problem and underscore the many grains of salt with which we should take the social scientists' claims. In contrast, I have made rather modest claims: that strategic empathy (the ability to discern someone's underlying drivers and constraints) is one important factor in enemy assessment, and that pattern-break analysis is a potentially useful tool in the larger undertaking of prediction.

The purpose of employing some of the theories from cognitive science is not to prove one conclusion over another, for this would be impossible. Instead, it is to bring ideas from other fields to bear on how historical actors might have reasoned. For example, the long-standing debate over Gustav Stresemann's drivers has remained stuck. Some insist that Stresemann was consistently aggressive in his plans for German revanchism, while others maintain that he was a changed man by the 1920s, content to integrate Germany into the comity of nations. I suggested that evolutionary psychology can provide some fresh ways of thinking about this problem, even though it cannot resolve it. Similarly, I invoke findings from the theory of mind literature to help us think afresh about the debate over Stalin's failure to anticipate Hitler's invasion of Russia.

These theories do not, and indeed cannot, prove anything. But they can certainly help us to broaden our thinking about possible explanations for seemingly mysterious behaviors. James Sheehan grasps my perspective when he writes: "He [Shore] is open to the deployment of psychological theories, but aware of their limitations. And while he clearly hopes that the acquisition of strategic empathy will help leaders navigate the treacherous seas of international relations, he recognizes the difficulties they must confront and is properly cautious about how much one can learn from both history and theory."

### *III. Countering Some Specifics*

While Blight and Lang along with Tuong Vu focused their specific criticisms on the chapters on the Vietnam War, Cohen offers observations about several other case studies in the book. Regarding Gandhi, he writes: "India's leader Mahatma Gandhi surely understood the limits of where the British would go in the use of force, but was this a unique quality of empathy on his part?"

In fact, Gandhi was deeply concerned about British violence. He called off protests when he feared that violence might erupt. He dreaded the loss of life and took pains to prevent placing Indians in situations where there might be mortal danger. And he studied closely how at Amritsar a British general had opened fire on a peaceful, unarmed crowd, killing roughly four hundred innocent civilians. From the vantage point of today it is easy to assert that Gandhi or anyone could have known that the British would not continue to gun down unarmed Indians. But Gandhi had good reason for concern. His calls to protest could have jeopardized the lives of unknown numbers of Indians and British. This was not a matter he could afford to get wrong. His strategic empathy around the pattern-breaking moment of Amritsar served as an important factor in his assessment of the British. Cohen wrote, "It is not clear that Gandhi's strategic empathy mattered a whole lot here." I disagree. It certainly mattered to the men and women who put their lives at risk opposing British rule, particularly the thousands who joined Gandhi in the Salt March, and the nearly 60,000 Indians who were arrested, but not murdered, along the way. If Gandhi had misread the British and other massacres had occurred after Amritsar, we might now look back on the Mahatma in a rather different light.

Regarding the chapters on Stresemann's reading of the Russians, Cohen asks, "Is this empathy understood as recognizing pattern breaks, or simply shrewd political judgment by another name? Moreover, is there not a danger here of attributing successful gambles to empathy, when they may also have some portion of luck about them as well?" Cohen is correct that strategic empathy was one factor, and contingency and chance are

almost always in the mix. But as I have tried to explain, pattern-break analysis entails something different from what Cohen understands it to mean.

On the Stalin chapters Cohen notes: “That Stalin was thus impervious to data that contradicted his views does not necessarily mean that he lacked all empathy—how else should we understand his handling of the Allies later in the war?” Stalin was indeed a skillful manipulator, but that skill is different from strategic empathy. I argued that if Stalin had scrutinized Hitler’s behavior around two key pattern breaks—the Night of the Long Knives and *Kristallnacht*—as FDR appears to have done, then Stalin might have been better able to accept that the three million troops on his border were planning to invade.

My chapters on Le Duan’s strategic empathy drew the most attention and criticism from the reviewers. Because Tuong Vu and Blight and Lang possess unique expertise on this subject, I will focus on their remarks.

Tuong Vu presents two major objections to my analysis of Le Duan. First, he argues that: “... Duan’s mention of America’s vulnerability to high numbers of casualties cannot be found anywhere before late 1965 in all the documents Shore cites and those that I have. Duan cannot be given credit for a ‘foresight’ in 1964 based on what he first mentioned only in late 1965.” I agree. I have not argued that Le Duan grasped all of America’s constraints prior to the date of the documents I cited. I have merely observed that his strategy during the war *subsequent to* 1965 rested in part on his recognition of America’s key vulnerabilities, a recognition he developed over time.

Tuong Vu’s second objection involved the timing of Le Duan’s strategic empathy—and his objection provides an excellent opportunity to clarify a basic problem of statecraft that I laid out in the book’s introduction, but which deserves further treatment here. Tuong Vu writes:

“Second, the ‘pattern break’ in American behavior, according to Shore, was American actions surrounding the Tonkin Gulf incident in August 1964. But Duan’s understanding of the other two constraints (difficulty in maintaining support for a protracted war and distracting global commitments) on American actions had already been voiced in his letter sent to the southern Party leadership (COSVN) in 1962 and in the Ninth Plenum’s resolution in late 1963, thus they clearly could not have resulted from Duan’s observation of American actions *after* the Tonkin Gulf incident one or two years later.”

Strategic empathy is an ability, one that emerges and develops over time. At pattern-breaking moments, strategic empathists are able to confirm, or at least gain far greater insight into their enemy’s underlying drivers and constraints. Typically the enemy’s behavior at pattern-breaking moments helps to resolve a crucial question about what the enemy truly wants or can achieve. But strategic empathy is still a process. Foreign observers are always gathering information and forming impressions of the enemy over time. That is what Le Duan was doing with regard to his American enemy: assessing its drivers and constraints over years. American behavior around the pattern-breaking moment of Tonkin helped him to resolve a crucial question: will America escalate?

To clarify, let us return to the Gorbachev example. Imagine two American intelligence analysts assessing Gorbachev during his years rising through the Party apparatus. One analyst, whom we’ll call Joe, thinks Gorbachev is a fraud: a Soviet strongman masked by a slick PR campaign. A second analyst, whom we’ll call Jane, has a different opinion of Gorbachev. She believes he is sincere. Both analysts gather evidence over the years that support their impressions of the Soviet leader. Sometimes Joe and Jane latch onto different data

points to support their own beliefs. At other times Joe and Jane analyze the same data point, but they interpret it in opposite ways. If Gorbachev shakes hands with random New Yorkers, Jane sees this as evidence of his reformist nature, while Joe thinks it is all an act intended to delude gullible types like Jane. Precisely this type of divide is a recurrent dynamic in the history of enemy assessments, as I outlined in the book's introduction.

Then comes the Chernobyl pattern break. Knowing that when an enemy imposes meaningful, long-term costs upon himself around a pattern-breaking moment, and witnessing how Gorbachev makes himself vulnerable to the old guard by openly admitting Soviet society's flaws, Jane greatly enhances her strategic empathy at this time. It's an 'aha' moment. It's a chance to see how the enemy behaves when forced to respond to an exogenous shock. It confirms what Jane had suspected for several years. The information gathered prior to the pattern break is still useful. It contributes to strategic empathy. Patterns of behavior can be useful, but behaviors at pattern breaks can be even more revealing. Let's now turn back to Le Duan.

In the years preceding the pattern-breaking moment, Le Duan, like Joe and Jane, was gathering information and evidence about the enemy. Tuong Vu is absolutely correct to identify several important episodes when Le Duan might have been forming his impressions of American weakness. We have no disagreement here. But the question Le Duan had to ask as tensions mounted around Tonkin was whether America would escalate after 1964. Would it really deploy massive numbers of troops to Vietnam? I have argued that the series of incidents around the time of the Tonkin Gulf encounter led Le Duan to conclude that America would soon escalate, despite America's weaknesses which Le Duan had been observing over the years.

Based on his words and actions around the pattern-breaking moment, it appears that Le Duan accurately assessed American plans to escalate. But historians must then confront a puzzling aspect of Le Duan's subsequent behavior. Why did Le Duan risk an American escalation by enabling, or failing to restrain, attacks on American bases? Why would Hanoi provoke America after the Tonkin Gulf incident when tensions were at their peak? I argued that Le Duan had come to believe that an American escalation was inevitable. He therefore saw a benefit in allowing, or at least not discouraging or condemning, those attacks because it could boost morale for what would surely be an extremely difficult war for North Vietnam. His insight came in part from the strategic empathy he had been developing over many years and which came into focus around the Tonkin Gulf pattern break.

Tuong Vu disagrees. He argues that Le Duan's encouraging of these attacks can be explained by two other causes. First, Tuong Vu asserts: "It was likely that Duan and Thanh had ordered the attacks to show off Vietnamese revolutionary prowess and to reward Beijing for supporting the Vietnamese revolution while shaming the Kremlin for not daring to stand up against American imperialism." This may well be true, but it still does not explain why Le Duan would risk an American escalation at such a precarious time. Impressing Beijing is one thing; risking the destruction of your nation is quite another.

This leads to Tuong Vu's second explanation for Le Duan's provocative attacks on American bases: his supposed recklessness. As evidence of recklessness, Tuong Vu claims that Le Duan disregarded the possibility of an American nuclear strike on North Vietnam.

As mentioned above, Tuong Vu argues that Le Duan was gradually observing signs of America's constraints over time, and he cites three episodes during which Le Duan may have concluded that America was weak. If Tuong Vu is correct, then is it not equally possible, even probable, that Le Duan also observed America's

consistent reluctance to use nuclear weapons? In 1962 America avoided using nuclear weapons over the Cuban Missile Crisis. During the Korean War a decade earlier America refused to use its nuclear arsenal. One did not need to be a great strategic thinker to realize that a nuclear attack on North Vietnam could easily lead to a stronger Chinese or Russian retaliation and a vastly wider war. If Le Duan actually believed that America was likely to use its nuclear weapons against North Vietnam and yet he provoked America despite this belief, then we must examine this evidence. If it is indeed concrete and compelling, then we must accept that on this score Le Duan acted recklessly. But in the absence of such concrete and compelling evidence, I must conclude that Le Duan shrewdly calculated the odds of America launching a nuclear strike on Hanoi and determined those odds to be quite low. Given that America never did use its nuclear weapons against Hanoi, I am inclined to conclude that Le Duan read his American enemy right. The nuclear question may therefore be further evidence in support of my contention that Le Duan possessed a reasonable degree of strategic empathy, particularly in gauging his enemy's constraints.

Tuong Vu argues that Le Duan's provocation of America to escalate the war can be chalked up to recklessness. But in order to accept the reckless hypothesis we must convince ourselves that Le Duan would behave recklessly on a matter of existential importance – existential not only to his nation and the cause to which he had devoted his life, but also to his own position of power atop the Party. Is it plausible that a man who had been contemplating, planning, assessing, and analyzing America for years, knowing that its intervention would dramatically hinder his efforts to unite Vietnam under communist rule, would provoke an American escalation recklessly? It is of course possible. But in the absence of concrete and compelling evidence, we must ask if it is likely. If we step back from this dispute, it is clear that Tuong Vu and I agree on an important point: that Le Duan was engaged in provocative behavior. We simply differ on the reasons for that behavior. Tuong Vu thinks Le Duan acted recklessly, whereas I believe Le Duan rationally concluded that American escalation was inevitable and that attacks against American bases could boost morale for the long fight ahead.

Blight and Lang also object to my analysis of the Pleiku episode, though for different reasons. Unlike Tuong Vu who sees Le Duan's hand in ordering the attacks on Americans, Blight and Lang maintain that the attackers "... did not even know Americans were present at the base." It would have been odd indeed if the Vietnamese sappers, who studied their targets carefully, had not known that Americans were present at Camp Holloway, a U.S. Army base. Hanoi's official history of its sapper forces describes the attack in detail, noting: "By the end of 1964 the number of American advisors and support personnel in Central Vietnam had risen to 9,000. The American-puppet seaports, airfields, and warehouses in Danang, Quy Nhon, Nha Trang, and Pleiku were crammed full of weapons, bombs, ammunition, and various implements of war."<sup>5</sup> This history

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<sup>5</sup> "History of Military Region 5 Sapper Troops (1952-1975) (Internal Distribution Only)" [Lich Su Bo Doi Dac Cong Quan Khu 5 (1952-1975) (Luu Hanh Noi Bo)] Military Region 5 Headquarters and Tran Quy Cat, People's Army Publishing House, Hanoi, 1998, 141 This account provides additional details of sapper forces' familiarity with the American presence at the base: "... on the night of 6-7 February 1965 the 409<sup>th</sup> Sapper Battalion's 30<sup>th</sup> Company, supported by a Pleiku City sapper platoon, a Gia Lai province sapper cell, a mortar company (minus) from 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment (with four 82mm mortars), and a Gia Lai Province infantry company attacked Aria Airfield at Camp Holloway. Pleiku city, the capital of Gia Lai Province, was a large American military base in the Central Highlands. The headquarters of the puppet army's II Corps and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tactical Zone and Camp Holloway, which was reserved for the use of all of the U.S. advisors in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tactical Zone, were located three kilometers north and northeast of the city. The Pleiku Airfield (ARIA) always had a company of helicopters along with a number of combat and reconnaissance [observation] aircraft standing by on combat alert."

describes the Pleiku attack as an attack on an American base. Although this is an official history, not a record created prior to the attack, it nonetheless suggests that Communist forces knew what they were attacking. They certainly knew that Americans were present at the Bien Hoa airbase, which they assaulted on November 1, 1964, and that Americans were housed in Saigon's Brinks Hotel, which they struck on December 24, 1964. Again, I did not argue that Le Duan directed these attacks on American bases in the months immediately after Tonkin. I question why he did not attempt to restrain them at such a dangerous moment when an American escalation seemed imminent. The reviewers' claims and speculations on this matter strike me as unpersuasive.

Finally, although Blight and Lang raise a number of concerns with my analysis of Le Duan, I will address what I take to be their ultimate conclusion on the matter. They argue that, "The war in Vietnam was not decided by strategic empathy. Instead, because empathy was almost completely absent, the outcome was driven by the brutal facts on the ground." I certainly agree that the war was not decided solely by strategic empathy, as I tried to make clear in the chapter's conclusion cited above. I find, however, that the brutal facts on the ground were driven by strategic decisions made on each side, and that some of those decisions in Hanoi were based on Le Duan's strategic empathy for America: his recognition that America would indeed escalate; his awareness of America's sensitivity to body counts; its being hamstrung by its other global commitments; and its difficulty maintaining public support for a protracted war. And I point to Le Duan's articulation of these constraints in the documentary record.

#### *IV. Conclusion*

I want to reiterate my gratitude to the reviewers for volunteering their time to consider *A Sense of the Enemy*. Their comments have enabled me to identify those areas needing further clarification. Naturally, just as some readers might misread certain aspects of a text, I, too, may have misread some of the reviewers' comments. If that is the case, I welcome them to contact me directly, so that we might explore any outstanding issues. My ultimate hope, of course, is that both historians and decision makers can profit from the ideas that our discussion has generated.

We must find ways to understand our enemies better, if we hope to minimize the frequency and costs of war. Pattern-break analysis cannot tell us everything we need to know about our enemies, but it might provide valuable insights at crucial moments. With the stakes of modern conflicts being so high, we surely ought to explore every reasonable avenue toward peace.