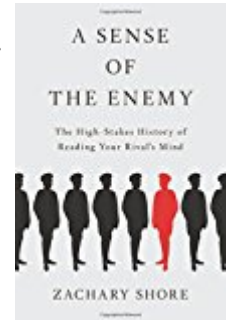


Zachary Shore. *A Sense of the Enemy: The High Stakes History of Reading Your Rival's Mind.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. 258 pp. \$31.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-19-998737-5.



Reviewed by Howard Ward

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Commissioned by Margaret Sankey (Air University)

In the South African Zulu dialect, there is a greeting, *sawubona*, that means “I see you.” The term implies a deep knowledge of a person beyond visual recognition, a level of knowing to the point of understanding a person’s thoughts. This level of understanding is not only important in building interpersonal relationships; it is critical in good statecraft.

In *A Sense of the Enemy*, Naval Postgraduate School professor Zachary Shore has created a compelling historical analysis that shows the need not only to see a potential adversary but, in the same spirit as the Zulu greeting, to see the world the way a potential adversary would. The central premise of the book concerns a concept called strategic empathy. Shore loosely defines strategic empathy as the ability to see as your enemy would see, in the spirit of knowing the enemy and yourself.

With historical examples and a narrative that is on point from start to finish, Shore effectively makes the case for using “pattern breaks” (p. 4) in

established behaviors that open the door to uncovering true intent and achieving strategic empathy. With vignettes that range from ancient China to World War II, the data analysis is comprehensive yet conveyed through a folksy form of prose that makes for easy reading.

Shore also does readers a service in pointing out some of the pitfalls in analyzing past behavior to predict future behavior. He uses the term “continuity heuristic” (p. 146), which is a way of thinking based on the premise that past behavior is the predictor of future behavior. Shore again uses historical vignettes that make a strong case for using past behavior as a baseline and using changes in previously predictable behavior to gain insight into true intentions and use that knowledge to operate on a timelier decision cycle than the adversary.

Another strength of Shore’s analysis is pointing out how culture can both help and hinder in gaining insight into adversary intentions. We know that culture includes the general beliefs,

values, language, and practices of a group. We also know universally that cultures are made up of individuals who make decisions and behave as much from drivers of their own life experiences as from the general tendencies of a group. Shore's application of this analysis would suggest that rather than asking what the Russians would do in Syria, it is more important to ask what would Vladimir Putin do in Syria.

Shore's masterful historical analysis could have been made more useful by clarifying that strategic empathy does not give one the ability to see the future; in fact, nothing can do that. As a former military wargamer, one thing I learned from my Navy counterparts and the history of the Rainbow Series of wargames staged from 1927 to 41, is that while we cannot predict the future, thinking through a problem from many angles can help us anticipate the different ways it might unfold.

A variety of mental excursions was the real takeaway from the Rainbow Series following World War II, and adding the pattern-break analysis to this type of thinking is a great boon to seeing how the future might unfold, as certain adversary actions keep some paths to the future viable while eliminating others. This process alone adds velocity to strategic decision making to gain an advantage over an adversary or set conditions that prevent conflict.

This point could have been clearer in the discussion of the great Andrew Marshall and the concept of operational net assessment. The discussion about data-based behavioral pattern analysis was fascinating and instructive, but it did miss the mark somewhat in that net assessment explores multiple avenues to the future; it does not produce avenues to prophecy, as Shore himself proves with respect to Marshall's watershed work at RAND and as the director of the Department of Defense's Office of Net Assessment, helping shape the strategy that crippled the former Soviet Union and ended the Cold War.

Overall, Shore's superb analysis deserves top marks and should be considered a must-read for anyone whose fortunes rise and set on correctly deciphering the intent of both friend and foe. The applicability of this book is valid across military, political, sports, and business settings. Shore's natural storytelling skills make the deep concepts of strategic empathy and the continuity heuristic easy to grasp. There are areas where the book could have better clarified how practitioners can capitalize on Shore's scholarship, but the lessons are nonetheless valid and useful.

If you wish to better understand the science of thinking, you may want to consider Daniel Kahneman's classic work, *Thinking Fast and Slow* (2011), as it focuses on thought processes rather than pattern analysis. To understand why it is important to read Kahneman, you definitely need to read Zachary Shore's *A Sense of the Enemy* so that we can have the mental capacity to correctly read the intentions of those who mean us harm and say to them with clarity and conviction, "I see you."

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