

# PEACE, CONFLICT, AND VIOLENCE

Peace Psychology  
for the 21st Century

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## CHAPTER 5

# INTERGRATIVE COMPLEXITY AND POLITICAL DECISIONS THAT LEAD TO WAR OR PEACE

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*And the war began, that is, an event took place opposed to human reason and all human nature. (Tolstoy, cited in Huberman & Huberman, 1964, p. 391.)*

*From the dawn of history down to the sinking of the Terris Bay, the world echoes with the praise of righteous war . . . I am almost tempted to reply to the Pacifist as Johnson replied to Goldsmith, "Nay Sir, if you will not take the universal opinion of mankind, I have no more to say. (C. S. Lewis, 1949, pp. 64–65.)*

As suggested by comparing the above reflections, a striking duality about war is that it is at once both seemingly aversive to humans and yet nearly universally accepted and practiced. Virtually all humans would agree that war is, if not inherently bad, at least highly disagreeable and the cause of much suffering. Indeed, the act of killing another human being—even in war—may well, as Tolstoy suggested, go against human nature. For example, examination of the 27,000 muskets retrieved from dead soldiers at the Battle of Gettysburg during the American Civil War, and reports by American riflemen during World War II, show surprisingly low percentages of weapon use, even with enemy soldiers in plain view (Grossman, 1996, 1998). This

suggests that humans may have a built-in aversion to the very thing that defines war—killing other humans.

On the other hand, this general aversion to war makes it all the more puzzling that, for practically as long as there have been nations or societies, there has been war, and that certain wars are accepted as necessary. Why, given that peace seems so psychologically preferable to war, is international peace so difficult to maintain?

Wars have multiple levels of causes. The historian studies political maneuvering and the rise and fall of particular leaders; the philosopher may explore moral and ethical causes of war in general; the sociologist may be concerned with such causes as mass

<sup>1</sup>During the writing of this paper, Peter Suedfeld was a Visiting Scholar at the Mershon Center, The Ohio State University.

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movements and competing loyalties; the economist may assess the distribution of resources among the various antagonists. Some political scientists argue that war is the inevitable outcome of nations each pursuing their own rational self-interest in an international environment characterized by anarchy, where guns are indeed *ultima ratio regis* (the final argument of kings: traditional slogan of the artillery). All of these approaches have merit, but the psychologist has a distinctly different task: to understand, as much as possible, what sorts of things those responsible for war think and feel that makes them send their own countrymen into battle, and why ordinary citizens obey, often enthusiastically. In doing so, the psychologist hopes to explain more precisely and at a deeper level exactly what factors contribute to the rise of particular wars, and, conversely, what factors contribute to a peaceful compromise in certain situations that, on the surface, closely resemble a build-up to war.

#### THE APPROACH OF THE AUTHORS TO WAR AND PEACE OUTCOMES

There is a tendency in the psychological literature to assume that war as an outcome is bad and that peace is good (see Suedfeld, 1992). Our own view is that this is a philosophical issue that generally lies beyond the scope of psychology. It may well be that wars are best judged, in the moral sense, as "good" or "bad" on a war-by-war basis. Whatever the case, however, the goal of the psychologist is to focus on the processes that lead to particular, predictable outcomes—and not to assign normative values to those outcomes.

#### INTEGRATIVE COMPLEXITY

The purpose of the present chapter is to investigate the role of a particular psychological construct, integrative complexity, in polit-

ical decisions that lead to war or peace. *Integrative complexity* involves both (1) the degree to which people differentiate among aspects of or perspectives on a particular problem ("differentiation"), and (2) the degree to which people then relate those perspectives to each other within some coherent framework ("integration"). Differentiation is necessary but not sufficient for integration; one can differentiate without integrating, but not integrate without first differentiating. Integrative complexity is measured by coding verbal passages (in most of the research discussed here, this entails coding public addresses or documents of political leaders) on a 7-point scale, where 1 equals low differentiation and low integration, 3 equals high differentiation and low integration, 5 equals high differentiation and moderate integration, and 7 equals high differentiation and high integration (for scoring details, see Baker-Brown et al., 1992).

#### AN INTEGRATIVE COMPLEXITY PERSPECTIVE ON SOME MAJOR CRISES

Consider what might happen to political leaders during a time of intense international conflict when war is a real possibility. The leaders might adopt one of two different hypothetical approaches to resolve the crisis: (1) they might stand unyielding by their position, refusing to see (or admit they see) any merit in that of the opposition, or (2) they might be (or at least appear) flexible and willing to compromise. It seems reasonable that when leaders adopt the first strategy during a crisis, the situation is more likely to end in war, while leaders who adopt the second approach are more likely to have that crisis end in peace. If leaders refuse to see any merit in their opposition's arguments during crises, they are more likely to end up "sticking to their own guns"—both figuratively and

(sometimes) literally. Conversely, if leaders attempt to be flexible and cooperative, they should be more likely to work out a peaceful resolution. Given this, to the degree that low integrative complexity is associated with an unyielding strategy and high integrative complexity is associated with a more flexible strategy, it seems theoretically reasonable to expect that integrative complexity could serve as a useful *predictor* of the outbreak or avoidance of war.

Let us now look at the evidence pertaining to the link between the integrative complexity of the statements of political leaders and eventual war or peace. We will then explore the possible explanations for this link, and consider the limitations of this literature.

### THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

More Americans were killed during the bitterly fought Civil War than during any other war in history (of course, it was the only war in which both opposing armies were made up of American soldiers). Interestingly, although it was fought from 1861 to 1865, the war very well could have begun about ten years earlier. Around 1850, there was a great debate in the U.S. Senate concerning the slavery status of any new states entering the Union. Would such states be allowed to have slavery or not? This debate ended in 1850 with a peaceful compromise. Why, given this, did the very similar Senatorial debates in 1860 to 1861 end in the incredibly violent Civil War?

One answer may be that the North and the South were driven to war by two increasingly influential extreme political factions—factions that tended to be lower in complexity than more moderate groups. Based on historical writings, prominent political figures before the Civil War were classified as either abolitionists, free-soil Republicans who would tolerate slavery but not allow it to

spread into new states, Buchanan Democrats who would permit slavery in new states if the within-state majority approved it, and outright supporters of slavery who wanted it to be legal throughout the nation. Results indicated that the two moderate groups (free-soil Republicans and Buchanan Democrats) were higher in complexity than both extreme groups (abolitionists and slavery-supporters; Tetlock, Armor, & Peterson, 1994). This suggests that the groups that were most likely driving the nation towards war were indeed lower in complexity. This interpretation is partially supported by the fact that the group highest in complexity, the Buchanan Democrats, was also highest in “war avoidance” as a central value, suggesting an association between high complexity and peace (although it should be noted that the other moderate group, the free-soil Republicans, was only moderate in “war avoidance”).

The above results do not directly compare integrative complexity levels prior to the 1850 compromise and the 1861 war. One would expect that, if complexity were a key factor in the outbreak of the Civil War, the integrative complexity of the 1850 debates would be markedly higher than the 1860 to 1861 debates. To our knowledge, no such direct comparison exists using an integrative complexity score. However, using a less sophisticated measure of complexity, Winter (1997; see also Winter & Molano, 1998) found that complexity was indeed lower during the Senate debates of 1860 to 1861 than during the Senate debates of 1850.<sup>2</sup> Taken together, this evidence sug-

<sup>2</sup>This difference was just short of conventional levels of significance (one-tailed  $p = .055$ ). However, the authoritarianism score, comprised in part of the complexity measure, did achieve conventional levels of significance (Winter, 1997; Winter & Molano, 1998). (Authoritarianism is negatively correlated with complexity: Persons high in authoritarianism do not want to think about new and unconventional ideas.)

gests a link between the complexity of the political statements of the day and the outbreak of the Civil War.

### WORLD WAR

Neville Chamberlain of Great Britain, when he faced a difficult choice, often chose the difficult option. Should he negotiate or should he choose war? His choice was to use force. Churchill, a vocal opponent of Chamberlain, who argued that Hitler should be dealt with by arms but not force. Churchill argued that through flexible and courageous leadership, the British could negotiate a peace agreement, with the understanding that the British might expect a difficult position in the future. The complexity scores of the British leaders were quite low.

More to our point, Chamberlain had consistently chosen the easy path than Churchill. At the beginning of World War I, there was a major drop in complexity scores (Winter, 1996). This is further evidence of a sharp shift in integrative complexity that war is associated with.

Analyses of Japanese policy-makers in the United States during the beginning of World War II found a pattern that was consistent with this hypothesis. Japanese policy-makers in the early and late 19th century showed a complexity between the two (Levi & Tetlock,

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## WORLD WAR II

Neville Chamberlain was the Prime Minister of Great Britain during the latter 1930s, and he faced a difficult dilemma: Nazi Germany was a burgeoning military power making often difficult international demands. Should he negotiate or stand firm? His choice was to use a highly flexible appeasement strategy. Chamberlain's primary political opponent on this matter was Winston Churchill, who dogmatically maintained that Hitler and the Nazis must be dealt with by arms buildups and stern displays of force. Churchill claimed that appeasement through flexible negotiation was simply encouraging further aggression (most historians agree, with the 20/20 vision that hindsight affords, that Churchill was right). As we might expect of one with such an unyielding position, Churchill's integrative complexity scores on Germany-related issues were quite low throughout the 1930s.

More to our present purpose, Chamberlain had consistently higher complexity levels than Churchill until very near the actual beginning of World War II, when he showed a major drop in complexity (Tetlock & Tyler, 1996). This is further evidence that a downward shift in integrative complexity is often a signal that war is imminent.

Analyses of statements made by Japanese policy-makers in 1941 prior to their attack of the United States at Pearl Harbor revealed a pattern that was only partially consistent with this hypothesis. The complexity of three key Japanese policy-makers, analyzed in both early and late 1941, did not reliably differ in complexity between the two time periods (Levi & Tetlock, 1980). Why?

It may be that certain unique cultural differences caused the Japanese to exhibit less consistent responsiveness to a looming war than the other nationalities that so far have been placed under the complexity microscope. Similarly, chronic personality differences between the three men could have caused them to react differently. Or, the truncated range of time examined may have been relevant: The earlier time frame may have been too near the December 1941 attack for the predicted downturn in complexity to be detected. Indeed, a study of nine surprise attacks from 1941 to 1982, including the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, was more supportive of a hypothesized link between integrative complexity and war or peace (Suedfeld & Bluck, 1988).

This suggests that complexity is a useful predictor of impending aggressive military actions even when the explicit content of the attacking nation's statements successfully hides the imminent attack.

## THE COLD WAR

In the years between the end of World War II and the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe, the United States and the Soviet Union were the primary opponents on the international political and military scene. This time period was dubbed the "Cold War" because, although never officially at war, these two superpowers spent a great deal of military and political energy on interventions around the globe, designed to expand their own influence and limit that of the opponent. Consequently, this era has proven a useful context for exploring the link between integrative complexity and hostile vs. cooperative outcomes in international conflicts.

Tetlock (1985, 1988) assessed the integrative complexity of official Soviet and American foreign policy statements from 1945 to 1983. Time series and regression analyses revealed

that the Soviets' complexity tended to be lower during the quarter-year prior to an aggressive intervention (such as the military intervention in Afghanistan, the Soviet-supported invasion of South Korea by North Korea, and the installation of Soviet nuclear weapons in Cuba), and higher during the quarter-year prior to an agreement with the United States that peacefully resolved a difficult international issue (such as the agreement to lift the Berlin blockade, the truce agreement which ended the Korean War, and the Soviet withdrawal of their nuclear missiles from Cuba). Similarly, the United States' integrative complexity levels were lower during the quarter-year of an aggressive intervention (such as American support for the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, the American invasion of Cambodia, and American military support of Israel during the Yom Kippur War) and higher during the quarter-year before a peaceful agreement with the Soviet Union.

That the Soviets and Americans differed in terms of the exact time of the complexity shift relative to the aggressive or cooperative act probably reflects something unique about each nation's approach to foreign policy; indeed, the Soviets tended to be more premeditative in their foreign policy during the Cold War (Adomeit, 1981; George, 1969; Leites, 1953; see Tetlock, 1985, for a discussion). However, for our purposes it is the striking similarity that is most informative: Both the Soviets and the Americans showed decreased complexity prior to (or during) an aggressive act, and increased complexity prior to (or during) a peaceful agreement.

### SADDAM HUSSEIN DURING THE PERSIAN GULF CRISIS

During the summer of 1990, Saddam Hussein ordered a successful Iraqi invasion of the oil-rich country of Kuwait, surprising

the rest of the world. In response to this action, a coalition of nations—led by the United States—brought their collective military forces to bear on the Iraqis. A dramatic military showdown ensued.

Several interesting findings from studies of this time period (Suedfeld, Wallace, & Thachuk, 1993; Wallace, Suedfeld, & Thachuk, 1993) suggest that the integrative complexity of the leaders, especially Saddam Hussein, was an important aspect of the crisis. The Western media has often depicted Saddam as the power-mad Butcher of Baghdad, who had his mind unyieldingly set on world conquest (see Bulloch & Morris, 1991; Darwish & Alexander, 1991). Interestingly, though, during the two months prior to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Saddam's integrative complexity scores were actually relatively high; this suggests that perhaps Saddam did not have his mind uncompromisingly aimed towards war. However, consistent with the surprise attacks reported above, his complexity fell markedly immediately prior to the invasion. This is further evidence that aggressive international acts are preceded by lower complexity in the attacking nations.

Immediately after the invasion occurred, his complexity rose, and it became higher yet once the invasion had been accomplished with complete success. In the few months following the invasion, international pandemonium broke out as many nations and the U.N. Secretary General tried diplomatically and through economic sanctions to convince Saddam to evacuate his troops from Kuwait. None of these ploys worked. Interestingly, although Saddam's integrative complexity levels were higher during these months than immediately after the successful invasion, they were only slightly so—much less than would generally be expected during such a complicated international negotiation. One inference from

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### REVOLUTIONARIES FROM CROMWELL TO CASTRO

International crises relevant to war and peace come in different shapes and sizes. One generally non-peaceful event in a nation's history is a revolution, that is, the violent overthrow of a government to establish an entirely new one. Successful revolutionary leaders (like Oliver Cromwell, George Washington, and Fidel Castro) generally showed low complexity during the attempted revolution. Interestingly, however, those leaders who remained low in complexity after taking over the government tended to be ousted from power. Leaders who were able to increase their integrative complexity after gaining power were more likely to remain in power (Suedfeld & Rank, 1976). These findings again suggest that high complexity is associated with relative peace, while low complexity is associated with armed hostilities.

### THE MATCH BETWEEN COMPLEXITY LEVEL AND THE SITUATION

For many activities, it is true that "it takes two to tango." But while it is certainly true that many wars are mutually entered into by the various participants, war does not require the consent of all parties involved. Nations can simply be forced into war by a foreign attack; once that happens, they must defend themselves or surrender. Although it has been consistently found that the attacking nation typically decreases in complexity when an aggressive action is imminent, that does not mean that the defend-

ing nation necessarily likewise decreases. What might the pattern be for a nation on the receiving end of an unwanted war?

One might guess that nation's leaders would also decrease their complexity as they prepare for the coming onslaught, or to match the complexity levels of their opponents. The available evidence, however, suggests that the opposite is the case. In their study of nine surprise attacks, for instance, Suedfeld and Bluck (1988) found a marked increase in the complexity of the defending nations between two to four weeks and one week prior to the attack. Similarly, although showing a decrease prior to the other three military conflicts from 1947 to 1976, Egypt and Syria slightly increased in complexity before the surprise invasion of the Suez Canal zone by Britain, France, and Israel in 1956 (Suedfeld, Tetlock, & Ramirez, 1977). In addition, although Saddam Hussein decreased in complexity prior to his own invasion of Kuwait, his complexity increased in the weeks before the deadline given by the Security Council for his withdrawal (Suedfeld, Wallace, & Thachuk, 1993; Wallace, Suedfeld, & Thachuk, 1993).

Why might a nation forced to defend itself show a pattern opposite to that of the attacker? Perhaps the most intuitively appealing explanation is that the defending nation increases its complexity in hopes of reaching a compromise and averting the crisis (Wallbaum, 1993).

This suggests an interesting psychological template for a one-sided war. Evidence from the Soviet-American Cold War era (Tetlock, 1985) suggests that, in general, enemies will typically match each other's complexity during crises. The evidence reported above, however, implies that in any heated international crisis where one nation adopts a low-complexity stance while the other nation, presumably in an attempt to win reconciliation, adopts a high-complexity po-

sition, military conflict may be imminent. This underscores the important point that simply evaluating complexity out of the historical context is not particularly informative: Just because a nation's leaders are high in complexity at a given time does not mean that nation will find a peaceful agreement. Agreements, unlike wars, require acceptance by both sides (Raphael, 1982).

Indeed, being highly complex could be a very dangerous enterprise if one's opponents are low. When confronting an implacable and determined antagonist, it may be necessary to present an equally impervious front to the enemy. Simply maintaining high complexity will guarantee neither peace nor success. Rather, the ability to apply different levels of complexity to different situations may play a greater role in success or failure in a variety of contexts, including maintaining peace against a determined antagonist (Suedfeld, 1992).

### WHAT ACCOUNTS FOR THE COMPLEXITY-WAR/PEACE LINK?

As discussed earlier, it seems intuitively credible that a highly competitive negotiating strategy will likely lead to war. But is integrative complexity a *symptom* or a *cause* of the type of diplomatic bargaining that leads to war or peace? Do leaders who decide to force their enemies into submission do so because their integrative complexity decreases, or does the fact that they have determined to force their enemies into submission cause their complexity to reflect a decrease? Do persons who try to make peace do so because their integrative complexity increases, or does the fact that they are determined to make peace cause their complexity to reflect an increase?

There is evidence from a laboratory setting that actual cognitive differences in com-

plexity can causally contribute to aggressive or peaceful decision-making. "Inter-Nation Simulation" studies revealed that persons low in integrative complexity are three times as likely to rely on competitive actions such as war than persons high in complexity. In addition, players who were low in complexity were more likely to use violence when frustrated (Driver, 1965; Schroder, Driver, & Streufert, 1967; Streufert & Streufert, 1978). Conversely, negotiating pairs high in complexity are more likely to reach mutually beneficial compromises (Pruitt, 1981; Pruitt & Lewis, 1975), thus suggesting that those low in complexity use negotiating tactics less likely to end in peaceful resolutions. Although this research suggests a direct causal relationship between complexity and war/peace outcomes, it cannot answer a critical question: in historical crises, what causes the *changes* in complexity in the first place?

Stress is one possibility. Crises are stressful—and stress has predictable effects on integrative complexity. The *disruptive stress hypothesis* suggests that although low to moderate levels of stress can increase complexity, high levels of stress (such as those probably caused by international crises) decrease complexity because of the fact that stress depletes the cognitive resources necessary for complex thinking (e.g., Suedfeld, Corteen, & McCormick, 1986; Suedfeld & Rank, 1976). Indeed, consistent with the predictions of the disruptive stress hypothesis, major political leaders' integrative complexity scores do tend to decrease notably during international crises. In one study, measurements of integrative complexity levels before, during, and after international crises between 1958 and 1983 revealed that 15 of the 16 leaders decreased in complexity during the crises (Wallace & Suedfeld, 1988).

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- complexity and war. The influential groupthink model posits that psychological pressures toward consensus within groups can,
- during times of crisis where a decision is required, lead high-level group members to unequivocally accept the opinion of their leader—even if they really disagree with it (see Janis, 1982, 1989). Signs of groupthink include a reluctance to criticize other members' opinions, ignoring input from qualified persons outside the group, and failing to explore potential alternative options to the leader's viewpoint.

Perhaps not surprisingly, there is evidence of a link between groupthink and integrative complexity. Tetlock (1979) found that decision-makers in cases classified as groupthink scenarios demonstrated less complexity than cases classified as non-groupthink scenarios. On the flip side, Bordin (1998) found in an experimental study that military officers low in integrative complexity were more prone to the influences that lead to groupthink in the first place when responding to an imaginary crisis caused by a terrorist attack on a United States embassy. This evidence suggests not only that shifts in group organizational strategies will affect complexity, but, conversely, that groups in which the members are low in complexity will be more likely to be affected by such group dynamics processes. To the degree that the impending crisis affects most or all members of a leadership group, this suggests that group processes may multiply the effects of low complexity on decision-making relevant to war and peace.

Of course, factors other than stress and group dynamics can affect the level of complexity of a nation's policies. Certain individuals seem to have chronically higher (or lower) levels of complexity than others; thus, the complexity of a nation's policies may shift when the leadership of that nation

changes. For example, Mikhail Gorbachev displayed decidedly higher complexity scores than his Soviet predecessors (Tetlock, 1988; see also Tetlock & Boettger, 1989). There may also be an individual difference in the ability to recognize and act upon the need to shift complexity levels, as was observed among the group of revolutionary leaders mentioned earlier.

### THE COGNITIVE AND IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT INTERPRETATIONS

It could be that the decision to take either an aggressive or peaceful tack in international crises is arrived at entirely independent of integrative complexity, and complexity as revealed in diplomatic statements merely reflects those decisions. For example, the complexity of such statements could be the result of an intentional rhetorical strategy designed to create a particular impression on one's antagonist. If a nation's goal is to simply bend another nation to its own desires, then one way to accomplish this is to issue low-complexity statements that get the no-compromise message across. Conversely, a nation's leaders may feel that flexible maneuvering can better accomplish their own selfish ends, and thus issue statements that are higher in complexity. Thus, the public statements of these official representatives do not necessarily reflect the private or actual complexity levels of these individuals, but rather simply result from fully intentional strategies designed to leave a particular impression on their antagonists (see, e.g., Tetlock, 1985).

Is the cognitive approach (which assumes that complexity causally contributes to decisions leading to war or peace) or the impression management approach (which assumes that complexity merely reflects an intentional strategy to engage in competitive or cooperative rhetoric) more adequate?

Direct tests of cognitive vs. impression management explanations of complexity in historical documents are difficult; indeed, it has been argued that such tests are very hard to interpret even when performed in a controlled laboratory setting (Tetlock & Manstead, 1985). The most direct attempt to disentangle the two explanations with regards to war and peace decisions comes in research on Neville Chamberlain prior to World War II. Tetlock and Tyler (1996) were able to use both public and private documents of Chamberlain for these analyses. To the degree that Chamberlain's private documents really reflected his sentiments, the researchers were able to assess his actual thoughts. As previously mentioned, Chamberlain's generally high complexity took a steep dive as the outbreak of the war approached. The impression management approach would predict that Chamberlain's public documents would particularly show this drop, while his private documents (since they reflect his real thoughts) would not. This did not occur; in fact, the drop was much larger for his private than his public documents (which did not attain conventional levels of significance; Tetlock & Tyler, 1996). This suggests that, as a cognitive approach would predict, the association between integrative complexity and decisions that lead to war or peace reflects a *real* difference in the complexity levels of the various major players on the diplomatic scene. Suedfeld and Rank (1976) reported that they found no differences in the complexity of public vs. private documents generated by revolutionary leaders during and after the revolution.

Not all of the evidence is so favorable to the cognitive approach. And of course, these two approaches are by no means mutually exclusive. The deliberate use of rhetoric does not preclude real cognitive change, and vice versa. At this point, it is

premature to take a firm position as to the relationship among impression management goals, complexity of information processing, and war or peace outcomes. Indeed, we consider it highly probable that both real cognitive changes and intentional impression management contribute to this link.

### CONCLUSION

As we have seen, the evidence suggests that integrative complexity is a powerful predictor of whether an international crisis will end in war or peace. However, a number of alternative interpretations for this consistent relationship must be considered.

One possibility is that complexity level may be susceptible to conscious manipulation as leaders wish to project either an image of flexibility and open-mindedness, or of firm resolve, independently of their actual thought processes. Another is that the nature of the crisis may dictate complexity: intractable conflicts over important goals may be so stressful that complexity levels drop (disruptive stress), whereas complexity may remain or become high when the individual actually sees an acceptable compromise resolution.

The centrality of the role of individual statesmen, the focus of most analyses, is another moot issue. For example, Chamberlain exhibited a relatively sharp decline in complexity during confidential, high-level decision-making sessions about how Britain should cope with Hitler's Germany. It may be that Chamberlain, increasingly demoralized and discouraged, was showing disruptive stress as it became more and more obvious through the grim months of 1939 that his policy of appeasement had failed. Alternatively, it is possible that the European world was becoming an integratively simpler milieu as the pace of rearmament acceler-

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In our view, it is premature to take a strong position on whether the complexity of leadership thinking or communication is a key causal construct, or is a sign of the operation of other, more fundamental, causal forces. The level of proof leaves us with an open, if not completely neutral, mind. An interesting possibility is implied by a recent study (Santmire et al., 1998). In a simulated hostage negotiation, it was not the level of complexity of the negotiators that made the difference. Rather, negotiators whose levels of complexity were moderately close to each other were more likely to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes than negotiators who were either very close or very diverse in complexity. This finding needs to be tested in real-life situations.

We began by posing the question: Given how aversive war is to people in general, why does war happen at all? An integrative complexity perspective offers one potential answer. Consider the different psychological makeup of the paths to war and peace. Perhaps war, because it is in some respects more difficult for humans to engage in than peace, requires the unitary commitment to an ideal that is the hallmark of low complexity. Complex processing may be largely

incompatible with war, because once one begins processing many perspectives, one is likely to hit upon persuasive solutions that do not include war. Negotiating peace demands that one be very attentive to multiple perspectives. At the very least, peaceful compromise requires thinking about one other viewpoint—that of the opposition. At the most, it requires balancing the many different complicated issues generally inherent in an international crisis. Thus, integrative complexity theory offers one psychological explanation of some of the causes of war in general, as well as being a useful predictor of whether a specific crisis is likely to lead to war or to peace.

As is perhaps obvious, the scoring of integrative complexity has some practical implications. Assessing the complexity levels of opponents and allies may be fruitful in understanding their position, but whether or not increased complexity among leaders would be a good thing (and the reader will recall that we do not prescribe it as the cure for all evils), it does not appear to have occurred. Comparisons of current and recent world leaders with those of earlier times show no particular pattern of change. Thus, at least to the extent that it depends upon individual propensity for integratively complex thinking, even under stress, world peace in the early part of the twenty-first century will probably be no more stable than in previous eras.