The Role of Motivation, Responsibility, and Integrative Complexity in Crisis Escalation: Comparative Studies of War and Peace Crises

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Drawing on D. G. Winter’s (1993) comparison of 1914 and the Cuban Missile Crisis, the author identified 8 paired crises (1 escalating to war, 1 peacefully resolved). Documents (diplomatic messages, speeches, official media commentary) from each crisis were scored for power, affiliation, and achievement motivations; text measures of responsibility and activity inhibition; and integrative complexity. Aggregated effect-size results show that war crises had significantly higher levels of power motivation and responsibility, whereas peace crises showed trends toward higher integrative complexity and achievement motivation. Follow-up analyses suggested that these results are robust with respect to both sides in a crisis, type of material scored, and historical time. The power motive results extend previous findings, but the responsibility results suggest that responsibility plays a paradoxical role in war. Future research directions are sketched, and the role of psychological content analysis in monitoring the danger of war is discussed.

Keywords: war, conflict escalation, power motivation, achievement motivation, responsibility

In this article, I report research designed to test relationships between five psychological variables and the escalation of conflicts into war: the power, affiliation, and achievement motives (Smith, 1992; D. G. Winter, 1993); responsibility (D. G. Winter & Barenbaum, 1985); and integrative complexity (Smith, 1992; Suedfeld & Tetlock, 1977). These five psychological variables are measured through content analysis of government statements, speeches, and diplomatic documents drawn from eight pairs of similar crises in which one crisis of each pair escalated to war and the other was resolved peacefully. Thus the research involves a series of comparative case studies (George, 1979; see also Lipphart, 1975), supported and extended by the systematic collection of objectively measured data.

Understanding War and Peace

War and peace are complex phenomena, each with many causes, such as geography, politics, population growth, economic rivalry, arms races, alliance structures, and leaders’ crisis management styles and skills, as well as a variety of historically specific factors (Blaney, 1988; Howard, 1983; Nelson & Olin, 1979; Singer, 1979, 1989; Suganami, 1996; D. G. Winter, 1996). In recent years, however, several scholars have emphasized the importance of psychological factors. For example, the historian Joll (1968) argued that political and economic facts need to be interpreted in the light of people’s unspoken assumptions or mentalities, and the political scientist Jervis (1976) suggested that during crises—when emotions run high, information is scarce, and time is short—psychological factors affect the way information is processed, intentions are judged, and decisions are reached. Thus motivation and perception emerge as psychological processes that have the potential to cause conflicts to escalate to violence and thus war (see Cashman, 1993; Choucri & North, 1975; George, 1991; Glad, 1990; Groebel & Hinde, 1989; Holsti, 1972; Kagan, 1995; Jervis, Lebow, & Stein, 1985; White, 1986). Of course, psychological factors cannot explain all aspects of conflict and war, but, in certain cases, they may explain some of the variation in war versus peace outcomes of crises.

Not every crisis escalates to war; many are peacefully resolved. Thus during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, U.S. President John F. Kennedy estimated the chances of nuclear war at “somewhere between one out of three and even” (Sorensen, 1965, p. 705), the Soviet embassy in Washington burned its secret papers, and U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara wondered whether he would ever see another Saturday night (Blight & Welch, 1989, pp. 75, 88)—yet World War III did not happen.¹ Some other notable examples of peacefully resolved international crises include (a) the mid-19th-century dispute about the U.S.—Canada boundary west of the Rocky Mountains, (b) the 1909 Bosnia crisis and 1912 First Balkan War crisis, (c) the peaceful resolution of Soviet–Polish differences in 1956, and (d) the Iraqi retreat from a threat to annex Kuwait in 1961.

¹ For a plausible “what if” scenario, in which the crisis could have escalated to an all-out U.S. nuclear attack, see O’Connell (2003).
The propensity for conflict may be an inevitable feature of human nature, but this does not mean that conflict necessarily ends in war. Thus any theory or generalization about the causes of war must account for occasions where conflicts were settled peaceably, without resorting to violence. In recent years, scholars have compared war and peace crises to isolate factors that may be responsible for the difference in outcomes (e.g., George, 1991; Holsti, 1972; Lebow, 1981; Leng & Walker, 1982; Leng & Wheeler, 1979; Raphael, 1982; Suedfeld and Tetlock, 1977; Suedfeld, Tetlock, & Ramirez, 1977; Tetlock, 1979; D. G. Winter, 1993).

In the tradition of these earlier studies, the research I report in this article focuses on the short-term role of certain psychological factors, as assessed in the written and verbal texts produced by key decision makers during international crises. Crises are assumed to be a particularly important, even strategic, topic of scholarly study, because they can be critical (and perhaps final) points of practical intervention. The research is organized in terms of eight comparative studies of matched war and peace crises, all derived from a common theoretical background and sharing common hypotheses and measures.

Theoretical and Research Background

Among the many psychological factors that have been implicated in aggression and war (see Glad, 1990; D. G. Winter, 1992b), several particular variables emerge from laboratory and field research with particularly rigorous operational definitions and strong validity credentials: the power, affiliation, and achievement motives (Smith, 1992; D. G. Winter, 1993); responsibility (D. G. Winter & Barenbaum, 1985); and integrative complexity (Smith, 1992; Suedfeld & Tetlock, 1977). A good deal of research suggests a high level of power motive imagery (i.e., a concern for having impact, influence, or honor), a low level of concern for affiliation (friendly relations with others), a low level of responsibility, and a low degree of integrative complexity will, other things being equal, tend to predispose decision makers and key political actors toward war rather than peace. A brief review of laboratory and field research involving these variables illustrates their relevance to war and peace.

The Power, Affiliation, and Achievement Motives

Strivings for power (concern for impact, prestige, and honor) and affiliation (concern for warm, close relations and unity with others) consistently emerge across cultures as the two most important dimensions of human social motivation (Conté & Plutchik, 1981; Kornadt, Eckensberger, & Emminghaus, 1980; Wicker, Lambert, Richardson, & Kahler, 1984; Wiggins, 1980). Methods for scoring the power and affiliation motives in thematic apperception have been developed and validated by D. G. Winter (1973) and Atkinson, Heyns, and Veroff (1954, respectively). D. G. Winter (1991a) adapted these scoring systems into a single integrated motive imagery scoring system for use with other kinds of verbal material, including speeches, interview transcripts, and diplomatic communications. Because the integrated scoring system also produces scores for achievement motivation (concern for excellence and success in competition), this variable was also studied in the present research, although without any specific prediction about the results. Table 1 presents a brief summary of the content analysis systems for the scoring imagery of these three motives. They can be thought of as defining three basic dimensions of motivated behavior, with a variety of other motives (e.g., aggression, nurturance, dependence, and others from Murray’s, 1938, catalog) represented as fusions of two or more of these three basic dimensions (see D. G. Winter, 1996, chaps. 4–5).

Conceptual status of the motive construct. As elements of personality, motives are often thought of as stable individual dispositions. In fact, their conceptual status is more complicated. A motive may be thought of as a stable individual disposition to be aroused by certain kinds of goals or incentives, but no motive operates all the time. (Even a glutton stops eating eventually, for a while.) Individuals differ in the range of stimuli that arouse the motive and the frequency and speed of arousal, the ultimate height or asymptote of arousal, the speed of decline after reaching the goal (or consummatory behavior), and the speed of recovery (or refractory period). In important ways, then, motives are both stable individual dispositions (see D. G. Winter, 1996, pp. 33–34; D. G. Winter & Stewart, 1977) and variable over time and across situations (Atkinson, 1982).

Laboratory studies of the power and affiliation motives. Several years of laboratory research give a detailed portrait of people who score high in the power motive (McClelland, 1985, chap. 8; D. G. Winter, 1973, 1996, chap. 5; D. G. Winter & Stewart, 1978). They are concerned about having an impact on other people, formal social power, and prestige. In negotiations, they are confrontational and exploitive (Schnackers & Kleinbeck, 1975; Tershune, 1968). If they score low in responsibility (a content-analysis variable designed as a moderator for the expression of power motivation), they are likely to engage in a variety of profligate, impulsive actions such as drinking and drug use, risk taking, sexual exploitation, and verbal and physical aggression (D. G. Winter & Barenbaum, 1985). They show greater systematic nervous system reactivity than those scoring low in the power motive, especially under stress and conflict (Fodor, 1984, 1985; McClelland, 1982), which suggests that power motivation is part of the body’s primordial fight-or-flight behavior system for dealing with threat.

The affiliation motive is associated with cooperative and friendly behavior, at least when the situation is perceived as being safe (Boyatzis, 1973; McClelland, 1985, chap. 9; D. G. Winter, 1996, chap. 5). McAdams (1985) suggested that affiliation motivation can act as a check on the power motive by channeling concerns for control and influence in prosocial, nurturant directions.

Power and affiliation motives and theories about war. There are many grounds for believing that the power and affiliation motives may be associated with violence, aggression, and war. Many theorists (e.g., Blauney, 1988) have linked war directly to power drives and conflicts of power. Many of the aggressive, profligate behaviors of power-motivated people discussed above are either individual analogues to war or else concomitants of war. The laboratory evidence links the power motive to many classical motivational concepts invoked by scholars to

2 These actions are jointly related to high scores on power motivation and low scores on responsibility. People scoring low in both variables tend to be irresponsible in ways suggesting inertia more than aggression.
explain war, such as honor and pride (Berkowitz, 1990; Frank, 1986), destructive instincts (Freud, 1933/1964, pp. 210–211), and the ways of power (Schmookler, 1984, chap. 1), symbolic commitment (Sullivan, 1979; see also Nelson & Olin, 1979, pp. 17–23), and “dark forces that conjure up ethnic conflict and imperial rivalry out of economic crisis” (Ferguson, 2006, p. 646). Even feelings of relative deprivation (Crosby, 1976; J. C. Davies, 1969) may involve an underlying power motive, because both concepts share a sense of deservingness or entitlement (D. G. Winter & Stewart, 1978, p. 415). Correspondingly, the friendly and cooperative behavior of affiliation-motivated people (see, e.g., D. G. Winter, 1996, chap. 5) is an individual analogue to peace seeking and peacekeeping.

Political psychology studies of power and affiliation motivation. In support of these theoretical links, empirical studies of political leaders carried out at a distance have found direct links between power motivation and war on the one hand and affiliation motivation and peace on the other. D. G. Winter (2002) found a significant correlation between U.S. presidents’ power motivation (scored from their first inaugural addresses) and U.S. entry into war. Presidential affiliation motivation, in contrast, predicted arms control agreements. In a group of 22 southern Africa leaders, power motivation was related to expert judges’ ratings of warlike disposition and propensity to resort to violence (D. G. Winter, 1980).

Among 45 heads of state, Hermann (1980b) found significant relationships between power motivation and pursuit of an independent foreign policy and between affiliation motivation and an interdependent foreign policy. Among the Soviet Politburo members during the mid-1970s, Hermann (1980a) found that favoring peaceful détente was associated with low power motive and high affiliation motive scores.

Scoring collective motive levels from cultural documents, McClelland (1975, chap. 9; 1985, pp. 441–452) found that internal violence and political instability flourished in countries where power motivation was high and affiliation was low. Using both content analysis of archival documents and a laboratory simulation study, Langner and Winter (2001) found that affiliation motive imagery was positively related to making concessions, whereas power motive imagery was negatively related to concessions.

A model of motivation and war. Theory, laboratory research, and field studies all combine to suggest the hypothesis that war is positively related to power motivation and negatively related to affiliation motivation. D. G. Winter (1993) confirmed this general model with three more specific studies:

1. When Britain entered a war from a prior state of peace between 1603 and 1988, the sovereign’s Speech From the Throne at the opening of Parliament (taken as reflecting motivational concerns of the British government in general) 2–3 years previously showed power significantly higher and affiliation motivation significantly lower than the 385-year averages.

2. From the early to the late part of the July 1914 crisis, government-to-government communications between Great Britain and Germany showed increasing power motivation and decreasing affiliation motivation.

3. In contrast, diplomatic communications between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 showed the opposite pattern of decreasing power and increasing affiliation.

No studies indicate any relationship between achievement motive imagery and war (although McClelland, 1975, pp. 342–346, found a relationship between levels of achievement motivation in cultural documents and a country’s internal violence and unrest). However, because the method of scoring power and affiliation imagery in verbal running text also produces achievement motive imagery scores, these are included in the present study for exploratory purposes.
Responsibility

D. G. Winter and Barenbaum (1985) developed a content analysis scoring system for responsibility to study the moderating effects of responsibility on the expression of power motivation. Table 2 gives a brief outline of this scoring system. For people scoring high in responsibility, power motivation is expressed in positive or prosocial ways, such as leadership and successful influence, rather than destructive ways, such as verbal and physical aggression, drinking, multiple drug use, and other profligate behaviors (see also D. G. Winter, 1991b). These laboratory results suggest that responsibility might be related to peaceful crisis outcomes, either by itself or in combination with power motivation. However, it is conceivable that in times of crisis, responsibility (in the sense of responsibility for the nation) could be recruited to support aggressive responses and thus escalation.

Activity Inhibition (AI)

McClelland, Davis, Kalin, and Wanner (1972) identified AI, measured by the frequency of “not” and “–n’t” contractions in thematic apperception or other verbal texts such as folktales, as a variable negatively correlated with male alcohol consumption, both among individuals and across cultures. Subsequent research by McClelland and his colleagues (McClelland, 1975, chaps. 7–8; McClelland, 1985, pp. 312–315; McClelland & Boyatzis, 1982) has shown that AI combines with high power motivation scores and low affiliation motivation scores into a leadership motive pattern (LMP), which predicts responsible leadership power behaviors instead of profligate impulsive expressions of power. Expectations about AI in the present research are conflicting. On the one hand, AI suggests the kind of restraint on power that might facilitate peaceful resolution of crises; on the other hand, the LMP is also associated, at national levels, with national mobilization of resources, expenditures on defense, and therefore war (McClelland, 1975, chaps. 8–9).

Integrative Complexity

Integrative complexity is assessed through content analysis, using a 7-point continuum ranging from simplicity (or no complexity) through differentiation and then integration, as shown in Table 3. High levels of integrative complexity are associated with more effective and adaptive behavior, especially in ambiguous or confusing situations (e.g., Suedfeld & Piedrahita, 1984). Several studies have demonstrated that complexity is related to peaceful resolution (versus escalation) of international conflicts. For example, Suedfeld and Tetlock (1977) found lower levels of complexity in communications and statements from two crises that ended in war than in three peacefully resolved crises (see also Raphael, 1982; Suedfeld & Bluck, 1988; Suedfeld, Tetlock, & Ramirez, 1977; Suedfeld, Wallace, & Thachuk, 1993; Tetlock, 1979). Using a different complexity measure in a study of world leaders, Herrmann (1980b) found that high complexity scores predicted both expressing positive affect toward other nations and eliciting positive feedback from them.

Method

In this article, I report the results of eight comparative case studies, each between a crisis that escalated to war and a similar crisis that was peacefully resolved. This research design dates back to John Stuart Mill’s (1848/1875) “method of difference”:

If an instance in which the phenomenon under investigation occurs, and an instance in which it does not occur, have every circumstance in common save one, that one occurring only in the former; the circumstance in which alone the two instances differ, is . . . the cause, or an indispensable part of the cause, of the phenomenon. (Vol. 1, p. 452)

Of course, phenomena such as war and peace have many and complex causes, so investigators must be content to look for significant differences in levels—rather than the absolute presence or absence—of one or more circumstances. George (1979, especially pp. 54–55) elaborated Mill’s logic into a method of structured, focused comparisons appropriate for the social sciences:

1. Researchers identify a phenomenon or class of phenomena of interest—here, outcomes of international crises.
2. Theoretically relevant general independent variables, preferably capable of objective measurement in the cases to be studied, are then selected—here, power and affiliation motivation, responsibility, AI, the LMP, and integrative complexity.

3 The LMP is scored as being present (a) if standardized power motive imagery is both greater than zero and greater than standardized affiliation imagery and (b) if standardized AI is greater than zero. In all other cases, it is scored as absent. In the present research, standardization was carried out on all documents separately within each pair of crises (see McClelland, 1975, chap. 8).
3. Comparable cases with varied outcomes (here, war vs. peace) are then chosen “in order to identify the conditions and variables that seemed to account for this difference in the outcome” (George, 1979, p. 55). Selecting cases so as to hold constant certain variables likely to influence the outcome (e.g., the countries and issues involved, the historical era) makes it possible to rule out alternative explanations of the difference in outcome.

4. Finally, the more comprehensive the theory and variables, the greater the “richness of historical explanation” (George, 1979, p. 57) of the outcomes.

Analyzed in this way, controlled comparisons complement correlational and experimental studies with large sample sizes.

Because all eight comparative studies reported in the present article followed the same general design and methodology, it is convenient to give a single description of the method. The first step was to identify pairs of crises, one of which led to war and the other of which was peacefully resolved. Then documents and other archival materials were selected from each crisis and scored for power, affiliation, and achievement motivation; responsibility; AI; and integrative complexity. Differences on these six psychological variables were then analyzed, both within each pair and aggregated through meta-analysis across the eight pairs, to determine whether they significantly differentiated the two kinds of crisis.

Selection of Crises

Although the general logic of the method seems clear, great care must be exercised in choosing paired crises. To rule out or reduce the effects of other nonpsychological factors on crisis outcome, it was critical to select pairs of crises that were as similar as possible to each other—for example, drawn from the same historical era, involving the same (or similar) countries, and focused on the same (or similar) structural and political issues. Further, both crises within a pair should be crises that could have gone either way. That is, for the war crises, a peaceful resolution should have been conceivable; for the peace crises, war should have been a real possibility. The more the paired comparisons meet these conditions, the more confident and rigorous any conclusions about the role of psychological factors leading to war or peace can be.

As an example of the problems of drawing conclusions from historical comparisons, consider Holsti’s (1972) classic comparison of the outbreak of World War I with the peacefully resolved Cuban Missile Crisis. Using content analysis, Holsti found that documents from the two crises showed differences in the sense of time pressure and perceived policy—psychological differences plausibly related to the difference in outcome. However, these differences could instead (or also) reflect other differences between the two crises: the countries involved, the multinational (Germany, Austria-Hungary, France, Russia, and Great Britain) versus bilateral (the United States and the Soviet Union) alignment, the historical era (1914 vs. 1962), the technology of diplomatic communication (telegraph and ambassadors vs. private letters and television speeches), or the kinds of issues at stake (see Schroeder, 1974). Some have argued that the inherent restraining effect of thermonuclear weapons was a key factor in the peaceful resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis (see Blight, 1990). To rule out these alternative explanations, one might plausibly compare July 1914 with the other Balkans crises of 1909–1912 and the Cuban Missile Crisis with the 1961 failed Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba.

There are many different types of crisis and many different types of war: world wars; wars related to colonies, client states, and national independence movements; disputes between advanced industrial nation-states and third world countries; wars of national expansion; and civil wars. Sampling broadly across a wider range of crisis types would help to establish the ecological validity or generalization range of any results. If motives, responsibility, or integrative complexity are related to crisis outcomes, do such results hold for all crises, or do they perhaps only hold for crises involving two countries of approximately equal strength and capability? Does it hold for both sides or only for the side that takes military initiative? Does it hold for the beginnings of crises, the ends of crises, or both? Which kinds of archival materials are most diagnostic—for example, government-to-government messages, speeches, or spontaneous news conferences?

In the present research, I selected eight paired crises to meet, as closely as possible, the criteria suggested above: Both crises involved the same nations or contending groups, grew out of the same general issue, and occurred during the same historical time period. Further, each of the peacefully resolved crises could plausibly have escalated to war. Taken together, the pairs include a wide range of types, from world wars between major powers to medium-power conflicts to major-power interventions in small- or medium-power countries to a civil war.

The eight pairs of crises are discussed below, with careful attention being paid to the precise identification of beginning and ending points for each crisis and careful specification of the documents used in the present research (see the Selection and Coding of Documents section below). Dates, kinds of documents analyzed, and standard reference sources for each crisis are given in Table 4.
United States expansion, 1845–1846: The Mexican War versus the Oregon boundary dispute. With the March 4, 1845, inauguration of President James K. Polk, the United States became involved in two crises, each connected with westward expansion and U.S. borders with its neighbors. Three days before Polk’s inauguration, without any prior negotiation with Mexico, the U.S. Congress passed a resolution annexing Texas, which had successfully rebelled against Mexico to achieve its independence back in 1836. Many Mexican leaders viewed this annexation without consent as an insult to national honor, so on March 6, Mexico broke off diplomatic relations with the United States. Negotiations continued for a year, focused on the question of whether the Texas–Mexico boundary was to be the Nueces River or the (much further south) Rio Grande River. In early 1846, when the new government in Mexico refused to receive an American emissary, Polk ordered General Zachary Taylor to advance to the Rio Grande. Fighting broke out in the spring of 1846, and on May 9, Polk and his cabinet asked Congress to declare war (see Bauer, 1974; Fletcher, 1973). The inclusive dates for the Mexican War crisis are thus March 4, 1845 (Polk’s inauguration), through May 9, 1846.

The northern boundary of the United States with Canada (then a British colony and called British North America), west of the Rocky Mountains, was also in dispute. Polk had been elected in 1844 on the slogan “[A boundary of] Fifty-four forty [degrees north latitude] or fight!”—which, by touching the then-Russian territory of Alaska, would have denied any Pacific coastline to Canada. According to the historian Merk (1967), the boundary issue “was a succession of embers, each ready to be fanned by some gust of national feeling into a conflagration” (p. 191). Increased American settlement and raids on Hudson’s Bay Company facilities in what is now the state of Washington “were all the ingredients of a border clash. Were one to occur, it was likely to echo through the excitable Middle West. It could spark off an explosion into war in the charged atmosphere of Anglo-American relations” (Merk, 1967, p. 219). Nevertheless, in June 1846, through a combination of restraint and sacrificed pride by British Foreign Secretary Palmerston, compromise efforts by U.S. Senator John J. Crittenden, and considerable maneuvering and shifting of position by Polk himself, both countries reached an agreement to extend the existing border along the 49th parallel to the Pacific Ocean. The inclusive dates for the Oregon boundary crisis are thus March 4, 1845, through June 11, 1846.

For both crises, the documents analyzed included all diplomatic exchanges relating to boundary issues between the United States and Mexico (Manning, 1937) or the United States and Great Britain (Manning, 1943).
Mexico as a result of the recent Mexican War. A “Southern Convention” was held in Nashville in June to discuss the possible secession of the slave states. That summer, after one compromise omnibus bill failed to pass, Illinois Senator Stephen Douglas steered a package of five separate bills—collectively known as the Compromise of 1850—through Congress (see Hamilton, 1964).

The inclusive dates for the crisis that ended in the Compromise of 1850 are those of the Senate debates: August 3 through September 16, 1850.

Ten years later, after the election of Abraham Lincoln in November 1860, Congress debated several compromises intended to reassure the South and avert widespread secession of Southern states. Kirwan (1962) described one major effort by Kentucky Senator John J. Crittenden: “Most contemporaries agreed that the early adoption of Crittenden’s proposals would have stayed secession in all states but South Carolina and thus would have averted the bloody war that followed. Nearly all recent scholarship has agreed with that conclusion” (p. 423). However, on January 11, 1861, united Republican resistance derailed Crittenden’s compromise. By that point, most Southern senators had departed from Congress, after the secession of their states, and so civil war became virtually inevitable. The inclusive dates for the crisis that led to the Civil War are those of the Senate compromise debates: December 3, 1860, through January 11, 1861.

For each crisis, the documents analyzed were 50 randomly selected half columns (each approximately 420 words) of verbatim Senate debate on the compromise issues, as reported in the Congressional Globe (predecessor of the present-day Congressional Record).

Germany, Britain, and Russia 1909–1914: Crises in Bosnia and the Balkans versus the outbreak of the First World War. During the period 1909–1914, any number of crises, including three in the Balkans, could have precipitated a major war among the European powers. The crisis that arose in 1908–1909 over the Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was “almost a dress rehearsal for the summer of 1914” (Nomikos & North, 1976, p. 14), but in the end, a German ultimatum forced Russia—and therefore Serbia—to back down. Again, describing the First Balkan War of 1912–1913 between the countries of the Balkan League and the Ottoman Empire, Nomikos and North (1976) wrote:

Russia and Austria-Hungary were again at loggerheads, and there was serious danger that Germany, France, and Great Britain would be drawn in. Austria-Hungary called up two classes of reservists and a partial mobilization was effected. Russia threatened countermeasures—to which Germany responded. If Russia attacked Austria-Hungary, the Kaiser warned, Germany would fight. But [British Foreign Secretary] Sir Edward Grey pressed for—and achieved—a conference of powers. (p. 14)

The inclusive dates for the Bosnian crisis are October 7, 1908 (the date of the Austro-Hungarian annexation), through March 31, 1909 (date of the Serbian yielding); for the First Balkan War, they are October 8, 1912 (the outbreak of war), through December 16, 1912 (beginning of the conference, which marked the end of the threat of war between the Great Powers).

After the June 28, 1914, assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie at Sarajevo, however, the course of events turned out quite differently:

In 1914, under remarkably analogous circumstances, Austria-Hungary maintained an inflexible determination to punish Serbia; Germany supported the Austrians unequivocally; Russia, backing Serbia, refused to capitulate; Germany mobilized in response to Russia; and Europe went to war. (Nomikos & North, 1976, p. 15; see also Remak, 1984)

The inclusive dates for the crisis that began World War I are thus June 28 through August 4, 1914.

For both crises, the documents analyzed included all diplomatic exchanges relating to the crisis (including direct correspondence between heads of state) between Germany and Russia (Grant, 1920; Lepsius, Bartholdy, & Thimme, 1922–1927; Schilling, 1925; Zibert, 1921) or between Germany and Great Britain (Gooch & Temperley, 1926–1938; Grant, 1920; Lepsius et al., 1922–1927; Montgelas & Schücking, 1924). Germany and Britain, 1938–1939: Munich versus the outbreak of the Second World War. After Hitler’s threats to invade Czechoslovakia during the summer and autumn of 1938, British and French leaders agreed to a compromise after a series of meetings with Hitler at Munich and Bad Godesberg. Germany was permitted to annex the Sudetenland (the mountainous region of Czechoslovakia adjacent to the German border, with a largely German-speaking population). For the time being, this averted war (Watt, 1989). The inclusive dates for the Munich crisis are thus May 22, 1938, through September 29, 1938 (the end of the final Munich conference).

When Hitler went on to occupy the rest of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, however, British and French leaders vowed to resist further German advances. They guaranteed the free-city status of Danzig (which had been part of the 1919 Versailles Treaty) and the boundaries of Poland (including the Polish corridor to the Baltic Sea, which had a predominantly German population). Hitler demanded boundary changes, but all attempts at negotiations failed. After securing the acquiescence of the Soviet Union via a nonaggression pact, Germany invaded Poland on September 1. With the British and French declarations of war 2 days later, the European part of World War II began (see Watt, 1989). The inclusive dates for the Poland–Danzig crisis are thus March 31 (the date of the British guarantee to Poland) through September 3, 1939.

For both crises, the documents analyzed included all available and relevant public speeches and parliamentary statements by Hitler and British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain (Baynes, 1942; Chamberlain, 1939; Curtis, 1942–1943; Documents on International Affairs, 1951), as well as all relevant diplomatic exchanges (Germany, Auswartiges Amt, 1949–1956; Great Britain, Foreign Office, 1939; Woodward & Butler, 1949–1954).

United States in Southeast Asia: Indochina nonintervention in 1954 versus Vietnam escalation in 1965. As the likelihood of a French military defeat in Indochina increased during the early months of 1954, pressure mounted for the United States to intervene militarily. On June 8, however, the Eisenhower administration announced that it would not seek Congressional authorization for intervention, having decided to give tacit support to the forthcoming Geneva Conference (Burke & Greenstein, 1989). The inclusive dates for the this first Indochina crisis are thus January 8, 1954, when the U.S. National Security Council met to discuss the deteriorating French military position at Dien Bien Phu, through August 4, 1954, when Secretary of State Dulles announced the nonintervention policy.
Ten years later, the United States intervened militarily, escalating the ongoing civil war in the Indochina successor state of South Vietnam. It is difficult to decide on definite beginning and ending dates for the crisis, which certainly ended in a full-scale American war—for example, U.S. military advisors had been assisting South Vietnam almost since it became an independent country in 1954. For purposes of the present research, however, the time period between December 1, 1964, and July 28, 1965, was selected as representing the closest parallel to the Indochina crisis of 1954. At the beginning of this period, the United States had not yet introduced ground troops into Vietnam, although it had engaged in some retaliatory air raids (e.g., after the Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964). During this period, President Lyndon Johnson and his advisors discussed U.S. options in response to the deteriorating military situation of the South Vietnam forces. At the end of the period, Johnson decided on an open-ended troop deployment of combat ground troops—in his own words, “going off the diving board” (Burke & Greenstein, 1989, p. 220).

Both crises involved an ongoing civil war; the issue was whether the United States would intervene militarily. Thus the comparison involves only U.S. (not French or Vietnamese) documents from both periods. The documents analyzed included all presidential speeches and press conference statements and responses relevant to Indochina or Vietnam, as published in the Public Papers of the Presidents series; and public speeches, statements, and interviews with State or Defense Department officials published in the Pentagon Papers study (New York Times, 1971) or the Department of State Bulletin.

The Soviet Union and its satellites, 1956: Poland versus Hungary. After Soviet Premier Khrushchev’s “de-Stalinization” speech of early 1956, pressures for reform grew in the Soviet satellite countries of Eastern Europe, especially Poland and Hungary. In Poland, Władysław Gomułka, who had earlier been purged as a “rightist deviationist” for favoring a more nationalistic Polish style of Communism, was elected party secretary on October 24. After an attempted coup by pro-Soviet elements was stopped by the Gomułka government, Soviet army units were rumored to be moving on Warsaw. N. Davies (1981) described the events that followed:

Khrushchev, in a rage, flew to Warsaw and confronted Gomułka. This was the first time that Moscow’s claim to automatic control over the affairs of a fraternal party had ever been ignored. . . . Crack [Polish] commando units . . . occupied all the approaches to Warsaw in full battle-gear and in full public view . . . . So Khrushchev blistered, and then relented. (pp. 584–585)

Gomułka remained party secretary, and Polish socialism was respected by the Soviet leaders, so long as it did not threaten the unity of the Soviet bloc. The inclusive dates for the Poland crisis are October 1, 1956, when agitation mounted for Gomulka’s reinstatement, and November 18, 1956, at the end of a reconciliatory meeting of Polish and Soviet officials in Moscow.

Meanwhile, similar events in Hungary led to a very different outcome. On October 22, 1956, the Hungarian National Assembly met amid popular demonstrations sparked by the events in Poland. The Soviet Union sent in tanks and troops, some of whom eventually supported the uprisings. Former Premier Imre Nagy, who had been purged a year earlier as a rightist deviationist, was brought back into the government on October 25, but the disintegration of the Soviet-backed system was increasing daily. Finally, on November 4, the Soviet Union replaced Nagy with the hard-line Janos Kadar and launched a full-scale military invasion of Hungary, attacking in Budapest and other major cities (see Barracough, 1962; Zinner, 1962). The inclusive dates for the crisis are thus October 22 through November 4, 1956.

For both crises, the documents analyzed included all available and relevant speeches, statements, and communiqués by major Polish and Hungarian leaders (Zinner, 1956), as well as all relevant Soviet radio commentary published in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Report.

The United States and Cuba, 1961–1962: The Bay of Pigs invasion versus the Cuban Missile Crisis. As the Castro government of Cuba moved toward a communist economy and an alliance with the Soviet Union during 1959–1961, United States opposition escalated. On April 17, 1961, a U.S.-organized Cuban refugee army invaded Cuba, only to be routed by Cuban armed forces over the next few days. Although President Kennedy limited U.S. involvement, specifically by canceling a second preinvasion air strike, the Bay of Pigs was clearly an act of military aggression. Although the April 17 invasion attempt marked the end of the Bay of Pigs crisis, it is not easy to determine precisely when that crisis began: As Peter Kornbluh remarked at an academic conference, “when you are talking about the Bay of Pigs, it is hard to say conceptually where the beginning was” (Blight & Kornbluh, 1998, p. 38). The general principle of covert action against the Castro regime was approved in March 1960 by President Eisenhower (see Wyden, 1979), but even before Kennedy’s inauguration, the final planning and ultimate decision had become the responsibility of the incoming administration (Schlesinger, 1965, pp. 233–234). For present purposes, the beginning of the crisis was considered to be January 6, 1961, when Soviet Premier Khrushchev made a speech citing Cuba as a prominent example of what he termed “wars of national liberation” that the Soviet Union would support. This speech had a major effect on Kennedy’s thinking about foreign policy in general and Cuba in particular (Fursenko & Naftali, 1997, pp. 73, 78; see also Alsop, 1962, p. 13; Beschloss, 1991, pp. 60–61; Schlesinger, 1965, pp. 302–303; Schlesinger, 1978, p. 423).

In October 1962, the discovery of medium- and intermediate-range Soviet missiles in Cuba led to a confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union that was probably the most dangerous moment of the entire Cold War. During the fateful week of October 22–28, an estimated 10 million Americans fled cities to dangerous moment of the entire Cold War. During the fateful week of October 22–28, an estimated 10 million Americans fled cities to seek refuge in the countryside. Schoolteachers told their elementary school classes that nuclear war might begin at any minute and gun sales in many cities increased dramatically, while the U.S. government made plans for food distribution to areas of predicted devastation (George, 2003, pp. 6, 68, 79–80). Perhaps it was the

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4 One historian described the last week of July 1965 as “the week Lyndon Johnson led America into war on the Asian mainland” (Berman, 1982, p. xi).

5 According to Reeves (1993, p. 41), Kennedy had circulated copies of Khrushchev’s speech to his foreign policy advisors, adding his own personal note directing them to “read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest” (words from the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer). In his January 18, 1962, top-secret remarks to the National Security Council, Kennedy characterized this speech as “possibly one of the most important speeches of the decade” (U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, n.d., Item 69, para. 8).
only moment in the second half of the 20th century “when a third world war seemed possible” (Fursenko & Naftali, 1997, p. ix)—“the calamity of modern times that did not happen” (Blight, 1990, p. 57). In the end, however, the crisis was resolved peacefully by a public Soviet pledge to remove the missiles in return for a public U.S. pledge not to invade Cuba and a secret U.S. pledge to remove missiles from Turkey. The inclusive dates for the Cuban Missile Crisis are those of its public phase, beginning on October 22 (the day of Kennedy’s televised speech disclosing the presence of Soviet missiles and demanding their removal) and ending on October 28, 1962, with the Khrushchev–Kennedy agreement.

For both crises, the documents analyzed included all available Kennedy and Khrushchev speeches, public statements, and press conferences; government publications; and government-to-government exchanges on the topic of Cuba (U.S. Department of State, 1973, supplemented by material from the Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Report, The New York Times, and the Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy series). Khrushchev’s October 24, 1962, response to a telegram from the British philosopher Bertrand Russell was also included, because it was intended to be a widely publicized signal to the United States (Fursenko & Naftali, 1997, p. 256) and was taken by American officials as a statement of the Soviet position (May & Zelikow, 1997, pp. 369, 372, 385–386).

Iraq and Kuwait: 1961 threat versus 1990 invasion. Shortly after Kuwait’s full independence in June 1961, Iraqi premier Abdul Karim Qasim announced that he considered Kuwait to be a part of Iraq and would proceed to implement this by annexation. In response to a request by the Kuwaiti ruler, Great Britain sent paratroops, ships, and planes to block any Iraqi invasion. Ultimately, however, Qasim announced that the unification of Kuwait and Iraq would happen only by peaceful means, British military units were replaced by Arab League forces, and the crisis died down (see Alani, 1990; Gott, 1965).

The inclusive dates for the crisis are March 5, 1961, when Iraqi statements began to warn of continued imperialism in sister country Kuwait, through October 12, 1961, when the Arab League force replaced British troops.

In 1990, after a dispute about oil prices and quotas and debts relating to the Iran–Iraq War, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein ordered an invasion and annexation of Kuwait.6 The inclusive dates for the crisis are March 3, 1990, as Iraqi discontent increased over Kuwait’s positions about oil prices, quotas, and Iraqi debts, through August 2, 1990, the date of the Iraqi invasion.

During the earliest phases of the 1961 crisis, Kuwait was not fully independent, inasmuch as Great Britain still played a role in its foreign policy. To have comparable material from both crises, therefore, only documents from the Iraq side were analyzed. These documents included all available statements or comments about Kuwait (as a nation and about its people, political status, and economic and political policies) by an Iraqi head of government, minister, or other official spokesperson; collective statements issued in the name of Iraqi political bodies; and unattributed commentary or excerpted Iraqi press commentary broadcast by Iraqi radio sources, mostly from the Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Report but also from a few government publications.

Selection and Coding of Documents

For each crisis, various kinds of documents and other archival materials were selected for coding of power, affiliation, and achievement motivation; responsibility; AI; and integrative complexity. Scores on these variables are doubtless affected by many factors besides the psychological characteristics of the person or group composing them: the type of discourse (prepared speech, informal remarks, answers to interview questions, written letters, reports, telegrams, diaries, etc.), the intended audience (an individual leader, a friend, a public audience, the mass media), the occasion (an electoral campaign, an inauguration, a crisis speech, a relaxed interview), and the compositional mode (reflective prose, spontaneous remarks, off-the-cuff utterances). Within each pair of crises, therefore, it was absolutely critical to select documents that were formally similar to each other. Only in this way is it possible to rule out the alternative explanation that differences between the two crises are merely due to differences in the kinds of documents scored.

For many of the paired crises, archival collections of government-to-government communications were available. For some pairs of crises, other materials were available: for example, speeches, press conference responses, and broadcast commentary. A list of all sources and documents used for each crisis is available from David G. Winter.

All documents were either English-language originals or published English translations. (Previous research suggests that verbal images scored for motivation and cognitive complexity are reasonably well preserved in translation and that scores based on translations are valid; see Suedfeld, Tetlock, & Streufert, 1992, p. 397; and D. G. Winter, 1973, pp. 92–93.) Although it was not feasible to remove all identifying elements from the material to be scored, certain steps were taken to ensure objectivity. All documents within each pair of crises were mixed together randomly before scoring. Scorers were blind to the precise nature and specific hypotheses of the study. Motive imagery and responsibility scoring were done by professional scorers who had previously attained a high standard of reliability in the use of the relevant scoring systems (i.e., category agreement and correlations of .85 or higher with material precoded by experts; see Smith, 1992, p. 529). Integrative complexity was scored by a trained professional who had met the criteria for research scoring of that variable. AI was scored by counting the occurrences of “not” and “–n’t” contractions.

Methodological Issues

This study is based on the assumption that valid inferences about the psychological states of individual political leaders and groups of leaders can be made from the study of statements, messages, or speeches, independent of the effects of other variables such as the form of communication used, speechwriters’ skills, or impression management. Reviewing this issue, D. G. Winter (1991a, 1992a, 1993) concluded that with appropriate cautions, such inferences were valid in the sense that the resulting

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6 This act eventually led to the first Gulf War of 1991, which is not considered here because it was a separate crisis, not at all parallel to Qasim’s 1961 annexation attempt.
scores showed predictive validity that converged with laboratory studies. Winter (1993, p. 535) also discussed the meaning and epistemological status of scores on individual psychological variables when these are based on collective documents, concluding that they may be proxies for aggregations of individuals’ scores; alternatively, they may reflect nonmotivational concepts such as ideological or psychological climate, values, or mood—what Joll (1968) called “unspoken assumptions” in “the minds of men” (p. 24; see also J. M. Winter, 1989, p. 196).

**Analysis of Data**

For the motive imagery, responsibility, and AI, raw scores were converted into images per 1,000 words for each document. Because the integrative complexity scoring system assigns a value to each paragraph, the overall score for each document was simply the average of its paragraph scores. For each crisis, scores on all variables were averaged across all documents from that crisis. Table 5 gives the mean and range of the intercorrelations of the five psychological variables across the eight studies.

For the main analysis, in each study, the mean scores for each variable of war and peace crises were compared with *t* tests, and effect sizes were calculated. For power and affiliation motive imagery and for integrative complexity, one-tailed tests were used because there were specific directional hypotheses. For achievement motivation, responsibility, and AI, more conservative two-tailed tests were used because there was not a single, clear hypothesis. Finally, for each variable, the overall mean effect size across all eight studies was calculated.

**Results**

**Motivation**

The results for motive imagery are presented in Table 6 and for the other variables in Tables 7 and 8. Tables 6, 7, and 8 present individual tests and effect sizes for each study, whereas Table 9 presents an overall analysis of the mean effect sizes. Power motive imagery was higher in war versus peace crises in six of the eight individual studies, with five of these differences being statistically significant. The mean effect size, shown in Table 9, was statistically significant and of moderate magnitude (see Cohen, 1988). Differences in power motive imagery were greatest for the Soviet involvement in Hungary versus Poland, World War I versus Bosnia and the First Balkan War, United States involvement in Vietnam versus Indochina, and the Mexican War versus Oregon crises.

Contrary to the results of previous research, affiliation motive imagery did not show a significant overall effect size, although there were differences in the hypothesized direction in five studies, with significant differences for Soviet intervention in Hungary versus Poland, the Bay of Pigs versus the Cuban Missile Crisis, and 1938–1939 Poland versus Munich crises.

Achievement motive imagery was not particularly expected to show any differences; however, in seven out of eight comparisons, its score was higher in the peace crisis than in the war crisis. Although the difference was statistically significant only in the Bay of Pigs versus Cuban Missile Crisis comparison, across all eight studies, the low to moderate mean effect size approached significance, as shown in Table 8.

**Responsibility**

The responsibility results, shown in Table 7 and summarized in Table 9, were rather surprising. Contrary to the original hypothesis, responsibility scores were higher in five of the eight war crises, with a significant low to moderate overall effect size. The differences were particularly strong in the comparisons of United States involvement in Indochina versus Vietnam and in the Soviet intervention in Hungary versus Poland. (A further analysis of the component subcategories of the responsibility measure showed the same trends as for the overall measure.)

**AI and the LMP**

The activity inhibition measure did not show a consistent pattern. However, the LMP, which combines activity inhibition with high power and low affiliation motive imagery, was higher in six of the eight war crises, which is consistent with McClelland’s (1975, chaps. 8–9) earlier cross-national findings. The war–peace difference was significant only in the World War I versus 1909–1912 comparison, as shown in Table 8. The small mean effect size approached statistical significance, as shown in Table 9, but it was less than the mean effect size of power motive imagery by itself.

**Integrative Complexity**

Integrative complexity was higher for the peace crisis than for the war crisis in six studies, but the difference was significant only in the Bay of Pigs versus Cuban Missile Crisis comparison. The

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**Table 5**

*Range of Correlations and Mean Intercorrelations of the Psychological Variables Across Eight Studies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological variable</th>
<th>Power</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Achievement</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliation</td>
<td>−.36 to .56</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>−.36 to .47</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>−.22 to .33</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>−.26 to .28</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>−.10 to .41</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>−.13 to .37</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrative complexity</td>
<td>−.48 to .07</td>
<td>−.15</td>
<td>−.13 to .37</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
small overall mean effect size approached statistical significance, as shown in Table 9.

Further Analyses by Side, Type of Document, and Crisis Characteristics

Because the eight paired crises varied in nature, participants, and sources of data, it is possible to explore the generality of the results through further analyses. Although these analyses are admittedly post hoc, they can be a useful guide to designing future research. Perhaps the most interesting question is whether the observed war—peace differences apply to both sides—to those who initiate conflict as well as to those who are only drawn in. A series of multiway ANOVAs revealed no side-by-outcome interactions, for any variable, in any of the

Table 6
Differences in Motive Imagery Between War and Peace Crises

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crisis</th>
<th>Power</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. expansion 1845–1846</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>3.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(W) Mexican War (n = 23)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>2.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(P) Oregon boundary (n = 10)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. North–South</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.970</td>
<td>0.052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(W) Civil War (n = 50)</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.53</td>
<td>4.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(P) Compromise of 1850 (n = 50)</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.39</td>
<td>4.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany, Britain, and Russia 1909–1914</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(W) World War I (n = 52)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.339</td>
<td>0.092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(P) Bosnia Crisis and Balkan War crisis (n = 20)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.269</td>
<td>0.213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany and Britain 1938–1939</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.90</td>
<td>4.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(W) Poland–Danzig (n = 36)</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.16</td>
<td>7.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(P) Munich agreement (n = 42)</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>2.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany and Britain 1938–1939</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States and Southeast Asia</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.736</td>
<td>0.343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(W) Vietnam escalation (n = 32)</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.67</td>
<td>8.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(P) Indochina nonintervention (n = 17)</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>5.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States and Cuba 1961–1962</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.16</td>
<td>7.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(W) Hungarian intervention (n = 46)</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>2.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(P) Poland nonintervention (n = 18)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States and Cuba 1961–1962</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.736</td>
<td>0.343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(W) German invasion 1990 (n = 40)</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.90</td>
<td>4.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(P) Vietnamese intervention (n = 32)</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.10</td>
<td>4.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States and Cuba 1961–1962</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(W) Mexican intervention (n = 46)</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>2.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(P) Polish nonintervention (n = 18)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States and Cuba 1961–1962</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.113</td>
<td>1.520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(W) German invasion 1990 (n = 40)</td>
<td></td>
<td>19.25</td>
<td>12.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(P) Vietnamese intervention (n = 32)</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.51</td>
<td>4.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States and Cuba 1961–1962</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.74</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(W) Cuban Missile Crisis (n = 13)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.055</td>
<td>0.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(P) Cuban nonintervention (n = 13)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.947</td>
<td>0.370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States and Cuba 1961–1962</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.03</td>
<td>5.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(W) Iraqi invasion 1990 (n = 40)</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.97</td>
<td>4.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(P) Iraqi nonintervention 1961 (n = 73)</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.97</td>
<td>4.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. W = a crisis that escalated to war; P = a peacefully resolved crisis. All p values are one-tailed for power and affiliation motive imagery and two-tailed for achievement imagery.

* Two-tailed p, because result was opposite to hypothesis.
eight studies. From the Munich crisis to the Poland–Danzig crisis, power imagery did increase in German documents and decrease in British documents, but the side-by-outcome interaction was not significant.

Analysis by type of document showed only a few scattered significant differences. Overall, there were no significant relationships between the magnitude of effect size and whether the comparison was based on diplomatic communications, speeches, or media commentary. Only the LMP and integrative complexity effect sizes were different—being essentially zero—in the two comparisons involving documents from only one side. In the Indochina versus Vietnam comparison, there was a borderline
significant interaction ($p = .051$) between source and outcome: Speeches and press conference responses by the president were higher in power motive imagery in war than in peace, whereas materials from other government officials were lower in war than peace. In the same-crisis pair, integrative complexity based on speeches was higher in peace than war, whereas for press conferences it was the reverse ($p$ of interaction = .047). Finally, speeches showed lower responsibility in the Poland–Danzig crisis than in the peacefully resolved Munich crisis, whereas diplomatic documents showed the reverse pattern ($p$ of interaction = .06). Are the effects in some kinds of crises stronger than the effects in others? The power and responsibility effect sizes were bigger for the six crises involving one or more major powers (either a symmetrical confrontation of two or more major powers or an asymmetrical confrontation between a major power and a smaller country), compared with the other two paired crises, the U.S. Civil War and Iraq in Kuwait: Mean $d_s = 0.758$ versus $-0.069$, respectively, for power, $t(6) = 2.39, p = .054$; mean $d_s = 0.554$ versus $-0.057$, respectively, for responsibility, $t(6) = 3.68, p = .014$. Both mean effect sizes were especially large for the three asymmetrical major power–smaller country crises.

There were no relationships between any of the effect sizes and the year in which either the war crisis or the peace crisis began. However, the effect sizes for power motive imagery, the LMP, and integrative complexity were all negatively correlated with the length of the interval between the peace and war crises ($r_s = -0.72, -0.80,$ and $-0.84$, respectively; $p < .05$). Although not statistically significant, the correlation of length of interval with responsibility effect size was in the same direction ($r = -.35$). One explanation for this finding would be that the longer the interval between the two crises, the less comparable they actually are, even if they are similar in terms of many formal characteristics. For example, many aspects of the conflict between Iraq and Kuwait in 1990 were probably very different from those of the conflict 29 years earlier; similarly, the North–South conflict in the United States changed in many important respects between 1850 and 1860. In contrast, those paired crises occurring close together in time (the U.S.–Soviet crises involving Cuba and the U.S. border crises with Mexico and Canada, in both of which the war crisis actually preceded the peace crisis, and the U.S.S.R. crises involving Poland and Hungary, which began in the same month) were arguably more comparable and therefore better matches.

**Discussion**

**Understanding Some Psychological Bases of Escalation and War: Summary of Findings**

**Motivation.** Taken together, the results of the present eight studies suggest that the higher the level of power motive imagery in documents and other relevant verbal material during a crisis, the more likely that crisis will escalate to war. In the current studies,

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8 Of course these were two different presidents: Eisenhower during the Indochina crisis and Johnson during Vietnam. This difference may "explain" the source by outcome interaction, but does not "explain it away." Johnson’s person and personality, as compared to Eisenhower’s, were extremely important factors in the difference in outcomes.

9 The Oregon boundary dispute is included in the latter category. Although at that time, the United States was not a great power, British North America (later Canada) was a colony of Great Britain, which was a great power.
Table 9

**Summary of Effect Size (d) Statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>95% confidence limits</th>
<th>t for difference from 0</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Power motivation</td>
<td>0.552</td>
<td>0.549</td>
<td>0.093–1.011</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliation motivation</td>
<td>0.228</td>
<td>0.605</td>
<td>−0.278–0.734</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement motivation</td>
<td>0.320</td>
<td>0.468</td>
<td>−0.072–0.711</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>.095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>0.401</td>
<td>0.445</td>
<td>0.029–0.773</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity inhibition</td>
<td>−0.048</td>
<td>0.359</td>
<td>−0.348–0.252</td>
<td>−0.38</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership motive pattern</td>
<td>0.161</td>
<td>0.244</td>
<td>−0.044–0.365</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>.105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrative complexity</td>
<td>0.269</td>
<td>0.396</td>
<td>−0.062–0.600</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>.096</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Affiliation motive imagery was lower in some of the war crises, but the overall mean effect size was not significantly different from zero. The power motivation finding gives a fairly robust confirmation of the results of previous research (e.g., D. G. Winter, 1993), suggesting that power motivation is truly an important motivational root of aggression and war.

Although not predicted and with an overall effect size of borderline significance, war outcomes are less likely if achievement motive imagery is high. High levels of achievement motivation have previously been shown to predict economic development and technological advances (McClelland, 1961). The present results suggest that concern for excellence can channel activity into non-aggressive (e.g., economic) forms of competition. In crude terms, entrepreneurs focused on making money may be too busy to go to war. Sometimes, though, competitive economic growth becomes diverted into aggressive channels. For example, if one country’s growth is perceived to take place at the expense of others, social comparisons may change, creating relative deprivation and resentment in certain countries or communities (see Chua, 2002; Crosby, 1976) and a complementary concern to protect (or regain) one’s competitive edge in others. In motivational terms, this would be a deflection of achievement motivation into concerns for power, impact, and prestige. Thus, although achievement motivation as such may be peaceful, the economic growth that it generates may lead indirectly to conflict and war (see Choucri & North, 1975, for an analysis of this process in the 19th and early 20th centuries; see also McClelland, 1961, pp. 377–378, on the achievement-to-power motivational sequence over time).

*The complex and contingent role of responsibility.* At the individual level, responsibility is usually thought of as a good thing, because it makes possible the control of impulses and prosocial expression of power motives (see D. G. Winter & Barenbaum, 1985). The present results suggest that in international crises, however, it can function to escalate violence. Examination of the three responsibility subcategories most strongly associated with war outcomes (standards, obligation, and concern for others; see Table 2) helps to explain why. In a crisis, as the stakes (and emotions) run high and the sense of “us versus them” is accentuated (see Tajfel, 1981; D. G. Winter, 2003), standards of moral and legal evaluation may be applied to the other instead of the self. The sense of impersonal obligation, which leads individuals to controlled action (the sense that “he had to act” or “she was following the rule”), may be transformed into a sense of inevitability and abdication (“we have no choice; we have to attack”), as Holsti (1972) found in his study of the July 1914 crisis. Finally, a concern for others, which normally channels individuals’ behavior in prosocial directions, may in a crisis lead political leaders to aggress (even preemptively) out of an altruistic concern for their own nation.

During some international crises, then, going to war may seem like the responsible thing to do: to deter an aggressor, to protect one’s citizens, or to secure the survival of one’s core values. Thus most people would accept that after Hitler violated the Munich Agreements by occupying Prague in March 1939, Neville Chamberlain did the responsible thing by insisting further German conquests and declaring war after the German invasion of Poland. However, aggression is sometimes rationalized—perhaps privately as well as publicly—with the language of responsibility. Thus on the day of the invasion, Hitler spoke of his “duty . . . that our people shall live, that Germany shall live” (Domarus, 1990, Vol. 3, p. 1755). In crises, then, the role of responsibility is both complex and contingent on many other factors.

*Integrative complexity.* The integrative complexity results are consistent with earlier studies, although the size of the war—peace differences and levels of statistical significance are not as great. This may be due to the more rigorous criterion of document comparability within crisis pairs used in the present studies. In any case, the results suggest that simplistic, black-and-white thinking is associated with more aggressive crisis outcomes. Alternatively, resolving crises peacefully requires differentiation and integration—in short, complex thinking.

*Future Directions in Research and Application*

The present results need to be interpreted with caution. They demonstrate differences or associations, but they do not prove causality. These differences in motive imagery, responsibility, and integrative complexity could be the result and not the cause of the different outcomes. Further longitudinal analyses could explore this issue further. For example, do communications about war and peace crises show different patterns of verbal imagery over time? Thus a further analysis of the Iraq–Kuwait crises of 1961 and 1990 shows differences in the power motive imagery over time, even though the overall difference in means between the two crises are...
actually reversed. In 1961, Iraqi power motive imagery was uncorrelated \((r = .01)\) with the date of the document; in the 1990 crisis, however, that correlation was positive and significant \((r = .36, p < .02)\). Are day-to-day fluctuations in verbal imagery associated with day-to-day fluctuations in aggressive acts? If they are, then which variables lead which? Future research could also pinpoint more precisely the psychological locus of these effects: whether they can be thought of as expressions of individual personality, products of collective psychology often expressed in the words of individual political actors or their speechwriters, or the result of structural or group processes (see D. G. Winter, 1993, p. 535).

In the present research, each side of a conflict was considered in isolation, as a separate and autonomous actor. In reality, however, crises are highly interactive, two-sided “games”; one side’s actions affect the perceptions and motive levels of the other, which in turn affect the perceptions and motives of the first side, all in ways that may be different in different crises. For example, a serious effort was made to deter Iraq from invading Kuwait in 1961 but not in 1990. And more appeasement might have prevented World War I, whereas more deterrence might have prevented the European part of World War II. Psychologists’ understanding of crisis outcomes could be greatly enriched by using game-theory dynamics and time-series analysis on data of the type used in the present research: for example, in the gradual buildup to the first Gulf War between August 1990 and January 1991.

One important practical application of this research would be an early warning system to monitor communications during crises, to determine whether the crisis is likely to escalate (power motive imagery and responsibility increasing; affiliation and perhaps achievement, along with integrative complexity, decreasing) or, conversely, whether it is ripe (Kriesberg & Thorsen, 1991) for peaceful overtures, perhaps via third-party intervention (Rubin, 1981). To return to the dual conceptual status of the motive construct introduced at the beginning of this article, to the extent that motives are stable individual differences, the present research has implications for selecting leaders or for knowing what to expect of particular leaders selected by others (see D. G. Winter, 2005, on U.S. President George W. Bush). To the extent that motives are aroused by particular incentives and situations, however, the present research has implications for crisis management and advising leaders. In the longer run, the identification of key variables indicative of escalation might also suggest ways in which these psychological characteristics and processes could be tamed (D. G. Winter, 2006) or damped down, while the psychological forces leading to peace could be encouraged.

References


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