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Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society

Title

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Journal

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society, 44(44)

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Publication Date

2022

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Peer reviewed

Perceptual Grouping for War and Peace

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Abstract

In a ground war, achieving peace is challenging even when both sides suffer. Here we demonstrate that when humans jointly viewed a battlefield as perceptually grouped by colors, a factor irrelevant to the rules of land-war games, they waged fewer wars and accumulated more wealth due to the perceptual border's constraint on their aggression. This facilitation of peace arose from perceptual grouping that serves as a visual common sense shared by humans, as a mismatched perceptual grouping between players failed to limit war. Moreover, it relies on the geopolitical principles that make ground wars destructive and disappeared when these principles were violated. Together, we show that perceptual grouping limits human ground war as it is a mutually acknowledged "rallying point" where expectations of peace converge.