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Dynamical Model of an Inter-Group Asymmetric Conflict. The Al-Aqsa Intifada.

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Abstract

The dissertation proposes a macro-psychological model of dynamics of an asymmetric conflict, which is then formalized in mathematical terms. Predictions of the model are tested using empirical data from the Second Intifada (Al-Aqsa). An important assumption of the model is that a tendency for revenge is governed by the collective psychological present of the hostilities of the other side. Computer simulation of the model demonstrated a good fit to the empirical data concerning attacks of Palestinian militant organizations (Fatah, Hamas, PIJ) and army counter-attacks. Dynamics of theoretical components predicted by the model show high correlations with corresponding variables measured by Palestinian and Israeli social opinion surveys. Analysis of the model with parameters fitted to the empirical data reveal the nature of the conflict's asymmetry and indicate which factors are critical for escalation and which are of secondary importance. Dynamics of the model shows an initial escalation by the weaker side followed by mutual escalation. The following phase consists of one sided escalation of the stronger side with final de-escalation of both adversaries. Also, the implications for the theory of asymmetric conflict as well as for the practice of conflict resolution are discussed.