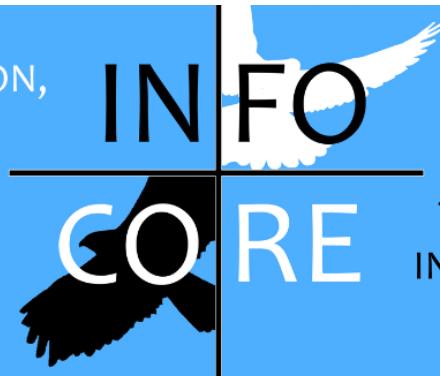


(IN)FORMING CONFLICT PREVENTION,
RESPONSE AND RESOLUTION:



THE ROLE OF MEDIA
IN VIOLENT CONFLICT

27 November 2015

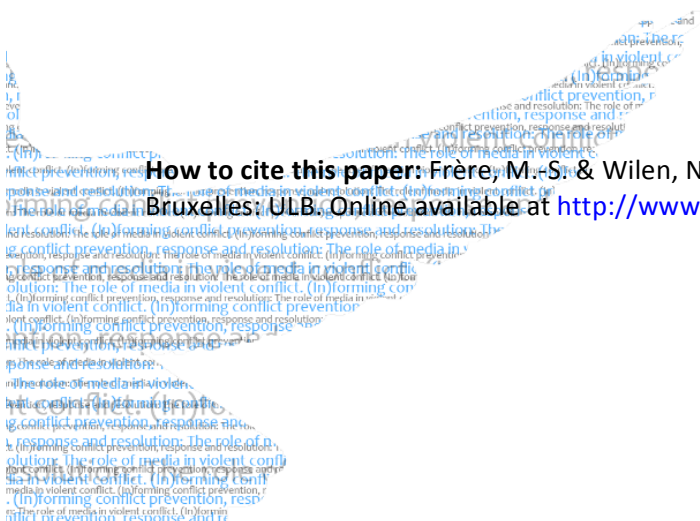


INFOCORE Definitions

Escalation/De-escalation

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INFOCORE DEFINITIONS

ESCALATION/DE-ESCALATION

Escalation or De-escalation corresponds to two different phases within a conflict (as defined in the document on conflict phases) but both refer to a period or an instant of change in a conflict.

Escalation is a broad concept, which refers to several different meanings, ranging from non-violent crisis to total nuclear war (Brecher 1996, p. 215). Most often however, it is linked to an increase in intensity of a crisis or a conflict. Brecher has identified three distinct processes which each provide a definition of escalation, including: a change from incipient to full-scale crisis, which automatically implicates an increase in stress, from low to peak; a change from non-violent to violent crisis and finally a change from no or low violence to severe violence (Brecher 1996, p.215). All of these processes can be found in different sorts of crisis, whether an intra-state or an inter-state conflict and imply qualitative change of the conflict. These three processes occur on different dimensions of a conflict, but can take place simultaneously, implying a radical change in a conflict.

De-escalation is linked to escalation in the sense that there is a need for a conflict to have escalated before de-escalation can take place. The two concepts are therefore intimately related, despite their contrasting meanings.

The definition of de-escalation can also be divided into three categories. Firstly it can be understood as a reduction in one or more dimensions of the intensity of the conflict behaviour between adversaries. Similar to the definition of escalation this first dimension also involves a decrease in the level of stress. A second process refers to a contraction of the conflict, which can take various forms, including a decrease in the number of parties involved. Finally, de-escalation may relate to efforts to move towards a settlement of the conflict. This last step can include various negotiation efforts, such as tacit bargaining but also explicit peace initiatives (Kriesberg, 1991, p.3).

Escalation and de-escalation phases provoke different methods of external intervention, as seen in the definition on conflict phases. While escalation may demand peace-making or peace-enforcement activities, generally with robust mandates, de-escalation requires more diplomatic means, such as mediation or negotiation to arrive at a settlement between the disputing parties.

References:

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