



INFORMING CONFLICT PREVENTION,
RESPONSE AND RESOLUTION:
THE ROLE OF MEDIA
IN VIOLENT CONFLICT

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WORK PACKAGE 4: NGOs, Media and Conflict

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Research questions

Large and diverse literature on NGOs in IR ⇔ Few theoretical and empirical work on their specific contribution to conflict discourse:

→ How do NGOs shape mediated discourses on armed conflicts? And what can we conclude from this on the role of NGOs in conflict prevention, analysis and resolution?

Definition

NGOs as organizations that are formally and legally independent from government, with goals rooted in values - in our case predominantly peace, security, freedom of the press, fundamental human rights - and with a strong drive to reinvest all or most of any financial surpluses into the pursuit of these objectives



Three Lines of Inquiry and Theoretical Expectations

1. NGOs as media sources:

As a result of Western news media cutbacks and growing NGOs resources and expertise, NGOs gain greater influence on the production of evidential claims, frames and to a lesser extent agendas for action communicated via “traditional media”.

2. NGOs as media-like voices:

New ICT & increasingly professionalised staff have enabled NGOs to communicate directly with target audiences. NGOs might increasingly rely on “insider strategies” to communicate evidential beliefs, frames, and agendas for action.

3. NGOs as intelligence providers:

Foreign policy analysts rely increasingly on NGO products through OSINT systems. NGOs are seen as increasingly valuable providers of accurate, timely and, but perhaps not always relevant, intelligence of relevance of conflict prevention, mitigation and peace-building



Research design

Largely exploratory conceptual framework → most-likely case selection to test, flesh out and specify the theoretical assumptions

Two-fold strategy for case selection:

- Pre-selection of *4 international NGOs* that will be examined across all lines of inquiry: ICG, ICRC, HRW, MSF
- Selection of additional *8-10 NGOs per conflict or country* by respective leads according to their resources and activity profile



Methods and sources

Mixed-methods design adapted to the specificities of the three lines of inquiry:

- Conduct of **semi-structured qualitative interviews with NGO actors**
- Additional **interview questions for political leaders and journalists**
- **Content analysis** with the aim of tracing and comparing NGO quotations and key conflict-related NGO publications (INFOCORE media corpus)
- **Performance analysis** for NGOs as intelligence providers based on the criteria of timeliness, accuracy and relevance
 - “Objective” assessment
 - “Subjective” assessment



Discussion

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR ATTENTION

SPECIFIC PUZZLES / CHALLENGES:

- Challenge of selecting “comparable” NGOs given the diversity of their configurations and missions, but also devising research strategies/questionnaires that allow comparison across different political contexts
- Methodological challenge of measuring the impact of NGO „products/communication“ both on news media and issue-publics

Questions? Comments?