(IN)FORMING CONFLICT PREVENTION, RESPONSE AND RESOLUTION:

THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN VIOLENT CONFLICT

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INFOCORE Definitions

Violent conflict

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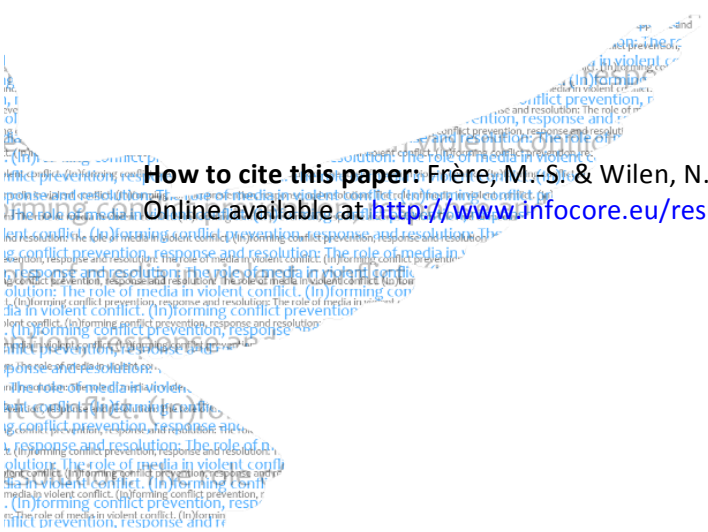

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INFOCORE DEFINITIONS

VIOLENT CONFLICT

A violent conflict involves at least two parties using physical force to resolve competing claims or interests. While a violent conflict may involve only non-state actors, often, the term is used as a synonym for war which involves at least one government.

Violent conflicts are categorized according to different factors, one of which is the number of casualties they result in per year. As such, the most frequent number coming up to distinguish violent conflict from mere conflict is 25 battle-related deaths per year. If the battle-related deaths during the course of a conflict are under 1000 they are considered as minor, while between 25-1000 in one year as during a particular year in conflict are categorized as intermediate conflicts. Above 1000 battle-related deaths during one particular year is considered as war or as a major armed conflict (Wallensteen and Axel 1994: 333-349).

Another way of classifying violent conflicts is depending of which type of actors are involved in the conflict and where it takes place. These categories are however rather blurry as the distinction between national and international conflicts is difficult to establish due to the degree of international involvement in internal conflicts. An example of this is the Congo wars in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) which, to a start was called a national war, but which transformed into an international war to the degree that it was named the 'First African World War' (Reyntjens, 2009).

The distinctions remain however and internal violent conflicts are often defined as conflict that takes place within a state as opposed to between states (Kalyvas and Balcells, 2010). Similarly, inter-state conflicts are characterized by the official involvement of two or more governments. Violent conflicts are also differentiated by the balance of power between the opposing factions: a symmetrical conflict reflects an even balance of power where the factions involved have more or less similar material, financial and technical capacities whereas an asymmetrical conflict refers to a disequilibrium between the actors, where one faction clearly has the upper hand in the balance of power.

Similarly, violent conflicts are labelled according to what the topic of the conflict concerns, be that a political, ideological issue, a social, exclusionary or inclusionary topic, or a religious or ethnic focus. Most often however, conflicts are a mixture of several different topics that overlap each other. Ethnic conflicts are for example often more of social conflicts where parts of the population have been excluded from power or education, for political reasons, whereas ideological topics also may include religious questions.

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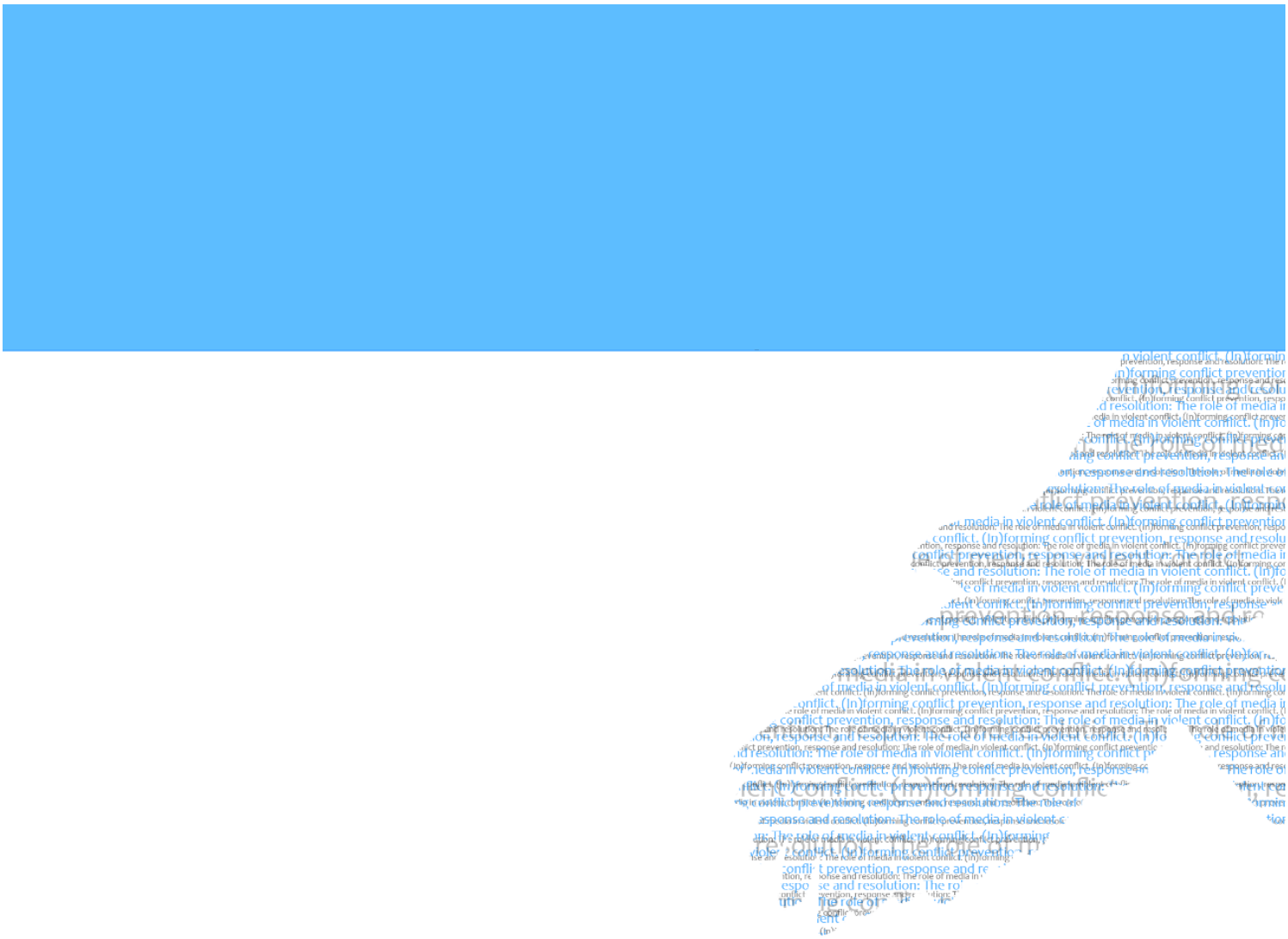

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