(IN)FORMING CONFLICT PREVENTION, RESPONSE AND RESOLUTION:

THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN VIOLENT CONFLICT

INFOCORE DEFINTIONS

"Political Actors"

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The definition of political actor within INFOCORE refers to: “individuals who have obtained at least some measure of political power and/or authority in a particular society who engage in activities that can have a significant influence on decisions, policies, media coverage, and outcomes associated with a given conflict”.

In democratic countries this would include all elected leaders, candidates who are running for election, and relatively high-level policy makers who have a significant impact on the formation and execution of policies that have an impact on society and/or foreign affairs. This definition includes all those in power who have been elected to those positions, government ministers, and those members of the legislative branch who are in the opposition. It would also include those individuals who are in charge of government institutions (e.g. the foreign Ministry) that are considered important policy makers.

There are a number of individuals who could be considered political actors within another research setting but are being excluded from this particular project. This would include leaders of political and social movements as well as military leaders whose policies can have an impact on political processes especially with regard to violent conflicts.

Political actors in non-democratic settings or semi-democratic settings carry out similar functions but are not elected or at least not elected in free and fair elections. An additional difference is that in these settings members of the political opposition may not be permitted to serve in the legislature or in any other formal capacity. In these cases those opposed to the government would be leading extra-parliamentary groups and may even find themselves in exile. The individuals are considered political actors within the confines of this research project.

It is worth taking note that, within the INFOCORE framework there is a certain overlap between political leaders and “strategic communicators” . Thus, political actors are often strategic communicators but there are quite a few strategic communicators who are not considered political actors. The most obvious example would be government spokespeople who normally do not have a major impact on the development and implementation of public policies.