

NON-STATE ACTORS IN PANDEMIC: VIOLENCE AS A TERRITORIAL CONTROL STRATEGY DURING COVID-19*

DIEGO A. MARTIN[‡] AND DARIO A. ROMERO[†]

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ABSTRACT. How do non-state actors enforce stay-at-home orders to reduce COVID-19 cases? We argue that Colombian-illegal groups used massacres to enforce social distance rules. Massacres are attacks killing at least three defenseless civilians in one operation. We estimate the effect of those violent events using a synthetic control method. To rule out the channel of massacres for other reasons such as coca production, we compare sub-regions with low conflict before the pandemic and where coca is no suitable for growth. We find that places with massacres reduced the pandemic outbreak by 70 cases per 100.000 inhabitants per week after the second month. We show that the principal channel that explains our results is a reduction in mobility indexes. The first massacre decreased infection levels by reducing individuals' mobility at workplaces. Finally, we show that young population groups experienced the earliest reduction in infection rates, while the old group has the highest decline in infection rates after massacres.

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[‡]Department of Economics, Purdue University. 425 W. State Street 335 West Lafayette, IN 47907. E-mail: dmartin1@purdue.edu.

[†]Department of Economics, Columbia University. 1022 International Affairs Building, 420 West 118th Street, New York, NY 10027. E-mail: dr2879@columbia.edu.