

## Introduction

The COVID-19 crisis is unprecedented in scale and geographic scope. In mitigating the health impacts, lockdowns, characterised by restrictions on freedom of movement, events and gatherings, and closures of business, schools and workplaces, have become a new global norm. Increasingly, attention is focussed on the secondary impacts of lockdowns, and while a spotlight is being shone on the economic impacts, there is significant concern around the impact on political violence, such as armed conflict<sup>i</sup>, ceasefires<sup>ii</sup>, terrorism<sup>iii</sup> and state violence against citizens<sup>iv</sup>.

This study attempts to untangle conjecture from fact, by empirically assessing two assumptions that have been prolific throughout the crisis:

1. **Lockdowns provide an enabling environment for non-state armed groups (NSAGs) to expand activity** for example, due to drawdown of state security services to police lockdowns.<sup>v</sup>
2. **Lockdowns are characterised by a rise in state violence against civilians (SVAC)**, for example due to excessive enforcement during lockdown policing.<sup>vi</sup>

This yields two hypotheses to test:

*H1. The stringency of lockdowns is related to violence involving non-state armed groups.*

*H2. The stringency of lockdowns is related to state violence against civilians.*

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<sup>i</sup> Mehrl, M. Turner, P. W. (2020) 'The Effect of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Global Armed Conflict: Early Evidence', *Political Studies Review*, pp.1–8, [online] (available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1478929920940648>) (Last accessed: 01/02/2021)

<sup>ii</sup> The University of Edinburgh/PRSP (2021) 'Ceasefires in a time of COVID-19', [online] (Available at: <https://pax.peaceagreements.org/static/covid19ceasefires/>) (Last accessed: 01/02/2021).

<sup>iii</sup> Ackerman, G. Peterson, H. (2020) 'Terrorism and COVID-19: Actual and Potential Impacts', *Research Notes*, (14/3) pp. 59-73, [online] (Available at: <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/binaries/content/assets/customsites/perspectives-on-terrorism/2020/issue-3/ackerman-and-peterson.pdf>), (Last accessed: 01/02/2021).

<sup>iv</sup> Bruijne, K. Bisson, L. (2020) 'States, not Jihadis, exploiting Corona crisis in West Africa', [online] (Available at: <https://acleddata.com/2020/05/28/states-not-jihadis-exploiting-corona-crisis-in-west-africa/>) (Last accessed: 01/02/2021).

<sup>v</sup> UNSC, Counter-terrorism committee executive directorate (2020) 'The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on terrorism, counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism', [online], (Available at: <https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/CTED-Paper%E2%80%9393-The-impact-of-the-COVID-19-pandemic-on-counter-terrorism-and-countering-violent-extremism.pdf>) (Last accessed: 01/02/2021).

<sup>vi</sup> Anderton, C. H. (2020) 'The other virus: Covid-19 and violence against civilians', *Peace Economics, Peace Science and Public Policy*, (26/3), [online], (Available at: <https://www.degruyter.com/view/journals/peps/ahead-of-print/article-10.1515-peps-2020-0039/article-10.1515-peps-2020-0039.xml?language=en>) (Last accessed: 01/02/2021).