



# Violent Non-State Actors and COVID-19: Challenge or Opportunity?

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*How COVID-19 has affected terrorist groups, organized crime groups, cartels, and gangs in specific regions*

## MEXICO

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected three major dimensions in cartels and gangs: disruptions in **drug supply chains**, increases in [violence](#) and new **opportunities for legitimacy** as cartels provide aid to local populations.



*DUNCAN WOOD, MEXICO INSTITUTE*

## LATIN AMERICA

Challenges to organized crime include supply chain disruptions leading to scarcity of precursor chemicals used in processing of illicit drugs, and difficulties in moving [illicit cash](#) between countries. New opportunities include emergency government spending with [little oversight](#), and price gauging and [fraud in sale of medical supplies](#).

## SOUTH ASIA

COVID-19 poses small challenges to the [Taliban](#), but also large opportunities for creating useful propaganda and [offering citizens resources](#) to combat the virus to [gain legitimacy](#) and support.

*MICHAEL KUGELMAN, ASIA PROGRAM*

*ERIC L. OLSON, SEATTLE INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION*



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## THE MIDDLE EAST

Violent non-state actors, such as ISIS, see the virus as an opportunity to [escalate their actions because governments are distracted.](#)

MARINA OTTAWAY, MIDDLE EAST PROGRAM



## EASTERN EUROPE

Organized crime groups are rich in cash and in times of crisis, [small businesses may become indebted](#) to crime organizations in order to stay afloat.

Challenges to these groups include increases in [cybercrimes, disruption of supply chains, and difficulties to launder money.](#)

LOUISE SHELLEY, GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY



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