Strategic Developments

ACLED defines "Strategic developments" as contextually important events which may contribute to a state's political disorder and/or may trigger future events. It includes arrests of key political figures, mass arrests, rallies, peace talks, mass hunger strikes, other strikes (e.g. 'dead city'), recruitment drives, looting, destruction of property, etc. It can also include instances in which bombs are diffused prior to an attack, or when a bomb is accidentally detonated earlier than intended. While it is rare for fatalities to be reported as a result of such events, they can occur in certain cases, such as the suspicious death of a high-ranking official, accidental detonation of a bomb resulting in the bomber being killed, etc.

The inclusion of an event in the strategic development category is based on its significance in the context of a country's disorder. Therefore, the consideration of its significance must be based on the strong impression that it is or will be important to the future of political violence and protest. These events are not typically used in analysis, but are used to understand the trajectory and onset of different patterns of violence and demonstrations by groups.

Coding note: As of 2018, the notes in the Strategic Development categories will be preceded by a *category* of Strategic Development as noted below. Notes will therefore appear as follows: "*Strike: Railway workers in Kisumu, Mombasa, Nakuru, and Nairobi go on strike in protest of no salary payments.*" The categories listed below are based on the types of Strategic Developments observed in ACLED data.

Strategic Development Categories

1. **Activity of armed groups**
    *   **Agreement**: An agreement between armed groups, including:
        o   **Peace agreement/talks:** new or final peace talks;
        o   **Ceasefire**: Temporary ceasefires between armed groups;
        o   **Exchange or release of prisoners:** when significant;
        o   **Surrender**: Militants and/or affiliated individuals surrendering to another armed group, e.g. "*20 rebels surrendered to armed forces today in X city*";
        o   **Repatriation**

        Note: temporary ceasefires, continuing peace agreements, evacuation deals, negotiated territorial transfers etc. are not recorded.

    *   **Movement of forces**: Whenever armed groups move their forces but are not engaged in violence, e.g. *"240 gendarmerie are deployed to X village following recent reports of militant activity in the area."* This category can also be used when leadership of a group withdraws from a city. *However, if they are reportedly setting*

up a base somewhere else, this is coded instead as a "Headquarters or base established" event, not a "Strategic development".

2. **Armed group creation/maintenance**
   - **Formation of armed group**: Formation of a new armed group; can cover anything from a new rebel group or paramilitary wing of the security forces to a local self-defense militia.
   - **Defection:** Evidence of a significant group defecting from another
   - **Recruitment:** Rebel/militia group recruitment drives

3. **Government activity**
   - **Arrests**: Threshold for inclusion is either the arrest of a group's leader or more than 25 people arrested at the same time (must be politically motivated and/or connected to ongoing conflict).
   - **Closure:** Of a base or a front. This is especially relevant for when military forces surround and close off a populated area, (e.g. as seen in Palestine and Yemen)
   - **Governmental ruling:** Relevant if it changes the political or legal landscape
   - **Curfew imposed:** Relevant if it is meant as a repression measure
   - **Security Measures**: Any non-violent security measures enacted by armed groups, such as curfews; e.g. "a curfew was declared across all 10 districts of X province".

   Note: *Formal statements and speeches are not coded.* While important, these are often too common for inclusion. Further, the actions that follow a meaningful speech are what ACLED aims to cover.

4. **Weaponry**
   - **Detonation/Disposal**: Detonations, or disposal, of explosives devices, including IEDs, landmines, car bombs, artillery shells, etc. Also includes *accidental* detonation of devices that do not cause casualties/damage to other groups, e.g. *"Taliban militant detonated suicide belt early, killing the bomber without any casualties or damage reported."* (Normal explosion of IEDs and landmines etc. are still considered Remote violence.)
   - **Weapons Seizure**: Seizure of weapons by an armed group, e.g. "2 trucks of weapons bound for rebel positions were seized by the security forces on X highway".

5. **Property (both private property & buildings/infrastructure)**
   - **Property destruction**: Armed groups destroying property (without the use of remote violence), e.g. "militants burned down a school in X village". Generally, these events should only have one Actor, unless the target is controlled/owned by another armed group (but no fighting was reported). This refers to cases where the destruction of property is a coordinated, targeted, and strategic act; *spontaneous arson should still be coded as Rioters (event type: Riots/Protests).*
     - **Demolition:** the mass destruction of property

- **Looting**: Looting by armed groups or rioters during protests (criminal looting should not be coded; *flag events whenever you're not sure*).

6. **Strikes / Individual demonstration**
   - **Strikes**: Group strikes, including but not limited to hunger strikes, dead city strikes, union strikes, etc. *Such events should only be coded if they are sufficiently large and/or involve a collective group, and if they directly impact future violence and protest dynamics.*
   - **Demonstration by an individual:** For example, a self-immolation by an individual, *which should only be coded if it directly impacts political violence or protest dynamics* (e.g. the self-immolation of Tunisian Mohamed Bouazizi, largely seen as the catalyst to the Tunisian Revolution and the wider Arab Spring)

7. **Non-violent activity:** This is a catch-all category for any strategic development that does not fall into any of the other categories and does not warrant the creation of a new category.