

State Officials' Targeted Killings as a Thorn in the International Cooperation Matrix

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Abstract

The focus of this paper is on target killings, particularly on state officials, aimed at neutralizing diplomats through death. Countries often cite various reasons for the killings, such as pursuing economic agenda and protecting nations against terrorism, among others. The paper delves into such justifications and the impacts of killing state officials with a focus on which such murders have on international relations. Besides, the paper focuses on historical discourses, especially those pertaining to the United States of America, which has, in the recent past, been widely cited as a gradually-shifting nation with more killings of other nations' agents. The paper builds on the various international accords that countries subscribe to, which subsequently guide international relations. Besides, the paper builds on the liberal and institutionalism theories of international relations, which are elemental components in understanding how diplomatic ties are supposed to be structured as well as the status quo. Through dissection and contextualization of the theories, this paper pinpoints the weak areas, which give nations the leeway to kill other nations' state officials and what would be different if all nations respected the international relations conventional codes. State officials' targeted killings are a thorn in the international cooperation matrix.

Keywords: 21st Century States Relations; Slaying of Foreign State Agents; International Law of Nations; Diplomatic Relations and protocols; International Diplomatic Conventions; UN Charter; Foreign Political Assassination; International Relations; targeting of the State Agents; UN Conventions and protocols respect.

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1. Introduction

Targeted killings against state players or representatives have been existential for quite a lengthy space of time. Majorly orchestrated or commandeered by those holding government positions, state agents killings mostly target diplomats for varied reasons, such as political career continuity, withholding secrets deemed sensitive to other parties, and declaring diplomatic wars, among others, which political players have. In ancient Greece, for example, democratic rule was protected through the authorities openly executing tyrants [1]. Similarly, European nations widely approved the execution of foreign state representatives in the sixteenth century when the authorities resolved that such foreign players were acting beyond their capacities, such as diplomatic duties [2]. In the recent past, there have been widespread concerns that the developed world is in the front ranks in killing state officials. For that reason, developed nations, such as the United Kingdom, Russia, Germany, France, and some U.S. states are on the spot for foreign officials' disappearances, executions in cold blood, as well as deaths to their family members. Such killings are either inflicted on those acting for the same nations or other nations. This article will look at state officials' killings and the effects that such killings have on diplomatic relations.

2. Twenty-first Century International Relations

There is currently a change in international relations, otherwise referred to as diplomatic relations. Various international accords, such as the 1918 treaty of Versailles, The Armistice of 11 November 1918, 1949 Geneva Conventions, Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, and Additional protocols of 1977 were enacted after the First World War [3]. Through the treaties, nations notably agreed to respect each other's state officials and uphold international law in such officials' treatment [4]. While such agreements are binding, there have been defections in that nations have been noted to go against the principles, which they signed against. Besides, the occurrence of diplomatic wars majorly stems from the double standard application of diplomatic relations. For instance, a nation could endanger the lives of another country's state official and expect the affected nation to keep mum over the matter [5]. When the victim country retaliates in a similar manner, the initiator of killings often cries foul. Such situations are commonly notable when a powerful nation accentuates killings of a weaker nation and the latter retaliating by similar killings. In any case, a nation's strength is gauged through military prowess, economic power, international allied networks, and political ideology standing [6]. One of the countries most cited for its meddling in other nations' affairs through mysterious disappearances and killings of foreign officials and riding on its strength is the United States of America. For instance, the U.S. has been widely mentioned in the killings of Libyan, Cuban, Congolese, Iranian, and German foreign agents and political players [7]. Even so, the U.S. also suffers losses in its officials abroad. In 2011, for instance, the Iranian government pounced on American secret agents operating in the country, executed, and imprisoned some of them. While it would be argued that Iran was supposed to deport the Americans, it used the executions as a rallying call, warning the U.S. of interference in the Middle Eastern nation's affairs, such as politics and economic set up [8]. China also executed thirty agents acting for the American government, who were executing covert espionage operations in the country [9]. The two nations were unapologetic on their actions, and the United States was depicted in its weakness to champion countries' independence but contradicted such feelings through spying on other nations. President Gerald Ford made one of the landmark declarations on the protection

of foreign agents through an executive order stating that no U.S. government official would in any way conspire and actualize foreign agents or politician killings [10]. The standing has by far changed with numerous killings against the directive being particularly enacted. Attacks and killings of Laurent Kabila, Muammar Gaddafi, Slobodan Milosevic, Saddam Hussein, Rafael Trujillo, and Salvador Allende are attributed to the U.S. or proxies and occurred after President Ford's declaration [10]. Besides, the United States was also allegedly involved in planning the unsuccessful killing of North Korean leader, King Jong-Un, in 2017 through gradual infiltration [11]. As a most recent case, the United States admitted to having planned and actualized the killing of Iranian Soleimani, who was a high-ranking military official in January 2020. The general was killed in an Iraqi airport with the United States president Trump defending the action. Widely rumored to be the onset of the third world war, the president responded that the U.S. killed the general to prevent a war, as opposed to starting one [12]. Iran responded through a number of attacks meant to frustrate the United States of America, with the Middle Eastern power stating that it was spoiling for a fight against the former and her allies. Iran also showed indications of a diplomatic tussle and its subsequent degeneration to a physical war with the felling of a plane in Iran days later, missile and rocket attacks on U.S. affiliated military bases in the Middle East, and the U.S. embassy in Iran [13]. Iran has, by far, given all indications that it is ready for an intense diplomatic war with the U.S. as well as a full-fledged military onslaught against it [14]. The relationship between the two countries and their allies has caught the attention of international policymakers and agencies and, therefore, depicted adverse diplomatic disagreements in the coming times [15].

3. Is the Slaying justified in International Relations?

Killing a state actor is mostly a complex task where nations weigh-in and mainly cater to diplomatic conflicts, which may come up after such killings [16]. Therefore, killing state actors poses three dimensions, as briefly discussed below. First, the diplomatic murders have, for long, been considered conventionally illegal till lately when nations went on public disclosures justifying such murders. Such killings are increasingly becoming common amongst countries. In this decade alone, countries that were considered gentle in international relations are also resorting to state actors' killings [17]. Such a situation illustrates how nations go out of their diplomatic neutrality to defend their ideological grounds or any other interests that diplomats may threaten. For instance, in the 2020 killing of Iran's killing of general Soleimani, the United States, which has over the years condemned state officials' killing across the world, had its reservations, which were made public [18]. While the army general was not killed on U.S. soil, the U.S. observed that the felled general was a key planner in terrorist attacks on the mentioned nation's diplomatic facilities, military establishments and, therefore, led to the death of millions of Americans as well as other countries' nationals mostly indirectly [7]. As mentioned earlier, the U.S. is a forerunner in many aspects, as it specifically sets precedents in international affairs [18]. Therefore, with similar justifications as those tied to fighting terrorism, more countries are more likely to join in the trend and neutralize individuals deemed to be entwined in terrorist activities. Secondly, the twenty-first century has presented humankind with the most sophisticated technologies across fields, and the diplomatic sector has not been left behind. The advancement of technology has made it a less complex task to plan targeted killings, track down targets, and finally take down state actors who are targets. Espionage has evolved with spies using advanced technology than was imaginable in the last two decades, as noted by [19]. For instance, drones have revolutionized attacks in that some risky missions, which may endanger the lives of a country's servicemen and

women, can seamlessly be conducted by unmanned drones, otherwise known as crewless aircraft [20]. Public justification, as the third step, entails countries going public about their endeavors in killing state actors. The governments involved often entail properly articulated statements that call their subjects to support the governments' decision to kill other countries' state players [21]. As also depicted in [22], the statements often appeal to the masses, which are, in essence, the language of political interactions. Therefore, the authorities often focus on a justification that relates to the people. For instance, after the attack of the World Trade Center on the 11th of September 2001, the U.S sought to pursue the terrorists behind it [23]. Some countries were also vindicated, especially having played the role of hosting terrorists or failing to notify the U.S. authorities that criminals in the nation's wanted list were located in their countries. The U.S., at the same time killed some terrorists and state officials held liable to have acted as accomplices. The statements provided by the U.S. later portrayed the effects that the terrorist attacks had on the country and how families and the economy were affected. With such justifications, the American people overlooked the abuse of human rights through failure to arrest the suspects and take them through due process of law, and if found guilty, be incarcerated after being tried in the judicial system [24]. Instead, the authorities conformed to the public demands of a "more tough" punishment whereby death is considered ultimate.

4. Is Silencing State Agents Becoming the New International Order?

Drawing from the contexts above, killing state actors has gravitated from an undercover activity to openly exposed actions. Such killings are currently advanced and gradually becoming the new international order, which is the common behavior among nations [25]. Therefore, international orders see nations adopt the same operations or national behavior. One of the reasons cited for international diplomatic order is its effect of contributing to regularity, and as such, with nations thinking similarly, there is a reduced risk of conflicts [26]. In the past, there have been various international orders that contributed to various impacts and continue to have effects in modern times. For instance, nuclear energy use international order led to three factions: pro-nuclear, anti-nuclear, and neutral states [27]. The pro-nuclear faction advocated for the allowed use of nuclear energy. Those who agreed became allies and even went into accords and agreed to support each other in developing nuclear energy resources as inferred in [28]. The second one is the anti-nuclear faction, which consisted of countries deeply against the idea of using nuclear energy. Thirdly, there is the neutral faction, which consists of countries that took no side [29]. The international order, in turn, led to various impacts. For instance, tension arose between the factions with further suspicions being noted among the individual factions' subscribers [30]. Through the targeted killings state players' international order, nations discredit former treaties as mentioned earlier in the paper, guiding international relations and, therefore, exposing world affairs to probable chaos.

5. The Core Theories, Treaties and Conventions Related to Subject Matter

The treaties and declarations by governments promised non-intrusion into the diplomatic community [31]. At the initialization of such agreements or treaties, most nations failed to visualize the forthcoming threats. However, most of the treaties on international relations were entered in the first half of the twentieth century [32]. The timing could essentially explain why nations presently find it overly hard to adhere to the treaties. There, however, been numerous changes in technology, information, and ideologies [33]. Nations, therefore,

find themselves at crossroads lost between what is right and what is not. Countries particularly observe complexity in adhering to ideologies subscribed to a few decades ago when the safety of their nations or any other interests could be at risk [34]. To this effect, nations gradually turn "rogue," as they seem to protect their national interests, and one of the most fronted avenues is through targeted killings. While there are varying opinions about why nations ought to resort to state players' killings or why not to, the issue contravenes theories of international relations, as will be discussed below. The theories will be analyzed in context and, therefore, relate the killing of state actors to the contravention of the theories of international relations. The liberal theory of international relations gives the provisions of nations pursuing their interests by cooperating and avoiding coercion or the use of force [35]. Further, the theory states that each nation has the right to choose their preferences, and that proposition is broken down severally. First, under ideation, nations' behaviors are protected and are related to the culture and socioeconomic aspects of any country [36]. Nations are, therefore, free to pursue their national interests and develop either specific preferences or cooperate with other nations to build up the same. Through government agencies, governments use their employees, such as state officials and diplomats, to pursue the ideation of their nations' topology [37]. In essence, nations possess the right to be independent in their thinking and actions. To achieve that, nations' state players ought to be allowed to pursue their nations' interests. Killing them without considering the diplomatic implications or following legal processes is likely to create more divisions across the world, which is not healthy for the continuity of world peace [38]. Secondly, under the liberal international relations theory, there is the sub theory -commercial liberal theory. Under this broken down element of the liberal theory, nations have the right to pursue their Independent economic goals. As such, governments are free to; for instance, impose any trading practices, taxes, bans, or embargoes that they feel are useful to their countries in stipulated times [39]. It is crucial for nations to protect those rights by themselves and even respect other nations' national economic trajectories. However, some nations may not particularly agree with others' economic actions, more so when the latter front actions, which may hurt the former category's economies [40]. To pass messages against various economic decisions, countries may resort to killing state players who are at the helm of such economic decision-making bodies or agencies. Such killings are not justified as they contravene the principles of financial autonomy and nations' economic independence [41]. The third sub theory is referred to as the republican liberal theory. The theory underscores the role of quality leadership and the roles played by state representatives', institutions, and the leadership dynamics which exist therein [42]. As noted, nations have their republican affairs standpoints, which other nations should make an effort to adhere to and, in this case, not interfere with other nations' state officials [43]. The liberal theory of international relations also runs under two assumptions. First, the theory assumes that all nations are both anarchic and rational [44]. In this context, nations first have their aspects of hardline policies. Under anarchy, individual governments exist in a highly volatile global political environment and make policies aligned explicitly to their countries' specifications [45]. With no international governments, nations choose what works for them and what does not. Anarchy in international policy refers to countries' self-help feature, as each nation is an independent entity across numerous contexts [46]. Besides, the theory maintains that nations are rational. In this regard, there is international cooperation where governments depend on one another to formulate their policies and make decisions [47]. International cooperation, in this case, creates a cordial environment with countries forming bilateral and multilateral relationships, which, in essence, drive various international orders [48]. However, the anarchic and rational feature of countries is the single most significant

factor that harbors discord in the international community. Through the practice or anarchic formulation of policies, countries may be portrayed as secretly rebellious or putting a fight in disguise against other nations [49]. Another theory that is violated by nations that kill other nations' state players is institutionalism. Institutionalism in international relations refers to the sharing of information amongst nations [50]. Nations cooperate on numerous issues, and this is done specifically through the effective flow of information [51]. It is worth the mention that most international orders are first conceptualized through communications. Nations communicate with each other in preliminary to actualization phases on any actions, which have a global impact and, therefore, mostly seek common directions [52]. Sharing information, for instance, led to the formation of the United Nations, NATO, various global warming accords, and peacekeeping missions, among others [53]. Nations, despite their existing international agreed practices, are free to share information [53]. However, freedom is widely violated, since the people responsible for sharing information are state actors [52]. Besides, those nations, particularly against specific information, may, in turn, strike through killing key players [30]. Similarly, countries sharing information may turn against each other. Such changes are often accentuated by the desire to compete or emerge victorious, or even pursuing full benefits of national actions [54]. One of the most cited cases of institutionalism is the Marshall Plan, which was involved in the reconstruction of western European nations after the Second World War [55]. The U.S., in this case, aided the nations with at least thirteen billion dollars in American currency [56]. While the action may easily pass for a humanitarian cause, the nations also entered various accords in cooperation, some of which are still existential [55]. Killing state actors, therefore, misaligns the information sharing courses and poses the threat of destabilizing plans or their outright elimination [57].

6. Conclusion

In a nutshell, killing state actors raises suspicion amongst nations. As such, nations may consider others as secretive and planning to take over the ideological, military, economic, or political interests of specific countries. It is, therefore, imperative that nations respect each other's interests and, therefore, not wrongfully kill state players, since such actions have the propensity to degenerate and bring over varied effects to international relations. Besides, killing state officials is often used as a show of might, especially by the perpetrators. Affected nations may retaliate through attacks and similar killings of the perpetrators' nationals. Such situations are elemental in the degeneration of international relations, which, in turn, bring global instability. Nations that kill other countries' state officials in cold blood also set bad precedents, such as the case where powerful nations kill other nations' officials. Other nations may follow suit with the justification that if superpowers are not rebuked in any way, then they should not be questioned too. State official killings also lead the world to curtailed freedom of thought. Government policymakers or diplomatic representatives may be restricted in their thinking, as they could possibly fear for their lives. However, killing some state officials is easily justifiable, especially given that some state representatives' could be involved in terrorism or activities that could affect other nations' citizens. However, through the international accords that nations entered into and various international relations theories, killing other nations' diplomatic officials is widely taken in bad taste. For that reason, nations must suggest measures of solving international disputes. Through the United Nations and regional bodies, governments ought to introduce measures to protect their interests and those of other nations for global posterity, prosperity, and the maintenance of global peace.

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