



Rising threats against political leaders

General Assembly 4



Shattered Vows: Tracing the Devastation Caused by
Violating Human Rights



Forum: General Assembly 4

Issue: Rising threats against political leaders

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Introduction

The Fourth Committee of the UN General Assembly (GA4) convenes to address the escalating and alarming issue of rising threats against political leaders. Preserving political leaders is critical to maintaining national stability and security in a period of heightened geopolitical tensions, terrorism, and ideological extremism. The rising threats against political leaders have arisen as a critical worry in the complicated environment of contemporary world politics, needing immediate attention and extensive study. The problem at hand is a spike in numerous threats, ranging from physical attacks to cyber threats, all of which are aimed at leaders at all levels of government. It becomes critical not only to understand the immediate threats that political leaders face but also to develop effective strategies that cross borders and ideologies, fostering a collective commitment to safeguarding the pillars of democracy and governance around the world.

Definition of Key Terms

Political Polarization

The cases in which an individual's stance on a given issue, policy, or person is more likely to be strictly defined by their identification with a particular political party e.g. Democrat or Republican, or ideology e.g. liberal or conservative.

Extremism

The actions or ideologies of individuals or groups outside the perceived political center of a society; or otherwise claimed to violate common moral standards.

Hactivism

The act of misusing a computer system or network for a socially or politically motivated reason.

General Overview

Historical Contexts

Political leaders have frequently been the object of threats throughout history, which can range from plots to overt attempts on their lives. At times, assassinations, coups, and terrorist attacks have changed the geopolitical environment and the path of nations. The historical examples that highlight the seriousness of these threats include the killings of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914, Gandhi in 1948, and the several attempts on the lives of U.S. Presidents, culminating in the terrible death of John F. Kennedy in 1963. Such tragedies have an influence on diplomatic relations, policy trajectories, and global stability in addition



to the immediate loss of leadership. The advent of radicalism, ideological divisiveness, and technological progress in the modern age have increased the frequency and intensity of threats against political leaders throughout the globe. A clear reminder of the complex link between political persons' security and the wider ramifications for international relations and the global order can be found in the historical summary of these cases.

Motives

The motives for these threats range from ideological disagreements and policy conflicts to deep-seated social grudges. Political polarization and widening societal divides lead to a climate in which criticism is frequently voiced with anger rather than constructive discourse. Economic inequities, cultural conflicts, and the difficulties offered by global crises may manifest as threats against political leaders. Recent examples of these are stated below.

- The 2019 Chilean Protests - Economic Inequities
- COVID-19 pandemic - Global Crises
- The 2021 U.S. Capitol - Political Polarization

Contemporary trends

Social media's introduction has made it easier for extreme views to spread quickly, radicalizing people and groups that might be a threat to public figures. Furthermore, the likelihood of animosity and violence against leaders who have opposing views has increased due to the global growth of populist groups and the widening political rift. Threats against political leaders can sometimes include transnational networks and state-sponsored operations that take place beyond country boundaries. Because these threats are dynamic in nature, security procedures, intelligence-sharing channels, and international collaboration must be reevaluated to reduce risks and safeguard the integrity of democratic institutions around the globe.

Change in nature of threats

Political leaders have always faced problems such as public disagreement, protests, or resistance from competing political groupings. This can be seen throughout history:

- Anti-Vietnam War Protests (1960s-1970) targetting President Lyndon B. Johnson and later President Richard Nixon.
- Anti-Apartheid Protests (1980) targetting apartheid-era leaders, including President P.W. Botha.
- Arab Spring (2010-2012) targeting various political leaders, including President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.
- Umbrella Movement (2014) targeting Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying.

However, the current century has seen a significant shift, with the introduction of digital platforms magnifying the reach and effect of threats- "New data suggests threats against public officials are on the rise, and experts say they're concerned the trends will only continue to worsen" (The Hill). Three in four election officials say threats have increased in recent years. Social media, in particular, has developed as a powerful instrument for threat



transmission, allowing both anonymous people and organizations to attack political personalities at unprecedented speed and scale. We can see this recently in the U.S. capitol riot, the Brexit campaign, assassination threats in India, the Brazilian presidential election, etc...

Types of Threats Against Political Leaders

Terrorism

Terrorist groups may provoke public fear, interfere with government operations, and threaten the fundamentals of democratic countries with their tactics, which range from bombs and killings to kidnappings and cyberattacks. Terrorists who use violence to further their political, religious, or ideological goals often target political leaders because they are seen as symbols of power and influence. Because it may cause turmoil, terror, and regime instability, killing or seriously hurting a political person has strategic significance. Transnational terrorist networks are also made easier by the interconnectedness of the world, which makes it possible for threats to cross state boundaries and influence leaders outside of their own.

Cyber Security

Political personalities are becoming progressively more vulnerable to cyberattacks as political activities and administration become more digitalized. Via sophisticated cyber operations, malicious actors—from state-sponsored organizations to hacktivists and criminal groups—target political leaders intending to compromise confidential data, disseminate false information, and upset vital infrastructure. Cyber dangers pose a threat not just to political leaders' privacy but also to election processes' integrity and public confidence in democratic institutions. The digital world's interconnection facilitates the quick spread of misleading information and the swaying of public opinion, which changes political environments.

Ideological Extremism

Extremist ideologies have the power to incite acts of violence, terrorism, and political instability regardless of their basis in religious, political, or cultural convictions. Extremists frequently target political leaders because they see them as barriers to the realization of their radical objectives or as symbols of opposition to them. These threats take many forms, such as planned acts of violence, kidnappings, and assassinations, to cause fear and upset the democratic processes that these leaders stand for. Political leaders are directly threatened by ideological extremism, which also erodes societal cohesiveness and promotes intolerance.

Political Unrest

Political leaders are frequently the target of popular ire in these circumstances because they are seen as emblematic of the perceived shortcomings or injustices that are causing the discontent. Threats of bodily violence, humiliation in front of the public, or



targeted attacks are possible ways for the people to vent their discontent towards leaders. For example, the Middle East and North Africa saw a surge of political discontent during the Arab Spring that resulted in the removal of numerous presidents.

Major Parties Involved

The organizations listed below are key players in addressing rising threats against political leaders due to their specialized roles, jurisdictional responsibilities, and expertise.

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

The United Nations Security Council is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations and is charged with ensuring international peace and security, recommending the admission of new UN members to the General Assembly, and approving any changes to the UN Charter. The UNSC can use resolutions and sanctions to deal with these problems. When threats affect international stability and security, the council's involvement is essential because it enables coordinated international measures to safeguard public leaders and uphold peace.

The International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol)

The International Criminal Police Organization, commonly known as Interpol, is an international organization that facilitates worldwide police cooperation and crime control. It is the world's largest international police organization. Through its Task Force on Crimes Against Humanity and Genocide, Interpol is involved in the growing threats against political leaders. By exchanging intelligence and coordinating actions to shield political leaders from harm, this specialized team leads global efforts to counter transnational threats.

GSG 9 der Bundespolizei (GSG 9)

GSG 9 der Bundespolizei, is an elite special forces unit of the German Federal Police to combat terrorism and violent and organized crime. In addition to its headquarters location in Sankt Augustin-Hangelar near Bonn, it has a second location in Berlin. GSG 9 is a German Federal Police special forces unit that was founded in 1972 and is focused on counterterrorism and high-risk scenarios. It plays a critical role in guaranteeing the safety of influential persons in Germany in light of the growing threats directed at political leaders. The squad was established in direct response to the 1972 Munich Olympics massacre and is well-trained to handle a variety of security threats.

MI5 and MI6

The UK's foreign and domestic intelligence services are called MI6, or the Secret Intelligence Service, and MI5, or the Security Service, respectively. While MI6 is in charge of overseas intelligence concerns, MI5 concentrates on addressing threats within the country, especially those directed towards political leaders. By obtaining intelligence, analyzing it, and working together with foreign colleagues, both agencies are essential in spotting and eliminating such threats. Their approaches to dealing with modern threats have been



influenced by the lessons they have learned from events such as the 1999 nail bombs in London.

United States Secret Service (USSS)

The United States Secret Service is a federal law enforcement agency under the Department of Homeland Security charged with conducting criminal investigations and protecting U.S. political leaders, their families, and visiting heads of state or government. Founded in 1865, the USSS is well-known for guarding the president and vice president, but it also leads the charge in combating growing threats to American political figures. To combat changing security threats, the agency uses cutting-edge protection techniques, intelligence collection, and technical advances. Historical events that led to the USSS's formation as a specialized unit for protecting prominent politicians included the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

Research, Assistance, Intervention, Deterrence (RAID)

RAID is an elite tactical unit of the French National Police. Founded in 1985. It is the National Police counterpart of the National Gendarmerie's GIGN. With a primary focus on counterterrorism and handling high-risk scenarios, RAID regularly participates in resolving threats directed at French political figures. In times of increased risk, the team makes use of sophisticated tactics, intelligence, and crisis management to guarantee the safety of important persons.

Timeline of Events

July 5, 1865	The Creation of the United States Secret Service. Established in the aftermath of the American Civil War, the USSS is tasked with combating counterfeit currency. Over the years, its role has expanded to include the protection of the President and other high-profile officials.
June 28, 1914	Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand: The assassination in Sarajevo triggers World War I.
November 22, 1963	President John F. Kennedy is assassinated in Dallas, Texas.
September 5, 1972,	Munich Olympics Massacre in Germany. Palestinian terrorists attack the Israeli Olympic team, resulting in the deaths of 11 athletes.
May 13, 1981	Attempted Assassination of Pope John Paul II in Vatican City. Mehmet Ali Ağca attempts to assassinate Pope John Paul II in St. Peter's Square.
October 7, 1985	Achille Lauro Cruise Ship Hijacking. Palestinian militants hijack the Italian cruise ship Achille Lauro.
April 17-30, 1999	London Nail Bombings in the United Kingdom. A series of nail bombings targeting minority communities in London prompts heightened security concerns.



September 11, 2001	9/11 Attacks in the United States. Terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon lead to a global reevaluation of security measures. The focus on protecting political leaders intensifies.
May 6, 2002	Assassination of Pim Fortuyn. The incident occurred in a parking park near a radio station where Fortuyn had just done an interview. This occurred nine days before the general election in which he was running.
December 30, 2003	The assassination of Akhmad Kadyrov in Chechnya, a pro-Russian leader of Chechnya.
April 27, 2007	Cyber Attacks on Estonia. Estonia faces a series of cyber attacks, including distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks, following a dispute with Russia.
July 22, 2011	Norway Attacks. A lone gunman attacks government offices in Oslo and a youth camp on Utøya island, resulting in numerous casualties.
April 15, 2013	Boston Marathon Bombing in the United States. The bombing raises concerns about domestic terrorism.
2014	Russian Hacking of the U.S. State Department. Russian hackers breach the U.S. State Department's email system.
2016	Cyber Attacks during the U.S. Presidential Election. Alleged Russian interference in the U.S. presidential election through cyber attacks and disinformation campaigns.
2017	The global WannaCry ransomware attack infects hundreds of thousands of computers in over 150 countries.
2018	Social Media Manipulation in U.S. Midterm Elections. Reports emerge of foreign actors, including Russia, using social media platforms to spread disinformation during the U.S. midterm elections.
2019	European Union institutions face a significant cyber attack, affecting the European Commission and the European Council.
2020	The SolarWinds supply chain attack is discovered, compromising several U.S. government agencies and private companies.
January 3, 2020	The assassination of Qasem Soleimani in Iraq. The targeted killing of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani by a U.S. drone strike escalates tensions in the Middle East.
2020-2021	The COVID-19 pandemic has become a fertile ground for disinformation campaigns, including false information about the virus, vaccines, and public health measures
2021	Chinese state-sponsored hackers exploit vulnerabilities in Microsoft Exchange Server, affecting thousands of organizations globally.
January 6, 2021	The storming of the U.S. Capitol by protesters underscores the domestic threats political leaders may face. Security measures are reassessed in response to this unprecedented breach of a symbolic government institution.



Previous attempts to solve the issue

Many countries have tightened security standards surrounding political individuals, deploying cutting-edge technology and beefing up physical security to reduce possible hazards. Through increased monitoring and information-sharing procedures, intelligence services play a critical role in recognizing and countering threats. Through conferences and agreements, international collaboration has been fostered, promoting the exchange of knowledge and tactics to tackle transnational threats. In many nations, legal frameworks have been strengthened, criminalizing threats against political leaders and imposing harsher punishments to dissuade future perpetrators.

President John F. Kennedy's assassination (1963)

Following President John F. Kennedy's assassination in 1963, the United States took steps to strengthen the safety of its political leaders. The Presidential Protection Assistance Act was passed, increasing funds and resources for the United States Secret Service. This act aims to improve the agency's ability to identify and respond to possible threats, assuring the President's and other high-profile officials' safety. In reaction to a direct threat to the highest office, the legislation was a significant step towards bolstering security measures around political leaders.

The attempted murder of Pope John Paul II (1981)

The attempted murder of Pope John Paul II in 1981 caused the Vatican to institute strict security systems. Following the St. Peter's Square event, the Vatican prioritized the Pope's protection during public appearances and overseas tours. To avoid future attacks on the Catholic Church's spiritual head, security procedures were beefed up, involving both the Swiss Guards and local police enforcement. The Pope's assassination showed the vulnerability of even the most revered worldwide icons, prompting enhanced security measures for religious and political leaders alike.

The Norway incident (2011)

The 2011 Norway incident, in which a gunman targeted government buildings and a youth camp, spurred European nations to reconsider security procedures for political events and prominent personalities. The tragedy, which resulted in several deaths, prompted a heightened inspection of public locations, improved intelligence-sharing across European countries, and a renewed emphasis on averting terrorist assaults. Security procedures at political gatherings and government buildings have been upgraded to address potential weaknesses and reduce the danger of repeat occurrences.

On a global scale, the formation of Interpol's Task Force on Crimes Against Humanity and Genocide exemplifies cooperation efforts to combat transnational threats. As the world's biggest international police organization, Interpol recognized the necessity for a specialized task force to combat crimes against humanity and genocide. Coordination among member nations, intelligence sharing, and cooperative operations to identify, trace, and capture



persons involved in preparing or carrying out threats against political leaders are all part of this endeavor.

Possible solutions

International Collaborative Intelligence Network

Create an international collaborative intelligence network that transcends political boundaries. This network would comprise intelligence services from different nations collaborating to recognize and evaluate any threats against world leaders in politics. Regardless of the particular geopolitical environment, this network might improve the capacity to foresee and avert assaults by exchanging information and resources. The main goals should be to advance international information sharing, openness, and trust.

For instance, the European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC), run by Europol, is a practical illustration of cross-border cooperation. The European Counterterrorism Cooperation (ECTC) unites intelligence services from EU member states to exchange data and coordinate counterterrorism measures. An international version of this model would include intelligence services from many continents, including North America, Europe, Asia, and Africa. Building mutual trust and collaboration across countries with potentially divergent histories or political ideologies is crucial.

Advanced Surveillance and Threat Detection Technology

Invest in the creation and use of cutting-edge threat detection and surveillance systems. This involves the real-time analysis of enormous volumes of data through the application of artificial intelligence, machine learning, and predictive analytics. Before they manifest, these technologies can recognize trends, abnormalities, and possible risks. To resolve privacy problems, a framework that guarantees responsible usage and monitoring while upholding the rights and freedoms of each individual should be devised.

For instance, Israel's Iron Dome, a technical marvel that demonstrates the potential of cutting-edge defense systems, can intercept and destroy incoming missiles in real time. Using a similar idea, nations may spend money on AI-driven surveillance systems that monitor social media, travel trends, and internet activity in addition to other data sources. Instead of violating someone's privacy, the goal is to spot possible risks by looking for trends that could point to radicalization or coordinated activity.

Global Security Education and Conflict Resolution Programs

Put in place global security education initiatives that tackle the underlying causes of extremism and political violence. By promoting a deeper comprehension of many cultures, faiths, and political ideas, these initiatives can encourage tolerance and lessen the allure of using violence to express disapproval. Furthermore, funding projects for conflict resolution at the national and international levels can support amicable settlements and lessen the incentive for violent attacks against political figures.



An actual project that attempts to lessen violence by teaching people about civic duty, human rights, and conflict settlement is Colombia's Peace Education Programme. International organizations, governments, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) might work together to provide education that promotes tolerance, understanding, and peaceful resolution of conflicts in a global version of these programs. This might include initiatives that encourage communication between historically tense populations and online courses and cultural exchange programs.

Useful documents

Article 2 (4) - UN Charter

www.un.org/securitycouncil/sites/www.un.org.securitycouncil/files/en/sc/repertoire/56-58/56-58_12.pdf#page=3

Article 51 - UN Charter legal.un.org/repertory/art51.shtml

The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations

legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/9_1_1961.pdf

The Vienna Convention on Consular Relations

legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/9_2_1963.pdf

Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected Persons, including Diplomatic Agents

treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1977/02/19770220%2011-31%20PM/Ch_XVIII_7p.pdf

UN Security Council Resolution 1373

www.unodc.org/pdf/crime/terrorism/res_1373_english.pdf

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