



11 December 2024

From: Dr Treston Wheat - Chief Geopolitical Officer
Subject: Assassinations: Corporate Risks and Implications for 2025

Overview:

Assassinations are increasingly being used as a tactic used by both state and non-state actors due to heightened political tensions, technological advancements, and state-sponsored actions. This increase, driven by polarization and geopolitical rivalries, has significant implications for businesses operating in volatile regions or politically sensitive sectors in 2025.

Historically, assassinations have spiked during times of upheaval, with peaks in the 1910s, 1950s, and during the Cold War. Recent years have seen a rise in politically motivated attacks, often employing advanced technologies like drones and 3D-printed weapons. Since 2020, there have been ten assassination attempts targeting heads of state—double the historical average. This trend reflects the broadening and diversification of threats influenced by several key factors:

Digital Age and Polarization: Social media has amplified conspiracy theories, expanding the threat landscape. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, pharmaceutical CEOs faced threats linked to baseless vaccine conspiracies.

State-Sponsored Assassinations: Countries such as Russia, Iran, and India have been involved in plots targeting dissidents and opposition figures. Examples include Russia's use of chemical weapons on Sergei Skripal, Iran's retaliation plans against U.S. officials, and India's targeting of dissidents abroad.

Modern Technologies: Innovations like drones and 3D-printed weapons are increasingly used, lowering barriers to accessing lethal means.

Assassination incidents have become global, affecting Europe, Asia, the Americas, the Middle East, and Africa. Examples include the killing of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse, an assassination attempt on Ecuadorian politician Fernando Villavicencio, and the killing of former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe with a homemade gun.

Implications for Corporations:

The rise in politically motivated assassinations poses a growing risk to global security and businesses. As tensions escalate through great power competition, political polarization, and conflicts, corporations must be vigilant. The risk extends beyond politicians; business leaders are also targets, particularly those with perceived political affiliations or involvement in sensitive industries.

Recent examples include a foiled plot against the CEO of Rheinmetall, a German arms manufacturer, highlighting the ongoing risks to executives linked to geopolitical events. Companies with exposure to volatile regions or politically sensitive sectors, and those whose leaders are outspoken on political issues, face heightened threats.



Dr Treston Wheat: Chief
Geopolitical Officer



Ross Hill: Founder & CEO

