

# Norms and security

[Government](#), [Military](#)



Norms and Security: The Case of International Assassination. The scholarly article by Thomas Ward as it covers in detail the diverse aspects and relations that exist between different states in modern day political environment is a masterpiece of political writing. Thomas Ward in this article discusses in detail, the often over-looked and under estimated policy issue of security, especially security of life of national and most importantly, international political figures.

Thomas Ward it goes without saying in a very straight forward manner addresses this controversial policy issue and/or option without mincing any words or by giving a partisan stance to the problem at hand. His article is extremely credible and his style of writing that of a person intimately associated with the intricacies of international political scenario.

In this article he poses three very pertinent questions. One, where this norm originates? Two, to what extent does it influence state actions? Three, why does this norm exceed other “ ethical injunctions”?

This article is full of anecdotal and verifiable historical facts dating from the Roman times to the present as Thomas Ward writes:

In Britain a former M15 agent created a stir by claiming that Her Majesty’s Secret Service plotted to kill Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi in 1996...And  
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in the United States, the dual conundrums of an intransigent Saddam Hussein and terrorists such as Osama bin Laden have raised calls in Congress and among the media for assassination to be considered as a policy option (105).

He points out that historically political assassination has not been resorted to

by “ great powers” and whole scale war has been the preferred option even though the collateral damage in case of a full scale war is much more and leads to the loss of many innocent lives and destruction of property.

He cites that, “...ethical concerns usually place assassinations off-limits as a policy option especially when the target is an international leader” (105), but due to monumental changes in the way the international politics is conducted today, reality has taken precedence over idealism and by extension ethics and morality have been side lined in international affairs.

In conclusion his pragmatic approach to political assassinations is that in this modern world of real politic where terrorism and guerilla warfare have replaced the traditional modes of violence this option or ploy of political assassinations, albeit “ unethical” (105) to achieve certain political ends is perfectly justified.

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Work Cited

Ward, Thomas. “ Norms and Security: The Case of International Assassination.” *International Security*, vol. 25, no. 1, Summer 2000, pp. 105-133. Print