

THE DICHOTOMY BETWEEN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL LAW IN THE FACE OF THE GLOBAL COVID-19 PANDEMIC*

Abstract

In addressing global issues, international relations and international law have always worked together since time immemorial. The nexus between both fields has however not flowed seamlessly or naturally. The nexus seems to be changing and needs a re-conceptualization within the global system especially with the nature of the threat posed by new pandemics such as the Corona Virus otherwise called the COVID - 19. With the emergence of COVID - 19 pandemic, strains are gradually increasing between international relations and international law such that despite consistent scholarly attention on the fields, their points of connection, both seems not to have engaged in a coherent international intercourse and coordination especially as regards to the efforts aimed at effective identification, control and prevention of the disease. This is surprising, given the marginal place of international relations and international law in global epidemiology. This paper is based on qualitative research. The theory adopted was collective security theory in international relations (liberalism). Collective security is a system by which states have attempted to prevent or stop wars through international treaties and conventions. International relations, international law and COVID - 19 were discussed on separate headings given details to each. It provides an outline of the convergence and dichotomy between both fields in the control of the COVID - 19 pandemic and explicated the ways we can build on the strengths of both fields and overcome inherent contextual dissimilarities with a view to having a global peaceful medical environment. The concluding part of the paper dealt with how to jointly curtail the pandemic globally.

Keywords: “International Relations”, “International Law”, “Pandemics”, “COVID-19”, “Death”, “World War”.

1 Introduction

* Omodele, Adeyemi O. LLB (Hons Ado-Ekiti), BL, LLM (Ife), PhD Student (Law & Diplomacy), Department of Political Science & Public Administration, Babcock University, Nigeria., E-mail: yemiomodelaws@yahoo.com

The dialogue between international relations and international law has always been a basis of scholarly discourse. While both concepts are naturally related, with international law often treated as a subset of international relations, they at most times do not flow seamlessly or naturally. In practical terms, their trajectories have sometimes been convergent and sometimes parallel especially as it relates to global issues, such as pandemics. Epidemiological concerns following the emergence and reemergence of contagious diseases i.e. the Spanish flu, SARS flu, and the Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic in recent times for instance, has placed the global health architecture under immense strain. It has demoralized political and economic systems across the globe and is threatening the very essence of international relations and international law.

The COVID-19 pandemic in particular poses serious problems of enormous scale and complexities for the global health system and has revealed serious flaws in the capability of international relations and international law to fully respond to the crisis.¹ The global component of the strategy for controlling the pandemic continues to face some basic problems in its application to facilitate international relations in controlling the pandemic. In addition, as the pandemic continues to spread, with regimes failing to effectively cooperate and coordinate efforts to contain the outbreak of the pandemic, the links between international relations and international law has become even clearer; however, the multilateral system of international relations, which is hinged on the United Nations, has remained weak.

The weakness of the international multilateral relations structure may be due to structuring the world into separate sovereign countries who do not accept a higher collective authority. Only States can control their actions under such a structure, and international law is the historical result of international relations in a devolved setting.² Hence, both fields seem not to have engaged in a coherent intercourse in identifying, controlling and preventing the pandemic. Actions towards the pandemic are mostly taken on a unilateral basis and are gradually exacerbating tensions among states of the world.

With the marginal interactivity between international relations and international law, the best way for addressing the pandemic is still a working intercourse between both fields. Hence addressing the pandemic might need a re-conceptualization of the intercourse between both fields within the global system especially as it relates to the nature of the threat posed by the pandemic. Consequently, in understanding the relationship between international relations and international law especially as it relates to quelling the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, this paper explicates the areas of convergence and dichotomy between both fields. Specific emphasis is given to present and future directions.

1.1 Methodology of the Paper

The paper is based on qualitative research. It employs a systematic review of extant literature on international relations, international law and the COVID-19 pandemic. Information was sourced

¹ Z. He, L. Sun. 'A Chinese Theory of International Law', *Springer Science and Business Media LLC*, (2020), pp. 3-4.

² *Ibid*

from relevant literature, reports, journals, newspaper, textbooks, unpublished works and monographs. Other related sources on the internet in various contexts were also used to review existing connections and areas of divergence between international relations and international law as it relates to the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.2 Collective Security Theory

Collective security is a system by which states have attempted to prevent or stop wars. Under a collective security arrangement, an aggressor against any one state is considered an aggressor against all other states, which act together to repel the aggressor.³

Collective security arrangements have always been conceived as being global in scope; this is in fact a defining characteristic, distinguishing them from regional alliances such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Both the League of Nations and the United Nations were founded on the principle of collective security. The principle of collective security provides rationality for a range of international organizations - such as the UN, NATO, EU, and OSCE - which all attempt to uphold international peace and stability through treaties and conventions.⁴

Neither the League nor the United Nations were able to operate the principle successfully to prevent aggression because of the conflicts of interest among states, especially among the major powers.⁵ In a system of collective security, the enemy is a threat to regional or international peace and security. It was stated further that the system of collective security is international in its reach, a threat can originate in any region, anywhere on the globe. Any nation within the regional or international system that commits aggression, imperils the peace, or grossly exceeds the bounds of civilized behaviour violates the norms of that collective security system and is subject to enforcement action. It has been argued that no nation is excluded from the responsibility of maintaining peace and security regardless of where, within its collective security system, the threat originates. Collective security can be triggered in another way. A threatened nation, exercising its inherent right of collective self-defense, can call on others to help.⁶

1.3 International Relations

International relations refer to a vague term widely used to denote interactions among states, between states, state-based actors and across state boundaries. It has a defined membership (e.g., states), law norms delimiting rights (e.g., sovereignty) and obligations (as defined in system wide multilateral treaties, like the UN Charter), and authoritative roles (the Secretary-General of the United Nations). Although international relations have taken on a new connotation in the contemporary era because of our ever more interconnected world, it is certainly not a new concept. This is because since time immemorial, states have often cooperated with one another to address a broad range of issues and to build sustainable relationships on various areas of interest,

³ Yale Law School; 'The Avalon project, Documents, History and Diplomacy', in *The Covenant of the League of Nations*, (1919). <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/parti.asp> accessed on 16/04/2020.

⁴ K Immanuel; *Perpetual Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 93 - 130.

⁵ *Ibid*

⁶ D S Yost; *NATO Transformed: The Alliance's New Roles in International Security*, (London: Leicester University Press, 1977), p.149.

and the basis of cooperation was mostly the instituting of treaties among nations. International relations allow nations to cooperate with one another, pool resources and share information as a way to face global issues that go beyond any particular country or region.⁷

In the present era, the understanding of international relations is becoming increasingly complex and is now seen as a means through which nations can interact and collaborate in matters such as military intervention, commerce and trade, cultural exchanges, peace treaties on global issues such as pandemics, terrorism and climate change through foreign structures and institutions such as the United Nations and its subsidiary bodies.⁸ International relations is now accepted as a mechanism that can be used by states to establish regular and diverse associations and cooperation with one another and it is the major mode of international communication.⁹ With international relations, the possibility for states to negotiate and establish communication with one another irrespective of disparate political arrangements is guaranteed.¹⁰

International relations in the contemporary era have been encapsulated under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (VCDR) where the basis of cooperation between states over issues of global concern is often enunciated. In ensuring the workability of international relations among states, elements of the VCDR encapsulates ways conciliatory missions can secure nationalistic interests and advance amicable relations among States.¹¹

Since the world today is characterized by mutable arrangements of power and balance, with diplomacy and war, aid and trade, treaties and alliances rife among states, the driving force for all these areas, is international relations. International actors are constantly entering into new power balances, behaving within existing structures of expectations.¹² Most of these structures of expectations (i.e the UN Charter) are formalized, involving written agreements, contracts or treaties defining the rights and obligations of cosigners.¹³ The structures of expectations also formalize legal norms and carry the right to punish defiance of the norms among members.

However, in recent times, there has been flagrant disobedience of expectations by member states across the world, and has raised concerns over the plausibility of international relations in ensuring a peaceful world. Despite this concerns however, many commentators and

⁷ P Stoeva; International Relations and the Global Politics of Health: A State of the Art?' *Global Health Governance -The Scholarly Journal for the New Health Security Paradigm*, 10 (3), (2016), pp. 97-109.

⁸ *Ibid*

⁹ G Berridge and A James, *A Dictionary of Diplomacy*, 2nd edn, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 93.

¹⁰ W Bloom, *Personal Identity, National Identity and International Relations*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 154.

¹¹ United Nations, Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. United Nations, Treaty Series, 500, (1961), p. 95.

¹² F Grunfield 'International Law and International Relations: Norm and Reality or Vice Versa'. *Amsterdam Law Forum, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*, (2011), pp. 3-6.

¹³ *Ibid*

pundits still believe that we cannot simply discountenance international relations as a tool for global cooperation on a broad range of areas. This is because it still remains the most reliable way for addressing a broad range of global issues,¹⁴ and can be very effective in addressing global issues when it works in concert with international law.¹⁵ This is because antagonism, conflicts and violence will continue to exist among states, but are less in intensity as long as there is an established order of rules governing behaviour on the international scene.¹⁶

1.4 International Law

Conceptually, international law can be defined as a body of principles, customs and rules regulating the behaviour of states in the international system.¹⁷ Although international law shares an analogous relation with other aspects of law, as a field of law, it is dissimilar with other aspects of law. While aspects of law such as public law for instance comprises of a set of binding rules among States, with cases where such binding rules govern individuals, in international law however, only States can enter into international legal agreements and legal arrangements are collectively binding on States. This binding State-to-State quality is what distinguishes international law from other forms of law and by practice; Sovereign States are often obliged to adhere to its provisions in their mutual relations.¹⁸

The primary sources for international law emanate from the actual behaviour of States as are encompassed by treaties, common principles of law recognized by civilized nations and customary international law.¹⁹ Treaties also called conventions are mostly mutual agreements on a wide array of areas State parties have acceded to that have been acceded to by State parties and are often binding on cosigners. Rules governing treaties are codified in the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, popularly referred to as the “treaty on treaties”.²⁰ Common principles of law are found in the body of customs which overtime has developed among States. Customary international law on the other hand is based on State practice, combined with an understanding that such practice has developed into an obligatory norm (*opinio juris*).²¹ When a stable practice develops amongst a sufficiently broad number of States, and when a large number of them view the practice as legally binding, it becomes recognized as a binding principle of international

¹⁴ P Meerts, ‘Diplomatic Negotiation: Essence and Evolution’, *Clingendael*, (2015), p. 311

¹⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁷ I Brownlie, *Principles of Public International Law*, 4th ed. (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 70.

¹⁸ J Brunnee, S J Toope, *Legitimacy and Legality in International Law*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 411.

¹⁹ I Brownlie, *op. cit.*

²⁰ A Aust, *Handbook of International Law*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 1-15.

²¹ *Ibid*

law”.²² The most essential principles of customary international law are *ius cogens*²³ and *erga omnes*.²⁴

Within the international system, international law provides the framework for political dialogue among States. While this framework might not guarantee consensus on a global issue, it however fosters the continuing dialogue and participation needed to provide conceptual clarity in developing legal obligations and for States to gain acceptance of such obligations. Regarding contemporary global issues such as pandemics, international law has played an essential role in the infectious pandemics diplomacy of the 19th - 20th century. The roles of international relations in this light are clearly explicated in the constitution, charters and legal frameworks of most transnational organizations such as the WHO (World Health Organization) which provides global legal mechanisms aimed at forging consensus and alliances on a range of issues overtly or covertly related to trans boundary spread of contagious diseases.²⁵ Today, international law still remains invaluable as it constitutes a core component of global contagious diseases management architecture.

1.5 Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Corona Virus Disease 2019 or COVID-19 (WHO parlance), an infectious respiratory disease is the most recent threat to global health. First detected in December 2019 in Wuhan, China, the infection is shown to have been caused by a novel Corona Virus which is structurally related to SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) virus, which affected many parts of the world only a few years ago.²⁶ As at first week of June 2020, there have been over 300,000 deaths globally, and the figures keep increasing every day. With proliferation of the pandemic, there is still a high degree of scientific uncertainty on crucial aspects of the disease, especially as regards to the routes of transmission, clinical management and infection control protocols.²⁷ The spread of COVID-19 today has caused global tensions and a huge impact on international relations. A number of important diplomatic events have been canceled and compared with many refined diplomatic activities; the pandemic has brought a great deal of disruption to globalization and threatens the very sustainability of the world economy. Today, despite information on the

²² *Ibid*

²³ *Ius cogens* are a Latin phrase that literally means “compelling law.” It refers to norms from which no derogation is permitted by way of particular agreements. See: A. Orakhelashvili, *Peremptory Norms in International Law*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.577.

²⁴ *Erga omnes* is a Latin phrase which means “towards all”. In legal terminology, *erga omnes* rights or obligations are owed toward all. See: A. Memeti, B. Nuhija, ‘The Concept of Ergo Omnes Obligations in International Law’, *New Balkan Politics*, 14 2013,p122.

²⁵ O Aginam, ‘International Law and Communicable Diseases’, *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 80 (12), (2002), pp. 946-947.

²⁶ Pneumonia of Unknown Cause — China: Disease Outbreak News. Geneva: World Health Organization, January 5, 2020 (<https://www.who.int/csr/don/05-january-2020-pneumonia-of-unkown-cause-china/en/>).

²⁷ M Patrick, The Multilateral System Still Cannot Get its Act Together on COVID-19, (March, 26, 2020).

pandemic, many nations especially the big shots of the United Nations still lack a basic consensus on ways to effectively combat the disease.

At an earlier stage, COVID-19 and its implications for health global health care was greatly downplayed, and there was an inflow of conspiracy theories about the US Central Intelligence Agency creating the virus to block China's rise. Similarly, it was also seen as a Chinese produced infection, and many countries such as the USA (United States of America), saw the Chinese origins of the infection as a reaffirmation of the belief that China poses a danger to the world and cannot be trusted to behave responsibly. Irrespective of the conspiracy theories, the infection had its origins in China and has now turned to a pandemic affecting almost the entire world and has stirred the world to realize the need for global cooperation in combating it. If the virus had not been downplayed and there was better preparedness from other countries, the rate of international spread and related mortality of the infection might have contained.

2 Dialogue between International Relations and International Law: Points of Convergence

While international relations and international law have long been considered separate academic enterprises and fields of endeavour with their own theoretical orientations, methodologies,²⁸ international law has always functioned as an integral part of international relations. Since international relations has always been about conduct among States, law serves the purpose of ensuing organization and adherence to diplomatic conduct and behaviour among States and their envoys when it comes to building relations.²⁹ Joyner asserts that the existence of international law as a compendium of rules and prescriptions and aspirations governing the conduct of States seem well established within the scope of international relations. Hence it is proper to assert that there has long been a synergy between the fields³⁰ but whatever synergy that existed between them largely disappeared in the aftermath of World War II.³¹

The aftermath of World War II led to disillusionment with the normative agenda of international relations and international law, following the failure of both spheres (international relations and international law), to prevent World War II or stop its brutal realities.³² In recent times, aspects of this disillusionment are reflected in events in the political realm.³³

²⁸ C Ku, *International Law, International Relations, and Global Governance*, (United Kingdom: Routledge, 2012), pp.17-36.

²⁹ *Ibid*

³⁰ C C Joyner; 'International Law is, as International Theory Does?', *Journal of International Law*, 248, (book review), 100 AM.,2006, p. 360.

³¹ J L Dunoff & M. A. Pollack, 'What Can International Relations Learn from International Law?' *Temple University Beasley School of Law, Legal Studies*, 14 (2012), pp. 3-6.

³² *Ibid*

³³ *Ibid*

Higgins³⁴ opines that the relationship between international relations and international law is one that is interlocked. Systematically, international relations, international law ensures that organized states adhere to a system of rules enacted by these states themselves to govern conduct or behaviour. These rules are often regarded by the states as being obligatory, and for which violation carries a price.³⁵ Within the purview of international relations both bilateral and multilateral, international relations ensures the maximization of order within a society and to ensure that chaos in the web of relations among states is avoided.³⁶ International relations and international law among states are very essential and the major purpose they serve is to strengthen existing relationships amongst states and at the same time adhere to set rules and regulations governing international conduct. States are required to have unbarred multilateral relationships with other states, and to follow established laws of conduct especially as regards to information sharing and spreading of ideas as it relates to wide array of areas e.g. pandemics. This point of convergence in the area of pandemics is particularly contained in the articulation of a number of United Nations initiatives, i.e. the One Health Strategic Framework, the One World and the Oslo Ministerial Declaration (2007) where it is enunciated that as part of the relations among states, there is the need for states to closely cooperate with other states and with subsidiary departments of the United Nations such as the WHO on global health threats, and enable collective actions to address the threat.³⁷ What still remains to be seen is whether these convergence can help in leading a heightened response towards combating the most recent global health threat, COVID-19 pandemic.

3 International Relations and International Law in the Face of COVID 19: The Dichotomy

International relations among states on the control of pandemics are not new. States have historically, cooperated on the control of diseases using international law. One important international law in this direction is the 1903 International Sanitary Convention, which was signed in Paris. While there were previous laws on the control of pandemics, the International Sanitary Convention unlike the previous laws provides detailed guidelines on dealing with the global spread of contagious. It was the International Sanitary Convention that set the process for the creation of the WHO, the first international organization devoted to health.³⁸

³⁴ R Higgins, *Problems and Process: International Law and How We Use it*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 27.

³⁵ *Ibid*

³⁶ *Ibid*

³⁷ G L Burci, The Outbreak of COVID-19 Coronavirus: are the International Health Regulations Fit for Purpose? (February, 26, 2020). Retrieved 03/30/2020 from: <https://www.ejiltalk.org/the-outbreak-of-covid-19-coronavirus-are-the-international-health-regulations-fit-for-purpose/>

³⁸ D Fidler, 'From International Sanitary Conventions to Global Health Security: The New International Health Regulations'. *Chinese Journal of International Law*, 4(10), (2005), pp. 325-326.

Although the International Sanitary Convention and laws that preceded it were useful in combating earlier pandemics such as the Spanish flu,³⁹ current global circumstances seem to be putting a wedge on the effectiveness of such laws in controlling the spread of contagions such as the recent COVID-19. With the emergence of COVID-19, the global health architecture is now under enormous strain, and the outbreak of the pandemic has revealed the flaws of international relations and international law to effectively respond to the crisis. Regimes have failed to effectively cooperate to coordinate efforts to contain the outbreak and most efforts have been on a unilateral basis, which has seemed mostly ineffective.

The failure of States to effectively cooperate to combat the epidemic is against the International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005)⁴⁰ of the World Health Organization (WHO) where it is clearly enunciated that states are obliged by general international law to cooperate on epidemics and address issues that transcend national borders. In the words of the World Health Organization, health is a shared responsibility, which involves equitable access to essential care and collective defense against transnational threats.⁴¹ Despite the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, many States who are parties to the IHR have not fully responded to the outbreak and significant discrepancies exist between their reports and realities.⁴² Many of them have also failed to act in accordance with the IHR guidelines.⁴³ This inability to cooperate has marred the very essence of international relations among States. The extent of international cooperation towards combating the pandemic has remained weak.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, limitations of closed political systems in dealing with global health issues have been demonstrated. Political systems characterized by scuttled information flows and lack of scrutiny with little place for deliberation has resulted in an outbreak morphing into an epidemic and subsequently a pandemic. What can be inferred from this is that, despite areas of conflict, international relations and international law can converge to deepen our understanding of global health and expose contrasting contextual rationalities underpinning them. States especially developing ones need assistance from other states, especially the developed ones and vice versa. Herein lies the place of international relations and international law. Dineke and Tobin⁴⁴ clearly enunciate the need for international relations among nations when it comes to addressing global issues and threats. According to them,

³⁹ A S Fauci., H C Lane, and R R Redfield, M.D, 'Covid-19 — Navigating the Uncharted', (March, 26, 2020). Available at: <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMe2002387>

⁴⁰ The International Health Regulation (IHR) (2005) is a legal framework for international cooperation on public health emergency response. The framework is binding agreement between 196 countries of the world. Art. 6 of the IHR establishes the reporting duty, *i.e.* the obligation of states to assess events occurring within their territories and timely notify the WHO of all events which may constitute a public health emergency of international concern.

⁴¹ K Agrawal, 'Pandemic Response and International Health Regulations', *Medical Journal Armed Forces India*, (2007), pp. 366-367.

⁴² *Ibid*

⁴³ *Ibid*

⁴⁴ D Z Paget; J Tobin. 'The Right to Health in International Law'. *European Journal of Public Health*, 22(6), 2012), pp. 930–931.

although individual states are responsible for preserving public health in their territories, their efforts may be rendered meaningless without international co-operation.⁴⁵ The mechanism for facilitating such international cooperation remains international law. Irrespective of tensions, in cases where difficult predicaments emerge over global issues, combating contagious diseases such as COVID-19 still rests effectively on the convergence between international relations and international law. Consequently, in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is the need to rethink and probably re-conceptualize these relations.

4 Rethinking The Connection Between International Relations and International Law in The Face of COVID-19

Efforts against COVID-19 cannot be fully sustained without international cooperation and support. Many states have recognized the responsibility of international cooperation and support as regards to health issues; the extent of international cooperation has remained weak. Regimes across the globe have failed to cooperate effectively and coordinate efforts to contain the outbreak and rather than carrying out multilateral decisions towards combating the pandemic, most decisions have been on a unilateral basis, and unilateral decisions have so far proven to be ineffective. With this state of affairs, there will be the need to modify and reexamine set priorities towards the pandemic as well as the effectiveness of international relations and international law in combating it.

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, international cooperation and solidarity is crucial. There is the need to rethink the points of convergence and divergence between international relations and international law. Since the overall purpose of international relations and international cooperation and interaction among states on a broad range of issues, states must not act unilaterally; they must act multilaterally in combating the pandemic. There is the need for unbridled exchange of relevant information between States on the extent of spread of the pandemic in their jurisdiction and the exchange of ideas on possible treatment. It is equally important for States across the globe to engage in coordinated global response, by building relations and collaborating with other states through adherence to the principles of international relations and international law. This direction of thought is clearly explicated under WHO laws where it is stated that coordinated efforts for addressing global health issues should be maintained to enhance interaction among states.⁴⁶

The need for cooperation is further engrained in the laws of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), a subsidiary body of the United Nations where its General Comment 14 states that given that some diseases are easily transmissible beyond the frontiers of a state, the international community has a collective responsibility to address this problem

⁴⁵ *Ibid*

⁴⁶ O Bozhenko, 'More on Public International Law and Infectious Diseases: Foundations of the Obligation to Report Epidemic Outbreaks', (August, 15, 2019). Retrieved from: <https://www.ejiltalk.org/more-on-public-international-law-and-infectious-diseases-foundations-of-the-obligation-to-report-epidemic-outbreaks/>

through collaborations and close interaction⁴⁷. The economically developed States parties have a special responsibility and interest to assist the poorer developing States in this regard.⁴⁸

In the fight against COVID-19 pandemic, international relations and international law plays a crucial role. The occurrence of the pandemic is a global problem that cannot be dealt unilaterally by States. To effectively combat the pandemic, States must cooperate through international relations and international law. With the global threat posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, a convergence of international relations and international law might not be difficult, what might be difficult is the process of making people to understand or accept the limited potential of international law to improve international relations.⁴⁹ This stems from the criticism that international law is sometimes ineffective in addressing global issues as a result of the failure of States to comply with or enforce its rules.⁵⁰ This seeming ineffectiveness however largely stems from the structure of the international system where the world has been structured into independent States that recognize no common higher authority with States preferring to regulate and conduct their affairs internally. Nevertheless, international relations and international law using this viewpoint can be seen as both indispensable and sometimes ineffective. The only way we can thus address global problems like the COVID-19 pandemic is the use of thoughtfulness. For the COVID-19 pandemic, while sharing disparate contextual viewpoints on global issues, an interaction between both is essential as it allows for the provision of contrivances for cross-border interactions among states (international relations) and the shaping of values and goals for pursuing these interactions in a normative system (international law).⁵¹ Thus irrespective of their points of divergence, international coordination using international relations and international law is the best way to mitigate the immediate many-sided global impact of the pandemic.

5 Conclusion

In a globalized world, contagions can neither be contained unilaterally, nor can its control be determined solely by domestic factors in isolation from external ones. Having caused substantial number of deaths within a short time, global politics reveals the need for quick decisions in combating the COVID-19 pandemic. While the fields of international relations and international law might still exist in a state of continuing adaptation and there is sometimes confusion in mapping their changing landscapes. Both fields can help us analyse global issues across various levels and can particularly help in a critical understanding of the global health architecture and can help draw attention to the mechanisms through which authority can reinforce set laws to attain such understanding and within the context of resolving or addressing global issues (i.e pandemics) among states, they have been proclaimed as veritable in ensuring global interaction whilst at the same time addressing existing inefficiencies. Thus to truly combat the COVID-19

⁴⁷ *Ibid*

⁴⁸ *Ibid*

⁴⁹ C Whytock, 'From International Law and International Relations to Law and World Politics', *School of Law and Department of Political Science*, University of California, (2016), pp.2-6.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*

⁵¹ C Whytock, *ibid*.

pandemic, States across the globe ought not to act unilaterally, rather, they should act multilaterally by engaging with other States to respond to the pandemic by action for action and statement for statement. The pandemic is quintessentially a global affair as it affects all irrespective of clime. Countries need to work together on treatment protocols, therapeutics and hopefully a reliable vaccine.