

Essay Question: *'Preserving law and order in today's complex and turbulent world is one of the few ways to keep international relations from sliding into chaos. The law is still the law, and we must follow it whether we like it or not.'* (Vladimir Putin) Discuss.

Table Etiquette

The Cambridge dictionary defines international as '*involving more than one country*'¹ and relations as how '*two groups behave towards each other*'². These seemingly clarifying words fail to instill a sense of humanitarianism within the interactive political actions of nations. Pen on paper in a United Nations General Assembly can mean war or peace, life or death for countless citizens of countless countries. International law is imperative; despite some hidden hypocrisy that surrounds its advocator Vladimir Putin, its necessity is evident as accentuated in the early 2020 Iran-USA crisis.

In reality, the United Nations seldom comprises of united nations, acting like a dysfunctional family attending a Christmas gathering - it becomes difficult when everyone is fighting over presents, there is the aunt who believes it is her right to discipline the children and there is the uncle who does not believe in the Christmas story. All of these unique members of the family are influenced by their personal history and past events to shape their current beliefs and actions. However, once a year the family comes together for Christmas lunch and to prevent disaster the dinner table is governed by a set of rules known as 'table etiquette'. International relations are similar to this fictional family - without a set of international laws, relations would indeed be '*sliding into chaos*'³.

Putin's quote in several simple words captures the legal essence of efficiency to safeguarding international relations. However, the words also seek to dissimulate his and his country's actions, shining a light on the quote's hypocrisy. Putin has also stated that some nations are violating '*international law and state sovereignty*'⁴. It seems he could be describing his own nation, for despite being restrained by the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, there have been many reports of Russia committing human rights abuses under Putin's presidency. These include the torture of Russian prisoners, the deaths of investigative journalists and the persecution of political prisoners - these prisoners number a reported 117 as of May 2017.⁵

Despite his violations of international law, Putin believes that should this law become compromised, the world may find itself in a dangerously militaristic situation.⁶ This viewpoint is

¹ Cambridge Dictionary, 2020, 'International'

² Cambridge Dictionary, 2020, 'Relation'

³ Vladimir Putin, 2013, 'A Plea For Caution From Russia'

⁴ William Parlett, 2012, 'Vladimir Putin and the Law'

⁵ Wikipedia, 2020, 'Human Rights in Russia'

⁶ William Parlett, 2012, 'Vladimir Putin and the Law'

epitomised in the early 2020 Iran-USA crisis when Iran's general Qasem Soleimani was killed by the US in a potential violation of international law. Putin's foreign minister declared it '*fraught with grave consequences for ... peace*'.⁷ According to law, the justification for the killing could be in self-defense⁸ '*against a(n)...imminent threat*', but the US stated that Soleimani was killed as he was '*developing plans to attack American(s)*', suggesting its illegality due to a lack of evidence of an imminent threat of attack.⁹ As per Putin's views, this defiance of international law has threatened international relations by heightening Middle Eastern tensions; following Soleimani's death, a Ukrainian passenger plane was shot down accidentally by Iranian forces, killing all 176 passengers and serving as a striking example of how conflicts can rapidly¹⁰ slide '*into chaos*'¹¹ when international law is compromised.

To avoid a repeat of this escalation, it is vital to remember that blatant disregard for international law can have serious consequences for human life. Nations must abide by so-called 'table etiquette' in this colourful family of countries that reside within '*today's complex and turbulent world*'¹².

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⁸ David Mednicoff, 2020, 'The US-Iran conflict and the Consequence of International Law-breaking'

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¹⁰ Uri Friedman, 2020, 'The Iran Plane Crash Is The Big Story'

¹¹ Vladimir Putin, 2013, 'A Plea For Caution From Russia'

¹² Vladimir Putin, 2013, 'A Plea For Caution From Russia'