The Role of International Relations and International Law Scholars in Advancing Global Peace and Security

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ABSTRACT

Global peace and security are the most significant challenges of our time. These goals represent the core aspirations of the international community. Achieving them requires deep cooperation between different academic fields, particularly International Relations (IR) and International Law (IL). Scholars in these disciplines play a vital role in promoting global stability. This study adopts an interdisciplinary approach. It uses analytical, explanatory, and comparative methods to study the distinct yet overlapping roles of IR and IL researchers in maintaining peace. First, we examine the theoretical frameworks of both fields. We then analyze how these experts contribute to policy-making, institution-building, and the implementation of peace regimes. The literature review covers modern theories and studies published between 2018 and 2024. Furthermore, the paper addresses the practical obstacles in peace research and offers directions for future inquiry. Our findings indicate that IR scholars focus primarily on the political, institutional, and structural dimensions of security. In contrast, international lawyers emphasize binding norms, justice, and state accountability. The study concludes that systematic interaction between these two groups strengthens "peace governance" within the international system. This collaboration is essential for preventing the recurrence of global conflict. Finally, we suggest that bridging the gap between theory and practice by using modern data and engaging in active mediation will significantly improve the impact of academic research.

Keywords: *International Peace, Global Security, International Relations, International Law, Research Strategies, Interdisciplinary Collaboration.*

Introduction

International peace and security have gained vital importance in the era of globalization and increasingly complex global relations. As two key variables, they represent the fundamental goals and primary concerns of the twenty-first-century global community. They also constitute the central objective of the United Nations system as articulated in its foundational mandate concerning the maintenance of international peace and security (1). In recent decades, transformative developments such as the end of bipolar rivalry, the rise of non-state security threats, and the expansion of concepts including human and cyber security have fundamentally reshaped traditional analytical frameworks. Under these conditions of rapid political, economic, environmental, and technological change, scholars

of International Relations (IR) and International Law (IL) play a crucial role in analyzing global threats, anticipating emerging risks, and proposing practical pathways toward peace (2).

Despite their distinct theoretical assumptions and methodological traditions, researchers in IR and IL have increasingly moved toward cooperation in order to generate more comprehensive and multidimensional strategies for managing contemporary security challenges (3, 4). In general terms, IR scholars concentrate on international political dynamics, the functioning of international organizations, and peace and security operations, whereas international lawyers focus on the structure, interpretation, and implementation of the international legal order. Both epistemic communities are indispensable for diagnosing global problems and formulating viable policy responses (5).

Recent scholarship further demonstrates that peace and security studies are no longer confined to military and geopolitical dimensions alone. Instead, they now encompass human, environmental, economic, and cultural aspects of security (6). As a result, scholars in both disciplines confront significant challenges in translating academic knowledge into policy-relevant outcomes. These challenges include the persistent gap between research and decision-making, the continued dominance of state-centric and militarized perspectives, and the growing complexity of interrelated factors shaping international security (7). Moreover, longstanding conceptual difficulties—such as the definition of peace indicators and the lack of standardized criteria for distinguishing between "positive" and "negative" peace—continue to constrain empirical and theoretical analysis (8). As global threats become increasingly multidimensional, researchers also face practical constraints, including limited access to reliable data, disciplinary fragmentation, and ethical dilemmas associated with field research. At the same time, new opportunities have emerged through the use of big data, scenario modeling, network analysis, and advanced information technologies, which enable more precise crisis analysis and threat forecasting (9).

Against this backdrop, examining the interaction between IR and IL scholars is essential from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Sustainable peace requires the integration of political analysis with robust legal frameworks. Accordingly, this study investigates the strategies employed by IR and IL researchers to promote international peace and security, with the aim of developing a scientific and practice-oriented framework that enhances the societal impact of academic research. By analyzing these strategies, the study seeks to support policymakers, international organizations, and scholars in designing evidence-based approaches to crisis management. Such strategies include interdisciplinary collaboration, bridging the divide between theory and practice, applying innovative research methods, addressing local and transnational levels simultaneously, developing new legal instruments, and engaging scholars directly in mediation and advisory processes.

The central research question guiding this study is as follows: *How can International Relations and International Law scholars employ scientific, interdisciplinary, and technological strategies to effectively promote international peace and security while overcoming contemporary theoretical and practical challenges?* To address this question, the article first reviews the major theoretical frameworks within both disciplines. It then examines the roles of IR scholars and international legal experts separately before analyzing their interaction and the principal challenges facing peace research. The article concludes with a synthesized analysis based on the study's findings.

Theoretical Foundations and Research Background

International Relations (IR) examines the interactions among states and non-state actors within the international system, whereas International Law (IL) provides the normative and legal structures that regulate these interactions (10).

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundations of IR and IL consist of diverse perspectives that seek to explain and justify the behavior of international actors, including states, international organizations, and transnational entities. This study focuses on the core frameworks that best align with its research objectives. Rather than privileging approaches centered exclusively on power and competition, priority is given to theories emphasizing cooperation, institution-building, international norms, and human rights. Accordingly, the theoretical framework adopted in this article integrates four complementary approaches: Realism, Institutional Liberalism, Legal Institutionalism, and Constructivism.

<u>Realism</u>

Realism is among the oldest and most influential theoretical traditions in the study of international politics and remains essential for understanding the practical limitations of international law. Its core assumptions include state-centrism, systemic anarchy, and the primacy of national interest. From a realist perspective, states operate in an international system lacking a central authority, and their overriding objective is survival through the accumulation and preservation of power.

Realist theory emphasizes competition and balance-of-power dynamics, conceptualizing security primarily in military terms (11). Within this framework, international law and global institutions are often viewed as instruments utilized by powerful states to advance their strategic interests rather than as autonomous constraints on state behavior. Peace, therefore, is maintained through equilibrium among competing powers rather than through legal obligation alone. When legal norms conflict with vital national interests, realism predicts that states will prioritize power considerations over compliance. While this perspective is valuable for analyzing military crises and great-power politics, it offers limited explanatory power for understanding human, economic, and environmental dimensions of peace. In this study, realism is applied selectively to assess why certain legal mechanisms succeed or fail depending on the support of major powers, particularly in the context of United Nations Security Council actions.

<u>Institutional Liberalism</u>

In contrast to realism, institutional liberalism highlights the potential for sustained cooperation among states, international institutions, and non-state actors. Proponents of this approach argue that international organizations and legal regimes can meaningfully reduce uncertainty, mitigate conflict, and promote peaceful outcomes (12).

The central pillars of institutional liberalism are cooperation and institutionalization. Through formal and informal institutions, states are able to pursue mutual gains and shared interests. International organizations contribute to peace by lowering transaction costs, enhancing transparency, and fostering trust among participants. From this

perspective, international law and treaty regimes function as essential mechanisms for managing an anarchic international system by providing predictability and stability.

Peace and stability are further reinforced through interdependence and the diffusion of democratic governance, commonly associated with the democratic peace thesis. Within this framework, legal norms structure interactions in ways that reduce incentives for conflict. Institutional liberalism thus explains peace as the outcome of sustained cooperation supported by international institutions (13, 14). In this article, the approach is used to analyze the effectiveness of legal institutions such as the International Court of Justice and multilateral disarmament regimes in preventing and managing conflict.

Legal Institutionalism in International Law

Legal institutionalism emphasizes the role of formal rules, treaties, and judicial mechanisms as foundational elements of international peace and security. According to this perspective, international institutions and legal agreements constitute the primary instruments through which state behavior is regulated and conflict is prevented. Prominent legal scholars underscore the importance of institutions such as the International Court of Justice, the United Nations Security Council, and international human rights regimes in establishing accountability and promoting compliance (15, 16). The overarching objective of legal institutionalism is the construction of a rule-based international order capable of constraining power politics and fostering durable peace through legal norms and enforcement mechanisms.

Constructivism

Constructivism functions as a conceptual bridge between International Relations and International Law by emphasizing the role of ideas, identities, and norms in shaping the international system. At its core, constructivist theory holds that the social world of international politics is constructed through shared meanings, values, and expectations. State interests are therefore not fixed or given in advance; rather, they are shaped by how states understand their identities and their relationships with others. From this perspective, peace depends not only on formal legal rules but also on the development of a shared culture and identity oriented toward peaceful coexistence.

Within a constructivist framework, international law is not merely a collection of prescriptive rules but a constitutive force that helps define legitimate state behavior. For instance, internalizing the prohibition on the use of force contributes to the formation of state identities as lawful and peaceful actors. Enduring peace thus requires transformation in strategic culture and collective understandings of security. International law influences behavior through the repetition, diffusion, and socialization of norms, gradually delegitimizing war and normalizing peaceful dispute resolution. In this study, constructivism is employed to explain how a "culture of peace" emerges and how legal frameworks contribute to the delegitimization of violence. By reshaping dominant security discourses, scholars and legal experts can promote forms of positive peace that extend beyond coercive enforcement. This perspective also clarifies why some societies maintain peaceful relations even in the absence of direct military threats or rigid enforcement mechanisms (17, 18).

Table 1. Comparative Overview of Theoretical Frameworks

Part	Theory	Role
International Relations	Institutional Liberalism	Cooperation among states and institutions to achieve collective security

International Law	Legal Institutionalism	Legalizing international relations and enforcing peace through binding rules
International Relations	Realism	Emphasis on power, competition, and balance of power, with security framed primarily in military terms
Cultural–Normative Dimension	Constructivism	Promotion of peace discourse and transformation of state identities and norms

Research Background (Synthesis)

Over recent decades, interdisciplinary engagement between International Relations and International Law has expanded significantly. Foundational works have highlighted the necessity of sustained theoretical and practical dialogue between these two fields in order to address complex global security challenges (19, 20). Within the Iranian academic context, scholars have examined the role of international law in foreign policy formulation and the pursuit of sustainable peace, underscoring the importance of legal norms in shaping international conduct (21, 22). Despite these advances, a persistent theoretical and methodological gap remains between political analysts and legal scholars, indicating the need for an integrative framework capable of fostering synergy between the disciplines (23).

Recent research further emphasizes the growing importance of modern analytical tools in peace and security studies. Advances in data-driven methods have enabled researchers to assess global security dynamics with greater precision. For example, remote sensing technologies and space-based monitoring systems allow for the observation of crisis zones and the anticipation of conflict escalation (6). Similarly, the application of network-based and discursive analyses has enhanced understanding of how patterns of cooperation and violence emerge and evolve within international systems (24). As a result, multidisciplinary approaches that integrate IR and IL with economics, human rights, and environmental studies have become indispensable for effective peacebuilding (7).

The Role and Strategies of International Relations Researchers

International Relations scholars contribute political and structural analyses that underpin efforts to maintain global stability.

The Role of IR Scholars

The contributions of IR scholars to the promotion of peace can be categorized into several key functions. First, knowledge production and theory building constitute their primary role. By developing analytical frameworks related to conflict, balance of power, and cooperation, IR scholars provide conceptual tools that inform policy decisions (25). For example, the theory of collective security, rooted in liberal thought, originated in academic discourse before being institutionalized within the United Nations framework (26). Similarly, concepts such as human security, global governance, and multilateralism have shifted scholarly and policy attention away from narrow power politics toward institutional and normative stability (27).

Second, IR scholars play a critical role in education and awareness-building. Through the training of diplomats, analysts, and policymakers, academic institutions contribute to the institutionalization of peace-oriented norms and practices (28). Specialized academic programs focused on peace and security studies further facilitate the translation of theoretical insights into practical engagement within civil society and international institutions (1).

Third, IR researchers contribute to policy analysis and crisis forecasting by employing quantitative methods, comparative analysis, and scenario modeling. These approaches enable the identification of conflict patterns and early warning indicators, which are often utilized by international organizations in managing regional and ethnic

crises. Finally, IR scholars engage in science diplomacy by acting as knowledge-based intermediaries between states. Through academic networks and Track II diplomacy, they help construct shared narratives, reduce misperceptions, and facilitate dialogue in highly sensitive political contexts (22, 29).

Strategies for IR Scholars

One central strategy employed by IR scholars is peacebuilding, understood as a long-term process aimed at rebuilding institutions, promoting human rights, and supporting socio-economic development in post-conflict societies (30). Another key strategy involves collective security and regional cooperation. From a constructivist standpoint, the diffusion of human rights norms contributes to the formation of shared identities grounded in human dignity and mutual responsibility (31). Regional security arrangements further complement global mechanisms by distributing security responsibilities and addressing localized threats within broader normative frameworks (4).

The Role and Strategies of International Legal Scholars

International legal scholars emphasize the law as both a constraint on power and an instrument for justice in global affairs.

The Role of Legal Scholars

A primary concern of international legal experts is the prohibition of the use of force. They stress strict adherence to the foundational principle that forbids threats or use of force in international relations, viewing it as a cornerstone of global peace and stability (32). In addition, legal scholars advocate for peaceful dispute resolution through judicial and quasi-judicial mechanisms, including the International Court of Justice and international criminal tribunals, as essential alternatives to coercive conflict management (33).

Legal scholarship has also expanded the concept of security beyond traditional military threats. Contemporary international law increasingly addresses issues such as climate change, resource scarcity, and systemic human rights violations as central peace and security concerns (34, 35). Scholars argue that binding legal regimes—such as international water law—are necessary to prevent conflicts rooted in environmental and resource-based pressures (36). Accountability represents another core dimension of legal scholarship, particularly through doctrines such as the Responsibility to Protect, which seek to prevent mass atrocities and ensure compliance with international humanitarian law (4, 37).

Strategies for Legal Scholars

One key strategy involves the codification of binding norms through international treaties and conventions that structure state behavior and establish legal accountability (16, 38). Legal scholars also contribute to transitional justice mechanisms in post-conflict settings by designing truth commissions and judicial processes aimed at breaking cycles of violence and fostering reconciliation (39). Moreover, the expansion of human security norms has led to the criminalization of practices such as torture, sexual violence in armed conflict, and the recruitment of child soldiers, thereby empowering societies to resist structural forms of violence through legal means (40, 41).

Interaction and Synergy Between the Two Fields

Sustainable peace is most effectively achieved through the integration of political strategy and legal expertise (42). While International Relations provides insights into power dynamics, interests, and strategic behavior, International Law establishes normative boundaries and enforcement mechanisms. IR analysis helps explain why legal norms are sometimes ignored, whereas IL supplies tools for regulating behavior and promoting accountability (3).

This synergy is evident in joint peace initiatives that combine legal instruments with political strategies, such as United Nations peacekeeping operations that integrate ceasefire monitoring with institutional reform and governance support (32, 43). More broadly, IR addresses the motivations behind state action, while IL focuses on the regulation of that action within a normative framework (44). Institutionalized collaboration between scholarly communities further reinforces this interaction, as joint programs and research initiatives facilitate cross-fertilization of ideas. At the same time, the relationship between IR and IL remains characterized by constructive tension, with debates over realism, idealism, and justice contributing to the ongoing refinement of peace as both a theoretical and practical concept (45).

Challenges and Obstacles

Challenges in Peace Research

Researchers in the field of international peace and security face three primary categories of obstacles.

First, the research–policy gap remains a persistent challenge. Academic findings frequently fail to reach decision-makers due to the dominance of highly abstract theoretical models, insufficient engagement with international and governmental institutions, and the inherently slow pace of academic publishing. As a result, valuable research outputs often have limited policy impact (7).

Second, state-centrism and military bias continue to shape much of the existing literature. Many studies still define security primarily in terms of state actors and military capabilities, thereby neglecting critical human, environmental, and socio-economic dimensions of peace and security (6). This narrow focus limits the analytical scope of peace research and undermines its relevance to contemporary global challenges.

Third, peace research is confronted with multilayered complexity. Peace and security outcomes are influenced by interdependent economic, social, political, and environmental factors operating simultaneously at local, national, and transnational levels. This complexity complicates research design and makes it difficult to develop universal or standardized solutions applicable across diverse contexts (24).

Table 2. Analysis of Challenges in Peace Research

Challenge	Causes	Consequences	Reference
Research–policy gap	Theoretical abstraction, limited institutional engagement, slow publication cycles	Reduced practical applicability and underutilization of research findings	(7)
State-centrism and military bias	Dominance of classical security paradigms and data limitations	Incomplete analyses and ineffective policy solutions	(6)
Multilayered complexity	Dynamic international environment and interaction of local and global interests	Difficulty integrating data and increased need for interdisciplinary approaches	(24)

As this analysis demonstrates, contemporary global challenges are rooted in structural and methodological limitations that reduce the overall effectiveness of peace research. Addressing these constraints requires a sophisticated interdisciplinary approach capable of managing the interaction between local and transnational

dynamics. To enhance the contribution of scholarship to international peace, researchers must narrow the gap between theory and practice, integrate human and environmental dimensions alongside military considerations, and adopt data-driven, interdisciplinary methodologies.

Challenges to Collaboration Between IR and IL Scholars

Effective cooperation between International Relations and International Law scholars is hindered by several structural and intellectual obstacles.

A major barrier lies in divergent analytical frameworks and scientific language. IR scholars tend to employ empirical analysis, political theory, and quantitative modeling, whereas international legal scholars rely on normative reasoning, doctrinal interpretation, and formal legal structures. This epistemological divide often results in miscommunication and conceptual fragmentation in joint research initiatives (20).

Institutional and organizational constraints further limit collaboration. Academic institutions and international organizations frequently treat IR and IL as separate disciplinary silos. The absence of formal interdisciplinary programs, limited funding opportunities, and weak cross-disciplinary research networks significantly reduce incentives for sustained cooperation (19).

Political and cultural frictions also play a role. The policy-driven orientation of IR scholarship may conflict with the normative and ethical commitments of international law. Additionally, cultural, ideological, and national differences among researchers can complicate collaborative processes, particularly in politically sensitive research areas (46).

Overcoming these challenges requires the development of integrative frameworks that institutionalize interdisciplinary engagement. Such frameworks should include cross-disciplinary training, joint research projects on global security issues, collaborative workshops, and digital platforms for knowledge exchange.

Analysis of Findings

Strategies for Promoting International Peace and Security

The findings of this study indicate that peace-promoting strategies are most effective when organized around several interrelated pillars.

Interdisciplinary application emerges as a central strategy. Integrating insights from International Relations, International Law, economics, and environmental studies leads to more comprehensive and implementable solutions. Empirical evidence from peace research in Northern Europe demonstrates that interdisciplinary collaboration enhances both the credibility and policy uptake of academic work (7).

Linking research to practice significantly increases impact. Policy-oriented research tools, including policy briefs and participation in consultative workshops, enable the rapid transmission of academic findings to international organizations and decision-making bodies (2).

The utilization of modern analytical methods represents another critical pillar. Technologies such as remote sensing, big data analytics, and network analysis improve the accuracy of crisis forecasting and early warning systems (6).

Attention to local-level dynamics further strengthens peace strategies. Many drivers of conflict and cooperation operate at the community level. Field-based research, interviews, and culturally informed analysis enhance the precision and relevance of policy recommendations (24).

Modern legal frameworks also play a decisive role. Normative concepts such as the Responsibility to Protect and emerging environmental legal regimes provide concrete mechanisms for enforcing peace and accountability within the international system (35, 47).

Finally, active engagement in mediation expands the practical influence of scholars. By participating directly in facilitation and dialogue processes, researchers can contribute to conflict resolution within both local and international networks (2).

Key Recommendations for Researchers

Based on the challenges identified and the findings of this study, several scientific and practical recommendations can be advanced.

First, interdisciplinary cooperation should be institutionalized. Collaboration across fields such as human rights, environmental studies, and public health broadens analytical perspectives and enhances research validity (2).

Second, bridging theory and action must be prioritized from the outset of research design. Producing executive summaries and maintaining sustained engagement with policymakers ensures that scholarly outputs address real-world security challenges (7).

Third, researchers should adopt advanced analytical tools. Training in big data analysis and social network methodologies allows scholars to monitor peace and security dynamics in real time while complementing qualitative approaches (6, 24).

Fourth, greater attention to local and transnational dynamics is essential. Fieldwork and engagement with local actors reveal hidden drivers of conflict and enhance analytical accuracy.

Fifth, international legal scholars should actively contribute to the critique and formulation of emerging norms, particularly in relation to the prohibition of war and the protection of human rights (47).

Sixth, research agendas must account for emerging global challenges such as climate change, food insecurity, and large-scale migration, which increasingly shape international peace and security outcomes (35).

Finally, scholars should move beyond purely observational roles and engage directly in mediation, capacity-building, and international networking to amplify the societal impact of their work.

Table 3. Comparative Analysis of Peace-Promoting Strategies

Strategy	Objective	Tools and Methodologies	Benefits	Reference
Interdisciplinary collaboration	Comprehensive analysis	Multi-sector research teams and integrated datasets	Enhances credibility and analytical depth	(2)
Linking research to action	Practical policy impact	Policy workshops and consultative engagement	Accelerates knowledge transfer to decision-makers	(7)
Advanced data analytics	Crisis forecasting	Remote sensing, big data, network analysis	Improves precision and real-time assessment	(6)
Local and transnational awareness	Identification of local drivers	Fieldwork, interviews, cultural analysis	Produces context-sensitive policy insights	(24)
Modern legal frameworks	Normative enforcement	Treaties, protocols, Responsibility to Protect	Strengthens compliance and legitimacy	(47)
Addressing global dynamics	Adaptation to emerging threats	Global datasets and scenario modeling	Maintains relevance under systemic change	(35)
Active mediation engagement	Community empowerment	Training, networking, facilitated dialogue	Increases direct societal impact	(2)

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that International Relations (IR) and International Law (IL) scholars play distinct but vital roles in promoting global stability. IR researchers strengthen the political and institutional dimensions of security by

producing analytical knowledge and forecasting crises. In contrast, international lawyers secure the legal and ethical foundations of peace by drafting binding rules and ensuring accountability. The interaction between these two fields expressed through both collaboration and mutual critique creates a synergy that strengthens "peace governance" at a global level. Despite challenges such as institutional silos and cultural differences, interdisciplinary frameworks and joint research projects can maximize the impact of this collaboration.

Ultimately, this research emphasizes that sustainable peace is impossible without blending political analysis with legal frameworks. Therefore, creating policies that support this academic interaction is a strategic necessity for the international community. Our findings show that using interdisciplinary and technological strategies allows for more accurate threat prediction and practical solutions. One of the most significant takeaways is the importance of a "hybrid approach." By combining quantitative and qualitative data and fostering cooperation between IR, IL, and the social sciences, we can achieve more comprehensive results. Furthermore, the use of modern technologies such as Big Data, Artificial Intelligence, and scenario modeling improves crisis management. Finally, involving local and regional actors ensures that peace policies are actually accepted and effective on the ground.

However, for scholars to truly influence global security, several strategic shifts in research are required:

1. **Closing the research-policy gap** by designing practical projects and participating in decision-making processes.
2. **Redefining security** to move beyond state-centric military views and include human, economic, and environmental factors.
3. **Adopting modern data tools** for more precise crisis forecasting.
4. **Focusing on the local level** to better understand the social drivers of peace.
5. **Critiquing and drafting legal frameworks** that reflect current global shifts.
6. **Taking active roles** in mediation and education to ensure research has a direct impact.

Research Limitations

This study faced several constraints:

1. Difficulties in accessing accurate and reliable data at both local and international levels.
2. The complexity of integrating diverse theoretical methodologies and academic traditions.
3. The significant time-lag required to observe the practical effects of these academic strategies.

Future Research Recommendations

To build on this work, we suggest the following:

1. Strengthen formal cooperation between IR and IL scholars to design comprehensive, joint studies.
2. Expand interdisciplinary programs focused specifically on peace and security.
3. Design "applied research" projects in direct collaboration with international organizations.
4. Utilize modern technologies and real-time data for crisis analysis.
5. Encourage researchers to act as mediators and facilitators in active peace processes.
6. Use a mix of quantitative, qualitative, and technological methods for more accurate results.
7. Prioritize the involvement of local and regional stakeholders in research design.

Produce policy-oriented outputs (such as Policy Briefs) to share findings directly with decision-makers.

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