



School of Law

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RCCL & CPLR Online Symposium: International Symposium on COVID-19 and Models of Governance in East Asia and the World (12 June 2020)

14 June 2020

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The novel coronavirus, now officially known as COVID-19, which first broke out in China's Wuhan in December 2019 and later developed into a pandemic, has up to now ravaged the whole world for almost half year. While there sees some regression of the pandemic internationally, legal, social and political issues and challenges posed by COVID-19 have just begun to be seen and felt in many jurisdictions internally and globally.

With the success of our online workshop on 22 May 2020 which focused on discussing the impacts of COVID-19 on international law, international relations and international order, on 12 June 2020, in collaboration with our sister research centre — the Public Law and Human Rights Forum (CPLR) of the School of Law of City University of Hong Kong — the Centre for Chinese and Comparative Law (RCCL) held another online symposium to discuss issues relating to national and regional governance, especially in East Asia, arisen as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the impacts of governments' responses to COVID-19 on the rule of law and rights protection (e.g. right to live, freedom of speech, privacy, freedom of information, etc.); the implications of COVID-19 on trade and economics; emergency law and public health policy in times of pandemic; and the responses of different jurisdictions and different governance models to COVID-19 and their lessons.

The Symposium started with the opening remarks by the Associate Dean of the School of Law Prof. Wan Wai Yee who thanked all the speakers for their participation, and then followed by the Directors of the two organizing institutions — namely Prof. Wang Jiangyu, Director of RCCL and Prof. Zhu Guobin, Director of CPLR — who introduced the purpose of this online Symposium.



Prof. Wan Wai Yee delivered the opening speech



Prof. Wang Jiangyu (left) and Prof. Zhu Guobin (right) introduced the Symposium's background and purpose

After that, we had 21 both informative and thought-provoking presentations on the following four sub-themes: 1) Rights protection and health governance in China; 2) Economic and legal issues relating to COVID-19 in China; 3) A comparative study of different jurisdictions' responses to COVID-19 and the challenges of the pandemic to state governance; and 4) The impacts of COVID-19 on global governance.

While COVID-19 related issues and phenomena are new to everyone, many of the scholars and experts in the world (including our Symposium speakers) have been following closely the relevant development and conducting in-depth studies on the relevant issues. Notwithstanding that their research may still be at the preliminary stage given the time constraint, our speakers' generosity in sharing their preliminary findings and research output at the Symposium are instrumental in providing important information to the Symposium participants and laying a useful foundation for further academic exchange and research.

The interactions between the audience and the speakers during the Q&A sessions were equally interesting: while the audience putting forward critical and acute comments and follow-up questions relating to speakers' presentations, the speakers enthusiastically responding to those challenges.

The Symposium came to an end with the conclusion and vote of thanks by the Directors of the two hosting research centres.

COVID-19 is an unprecedented pandemic and issues arisen from it are also unprecedentedly challenging to individual jurisdictions and the world as a whole, which definitely could not be thoroughly covered in two conferences. Thus, RCCL will certainly continue to explore opportunities to organize similar academic activities to provide a platform for further academic exchange on this important cutting edge topic.

This Symposium is a research output-oriented event, some of the papers presented at this Symposium will be blinded reviewed and published in a special issue of an international comparative law journal. Besides, based on the substance and spirit of the speakers'

presentations, RCCL and CPLR will also jointly publish a bilingual policy report on COVID-19 and East Asian Governance Models.

