14. The use of force and collective security

This chapter looks at the use of force and collective security. Today, the United Nations Charter embodies the indispensable principles of international law on the use of force. These include the prohibition on the unilateral use of force found in Article 2(4), and the recognition of the inherent right of all States to use force in self-defence found in Article 51. Finally, under Chapter VII, a collective security system centred upon the Security Council was established for the maintenance of international peace and security. A key debate over the scope of Article 2(4) is whether a new exception has been recognized which would allow the use of force motivated by humanitarian considerations. It is argued that these ‘humanitarian interventions’ would allow a State to use force to protect people in another State from gross and systematic human rights violations when the target State is unwilling or unable to act.
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