19. The International Court of Justice

The International Court of Justice (ICJ), which is defined in the UN Charter as the ‘principal judicial organ’ of the United Nations, is a standing mechanism for the peaceful settlement of disputes between States. It may also give advisory opinions on the law, at the request of the Security Council and General Assembly, or of other UN organs and specialized agencies that are so authorized by the General Assembly. No dispute can be the subject of a decision of the Court unless the States parties to it have consented to the Court’s jurisdiction over that specific dispute. This chapter discusses the history, structure, and composition of the Court, the ways in which jurisdiction is conferred upon it, its procedure, and the nature and effect of decisions (judgments and advisory opinions) of the ICJ.