REASSESSING TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY IN CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL LAW: CHALLENGES AND APPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The principle of territorial integrity remains a cornerstone of international law, enshrined in the UN Charter and reiterated in numerous international instruments. It safeguards the sovereignty and political independence of states by prohibiting external interference and the forcible acquisition of territory. However, its contemporary applicability is increasingly contested amid emerging geopolitical crises, secessionist movements and humanitarian interventions. Conflicts in Ukraine, the South China Sea and the Middle East have reignited debates around the balance between state sovereignty and the right to self-determination. Furthermore, the invocation of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and evolving norms surrounding the recognition of breakaway regions pose additional complexities. This paper critically examines the modern relevance of territorial integrity, highlighting how international legal norms are strained by political realities. It explores the interplay between territorial preservation and emerging exceptions under customary international law, arguing for a nuanced approach that respects sovereignty while accommodating legitimate aspirations for autonomy. The analysis draws on case studies and international jurisprudence to assess the evolving boundaries of this principle in the 21st century.

Keywords - Territorial integrity, Sovereignty, Self-determination, International law, Geopolitical conflict.

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