

## THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF REGIONAL SECURITY IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS - THE OVERVIEW

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### **Abstract:**

*The aim of this article is to introduce the theoretical basis of regional security and the functioning of regional security institutions in the light of international relations. The article includes: consideration of definitional aspects of international security of a state and regional security, criteria of regional security, approaches to the issue of security in selected theories in international relations as well as threads dedicated to their origin, evolution and current forms of activity of regional security institutions. The conclusion of the article indicates that the sources of cooperation in the area of regional security can be perceived in two ways: firstly, as a result of the natural desire of states to cooperate with each other, striving for regional integration, and the expression of the identity and regional culture. Secondly, primarily in the effect of states' endeavors to obtain hegemony in the region, the desire to protect sources of security diversification, and finally the result of the belief that collective action can be more effective in countering threats and mitigating effects of the weakness of nation states in the anarchic international environment.*

### **Keywords:**

*security, institution, region, regionalism, international relations, theory*

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this article is to discuss the theoretical foundations of regional security and the functioning of regional security institutions in international relations. These considerations are accompanied by the conviction that this matter is one of the substantive issues in the field of international relations, even on theoretical grounds. Furthermore, the purpose of the considerations is to answer the question: what are the sources of cooperation in the field of regional security of countries, taking on the form



of regional security institutions. Thirdly and finally, the article is to provide a concise and thus practically useful didactic discourse as the outline of the issues discussed and the current state of research in this matter.

The article is divided into two main structural parts. One of them is centered on the aspects of regional security in international relations. The second part, however, is dedicated to issues related to regional security institutions.

## **1. REGIONAL SECURITY – THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS**

### **1.1. THE CONCEPTS OF REGION AND REGIONAL SECURITY**

In order to achieve the above outlined objective it is recommended to make the definition of international security of a state the starting point for these considerations. In the basic sense, national security is defined as freedom from threats posing a risk to the survival (existence) of a state. Therefore, it includes providing such fundamental elements as territorial integrity, sovereignty, freedom to choose a political system, sufficient conditions for well-being and development of society [3].

However, if the issue of international security of a state is considered in the regional context, it is worth noting the specific two-planeness. First of all, it concerns the external aspects of national security, related to establishing and remaining in two - or multi-lateral relationships with other participants of international relations in the region, for example other countries, regional institutions, military alliances, integration organizations, etc. Further, it will be also linked to the international system as a whole. In the latter case, from the point of view of international security of a state in the regional context, such elements will be significant:

- the structure and organization of a system;
- appreciation or depreciation of the importance of regional ties and activities within that structure;
- the position of a country and the region which it belongs to, in the international system [3].

International security in the regional dimension (as well as national security in general) is also the function of the historically variable international world order. As such, it is closely related to both the current state of international relations, as well as the dominant strategies of the national security policy of states in the region. Consequently, international security of a country “is synonymous with such a state of international relations in which there are realistic and reasonable mechanisms to reduce risks and the rules of procedure and the principle of the non-use of force accepted by the international community” [5]. Thus, it is a situation in which “members of the international community feel relatively safe, that is they are free from any threats of military attacks, political pressure or economic coercion” [5].

It is also worth emphasizing that the current security models to a large extent determine security of a state in the international environment (and hence regional) in its spatial dimension. However, it should be assumed that today there are no fully effec-



tive security models of a global character, and a relatively reliable mechanism of this kind can be talked about at the regional or sub-regional levels.

Taking up considerations on the theoretical foundations of regional security it is worth paying attention to the very concept of a region. In general, this issue raises considerable polemics in social sciences, which is due to the fact that a region is the area of interest to many fields of science. These are: political sciences and international relations, but also sociology, economics, management, law, and history. This concept is mainly associated with the areas singled out due to some criteria or features distinguishing them from others. Hence, we are talking about geographical, cultural, ethnic regions, or those defined by the criteria of administrative or political organization. In the literature, one can find at least two conceptions of a region:

- the structure and organization of a system;
- in analytical terms: a region is seen as the generalization of space, and not the real social and economic system;
- in subjective terms: a region is treated as the objectively existing socio-economic entity, consisting of actually existing material elements and social relations between them [12].

For the purposes of the foregoing considerations, according to the author, the analytical approach to the issues is more appropriate. It stems from the fact that the main object of the discourse is to present the theoretical framework based on generalizations. Hence, in this sense it will be presented further in the discussion.

“The very concept of regional security has a long tradition in international relations and is understood as effectively implemented protection of the system of mutual relations between countries in the region against the threats of instability, crises, armed conflicts and regional wars” [15]. Most frequently, security at the regional level is built based upon a system or an alliance operating within the defined region, and “regional security institutions are often, but not always, established on the basis of geographical boundaries of the region, at the interface of functional cooperation” [15]. At the same time it is also worth noting that sometimes this geographic scope of regional security institutions can be different, as the sense of common security may go “across” functional interests (e.g. trade). Its relatively high occurrence takes place in the case of military alliances, which in the post-war international system often covered - and still covers - an area larger than the region in strictly geographic or economic terms [15].

When it comes to regional security, it is also necessary to identify the main threats in this sphere. These main threats to security in the regional context are identical to the catalogue based on the guidelines of many of contemporary security strategies. They attach particular importance to the elements of threats such as the possibility of the outbreak of a war, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and means of their delivery, international terrorism, organized crime, uncontrolled migration, social tensions, environment disasters, corruption, epidemics or demographic threats associated with low population growth and aging of populations in the states of a given region [8].



## 1.2. REGIONAL SECURITY CRITERIA

It is also crucial to pay attention to criteria of regional security. When it comes to the criteria of national security at the international level – but also in regional terms – their most substantive, verifiable aspects include:

- the military potential of states of a region and its technical and technological levels;
- the condition, strategy and the size of armed forces of countries in a region;
- the quality of management of a defense sector in states of a region;
- the character of borders between countries of a region and of external ones (geographical and political );
- political and military alliances of regional range;
- the role of political elites and rationality in choosing allies within - and beyond a region [5].

The elements below should be indicated among other safety criteria in the regional context:

- the condition of the international system - in the nearest vicinity of states and in the regional scale (continental, sub continental);
- the complexity and complementarity of the most important values protected at the level of national security and the regional environment, as well as the reasons for determining these 'absolute values' in countries of a region;
- the nature and dynamics of strategies adopted by participants of the international system in a region;
- the issue of clear and unequivocally important areas which are subject to particular protection in the process of building a model of international security of states in a region [5].

Moreover, the criteria of regional security should be considered from the perspective of the region's position in the world system. One of the most famous system theories has been created by Immanuel Wallerstein claiming that when the economic criterion and the concept of a country (not a state) are used, in the world system there are distinguished: a core - which includes countries that are the so-called rule makers being able to impose their will to weaker participants, i.e. those located in the system within the so-called semi-peripheries and peripheries. The core encompasses countries with the highest level of development in terms of the capitalist economy. A stable, the most often democratic, political system and the highest level of capital accumulation, consumption, innovation and generating cultural patterns are what distinguish them. All this makes them play the dominant political role in the world system. In turn, semi-peripheries are characterized by the type of development based on the inflow of foreign investments and capitals, own activity, as well as cheaper and relatively well-



educated workforce. A democratic but unstable or undemocratic political system is also often typical for semi-peripheries. In the global system, semi-peripheries primarily perform production functions and provide services, remaining under the economic and political influence of the core. Whereas countries with the low level of economic and social development, outdated or the primitive economic model, a high level of debt and inflation belong to peripheries. What is more, their political systems are often characterized by instability and undemocratic character [14].

However, referring to Wallerstein's assumptions it should be borne in mind that, in fact, the most important criterion of belonging to the core, not only and not always, is the economic value, since countries of the high military position are also frequently located in the center of the system [6]. Thus, there are at least two basic world systems, economic and military, which are taken into account, and the hierarchy of countries operating in the cores of these systems sometimes differs significantly. Moreover, the position of the center of both systems depends on many factors not only purely economic or military, but also social, political, religious, intellectual and psychological as well. In addition, often the countries located in a region representing semi-peripheries have in fact a greater impact on political decisions taken within the system than those located in the core (e.g. the position of the Russian Federation in Central and Eastern Europe). From the point of view of international security, also in the regional context, the most substantial is the structure of the global military system, and the place a state occupies in it. Such a perspective in regional terms, and more specifically: in terms of regional alliance, brings certain hazard. For example, states, which are North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members, are frequently and automatically located in Europe, in the center of the military system. This is done regardless of their actual military condition. Therefore, the membership in the Alliance causes a feeling - often illusory - of having a strong position, often incompatible with the real individual position of the Alliance members in the world military system. So it is worth remembering that regional security guaranteed within the Alliance does not directly prejudge security of an individual state, and its vital significance continues to be determined primarily by the individual position of the country in the global military system [8].

### **1.3. THE PROBLEM OF SECURITY IN TERMS OF SELECTED THEORIES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

Referring to the theoretical foundations of regional security, it should also be recalled how the selected theoretical schools of international relations regard the issue of security [3].

As far as the realistic school is concerned, a nation-state is the main (and basically the only actual) subject of international relations. These relations are inherently anarchic: no greater authority exists in their sphere than sovereign states. Therefore, security here is very state-centric: states are themselves responsible for ensuring their own security, and its main criterion is the individual strength, determinants of which include geographical factors, the economic power, military capabilities (quantitative and qualitative), the character and morale of the nation, the quality of leadership and effi-



ciency of the government. In the anarchic reality of international relations, one deals with a constant and insurmountable divergence of interests and rivalry between countries - even within a given region. Their constant concern is to maintain the best relationship between the strength of their own and the strength of other countries. Hence, the so-called security dilemma largely directs international relations - and regional ones - in this theoretical vision. Its mechanism is known: actions taken by a given state to reinforce own security cause a decline in the sense of security of other countries in the region. These, in turn, feel compelled to ensure themselves the greatest power so as to escape from the influence of other countries. This, further, makes other states experience a heightened sense of insecurity and prepare for a possible aggression. In this approach, the competition for maximum power results in states' relentless pursuit towards ensuring security and maximum accumulation of forces at the individual level [3].

The concept of regional security carried out within the framework of different alliance configurations closely correspond to liberal theories, especially the theory of collective security. The idea of collective security, as a rule, obliges all participants of the system to oppose any attack on any member of the community. The force gathered in this way is greater than in the case of the classical alliance and may effectively discourage a potential aggressor for the violation of the status quo. The system of collective security is directed inwards and provides security from the countries belonging to the system. This concept is related to the existence and activities of organizations like the United Nations (UN) or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). While, the idea of collective defense is associated more with the essence of the classic political and military alliances. An example can be abovementioned NATO - where the system of that collective defense is directed outwards and its aim is to counter threats coming from outside of the alliance system.

The idea of collective security and collective defense can also be analyzed in different variants of collective, defensive, comprehensive and cooperative security:

- the collective security variant is associated with the era of the Cold War and based on the assumption that in the times of global interdependence no country is able to provide its own security only by itself. It gave - and gives - a clear priority to international security measures over national, to political over military, to peaceful over force ones;
- the defensive security variant is associated with an attempt to solve the abovementioned security dilemma and involves the creation of armed forces of states in a region in such a way to, on the one hand, ensure effective defense of their own territories, on the other hand, not to pose a threat to other countries. This can be achieved by certain adjustments in the strategy and the reduction of armed forces and profiling them so as to limit offensive abilities;
- the comprehensive security variant, in turn, is wider than the military understanding of security and takes account of political, economic, cultural, legal, environmental and humanitarian aspects;



- the cooperative security variant, finally, is the concept of interlocking and mutually reinforcing institutions. The objectives of the cooperative system are: effective response to regional threats, conflict prevention through diplomatic measures and specific deployment of armed forces, control of conflicts and providing various forms of assistance in the period after their completion.

Another important element of liberal theories is the theory of democratic peace presuming that democratic states do not conduct wars with each other but create social ties and economic interdependence. This theory assumes that the internal democratic norms and standards are transferred to the sphere of international relations. Democratic states, therefore, are peacefully oriented, interested in cooperation, positively perceive other democracies, and in crisis situations they advocate negotiations and maintaining the status quo [3].

Apart from the group of liberal theories, the theory of constructivism should be recalled, since it recognizes a security problem as a social construction. In this concept the so-called process of securitization, which involves defining specific activity as belonging to the realm of security, is essential. According to the assumptions of constructivism, identities and interests of states and societies are not given a priori but result from interactions between specific actors (participants) of relationships. Political elites are of great importance here because they affect certain behaviors of countries, including defining threats and actions belonging to the sphere of security, also in the regional context. Threats to security and facilities, which are to be ensured with security, are created (constructed) during the social process. This approach draws attention to the possibility of different eligibility of certain areas as belonging - or not - to the sphere of security, depending on the interests of a particular social group or political or military elite, which decides on this [3].

## **2. REGIONAL SECURITY INSTITUTIONS**

### **2.1. THE CONCEPT, CHARACTER AND EVOLUTION OF REGIONAL SECURITY INSTITUTIONS**

It is impossible to consider the issue of regional security without giving appropriate attention to its institutions. Threads concerning them should be begun by explaining the very concept of an institution. It is defined, among others, as “a formal structured organization capable of deliberate action, as well as the international regime made of principles formulated through negotiations and expressly approved by states” [11]. Regional institutions are the regimes or formal organizations with membership limited to a specific geographical region or possibly two or more neighboring regions. It happens that the regionality criterion is recognized in other than geographic context, e.g. of undertaken problems, actions and ideas. Regional institutions can be formal or non-formal, intergovernmental or non-governmental, and the subject to further discussion contained herein will be formal intergovernmental institutions of regional safety [7].





The character of security the responsibility for which is assigned to regional organizations can be understood as follows:

- these organizations support development of predictable, peaceful relations between their members, thus building the sense of security and community;
- organizations clearly indicate in statutes their aims, which are to provide security, e.g. by coordinating at some level national policies of defense, security as well as foreign ones or respond to threats and conflicts [7].

Intensive development of regional security institutions dates back to the second half of the twentieth century. In this period, a substantive development of roles performed by regional institutions active in the field of security took place. In addition to self-activity, a growing number of regional institutions are currently involved also in cooperation within security policy with other international and non-governmental organizations, which is particularly evident in the area of intervention operations [7].

In the initial period of intensive development of regional institutions, i.e. after the World War II, there were distinguished three types of regional organizations:

- multi-tasking organizations;
- organizations with economic profile;
- defensive alliances.

Institutions belonging to multi-tasking and defensive alliances organizations were – and are - of the greatest importance for regional security in practical terms. The period immediately after the World War II and the beginning of the Cold War, then the mid and late periods of the Cold War, and finally the post-Cold War period can be pointed out as the main phases of security institutions development in the twentieth century.

Security institutions were already known before World War II. However, during that period – at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries - the formal security institutions took up little activity and they took typically regional forms, though the nineteenth American Monroe Doctrine assigning the two American continents to the realm of influence of the United States of America (USA) had all the qualities of a regional security system. In Europe, in the last years of the nineteenth century and in the early years of the twentieth century, for a long time the concept of the so-called “Concert of Europe” dominated, which meant the balance of powers as a formula of continental security. Only experience from the World War I brought the first attempt to build the first formal security institution - the League of Nations. The League - a formally universal organization – had already a lot of features of a regional institution: the dominant members were European countries, since the United States had rejected the membership in the League, although its statute tolerated regional agreements (including the already mentioned Monroe Doctrine) [7].

Regional institutions created after World War II greatly benefited from the experiences of the League of Nations, hence the emphasis began to be placed on the shaping such a dimension of the organization, was dedicated to social tensions, like those that contributed to the outbreak of the World War I and II. Another important dimension con-





cerned the sphere of security. Many countries considered regional organizations as more effective than common institutions. Therefore, the United Nations Charter even affirmed the principle of partnership and regional activity.

In the era of the Cold War, regional institutions bringing together the so-called third world countries (i.e. countries newly formed as a result of decolonization, not positioned ideologically on any side of the Cold War confrontation) found themselves in a particular situation. While joining regional organizations, these countries were, as a rule, influenced by the strongest partners. Generally, regional organizations in the Cold War times were dominated by the two largest alliances defining and supporting the division between the East and the West, i.e. the Warsaw Treaty and NATO. It is these institutions, which were to create the so-called "long peace" based on maintaining the relatively stable balance of power for decades. Under these conditions, the space for other regional institutions in the field of security was small; nevertheless they effectively took up topics important to their members, such as decolonization, the problems of racism and apartheid, the situation in Palestine, etc. At the same time, the attempts to transfer the model of great ideological military alliances to other regions of the world - mainly to Asia - failed, hence on the periphery of the then system bilateral and ad hoc alliances dominated [7].

The response to the domination of the superpowers in the sphere of regional security was the second wave of the emergence of new regional institutions created mainly by developing countries in the period from mid-60s to mid-80s [7]. This period was characterized by the formation of institutions of sub-regional profile, i.e. with the membership of countries from the area smaller than a continent. Other features of organizations of the so-called "second wave of regionalism" were striving for the minimum of self-sufficiency, genuine cooperation, more independence, combining activity in the security sphere with activity in the economic field (e.g. the set-up GCC - the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council), as well as the creation of institutions as the reaction to specific local or regional threats (e.g. the establishment of the Association of South-East Asian Nations, ASEAN, in the context of the conflict in Vietnam) [7].

After the Cold War, on the one hand regional security became more unstable, but on the other hand strongly dependent on state entities located in particular regions. This revealed the regional type of the security complex and brought another wave of regionalism, although initially the moods and atmosphere of the era of the Cold War end had fostered universalistic visions of the world order [1]. The upgrading of the regional cooperation and the importance of regions produced two experiences in the 1990s: the success of European integration, which reached the stage of the European Union, and the popularization of Samuel Huntington's thesis about the clash of civilizations where the main actors were not states, but the loosely defined regions (sub-regions) corresponding to various "civilizations" [10]. This was accompanied by one more observation that the reaction to variously understood globalization processes was the shift to a stronger identification with a region. The trend of regionalism was once again a response to attempts to create governance on a global scale, and globalization and regionalization processes, or fragmentation ones, intermingled [7].



After the Cold War, it quickly turned out that the universal structures, such as e.g. the UN, were not able to cope with all tasks - especially those related to conflict resolution. That was the reason for the idea of the division of tasks between universal institutions and regional ones. The United Nations could not independently play the role of a pillar of global security due to the lack of adequate resources and genuine involvement of the main actors. This gap was to be filled by regional institutions. Therefore, the new post-Cold War wave of regionalism in the field of security was associated with a kind of "impotence of the United Nations, and the major powers" lack of enthusiasm to cultivate old alliances and support costly engagement in the world's remote areas. Moreover, it wore strong traces of self-organization and self-help among weaker states, since operating in a group made finding their ways in a new environment easier. In turn, more powerful states, so far limited by the Cold War alliances, might have developed their own concepts of cooperation and leadership in their regions [7].

In that period, in addition to the emergence of new institutions dedicated to the issues of security, this component was also developed or created in the framework of existing organizations. New institutions were established in the regions rarely taken into account before in terms of this type of cooperation, for example the South Pacific region and the former Soviet republics. It was the first time when also China got engaged in regional security systems. A group of regional institutions from Europe, the Americas and Africa underwent major reforms notably dedicated to security issues: the statutes were modified by adding provisions on the principles concerning solving conflicts and their management as well as the protection of human rights - in the form of permissible military intervention. The quantitative aspect was the next substantial proof for the development, not only in terms of the growing number of organizations dealing with the issues of regional security in the broad sense, but also a growing number of their members – e.g. In the mid-2000s OSCE consisted of 56 member states (in 2015 – it had 57 members), thus being the largest regional security organization in the world [7].

## **2.2. THE PROBLEM OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF REGIONAL SECURITY ORGANIZATIONS AND THEIR CONTEMPORARY TASKS.**

It would seem that the initial skepticism with respect to the effectiveness of such organizations like regional security institutions gradually subsides as the "regional institutions have never had such significance as it is today" [7]. At the same time, it is worth maintaining a certain amount of that skepticism towards unambiguous claims about the success of the regional approach in the field of security. It is difficult to clearly state whether this trend is permanent and whether it really significantly influences the security environment. The facts do not always confirm that this trend has real and positive effects: the fact of lengthening the list of regional organizations operating in the security sphere, the increasing (sometimes to absurd dimensions) number of their members and their declared goals do not prejudge that. Some regional organizations with long-lasting activity in the field of security can boast of some success, but many others, e.g. in the Middle East or Central Asia, not necessarily: regional organizations in those areas failed, among others, to effectively create a nuclear-free zone. In addition,



in the development of the regional approach to security at the institutional level, there were no clear, easily perceptible correctness, and the value of regional institutions in the field of security can be assessed in different ways - including depending on the theoretical paradigms [9].

For example, in the theoretical approach of Karl Deutsch, or in other theories of the liberal trend, there is a perception that the institutions are able to co-shape the conduct of states, among others, related to security issues and cooperation with other partners. In this sense, institutions are conducive to a dialogue, agreement and even forge a common identity, but they can also be seen simply as useful tools, which in conditions of interdependence increase the states benefits from international cooperation, including the introduction of specific principles and procedures [4]. However, skeptics - mainly representatives of the realistic trend - claim that regional or other institutions do not particularly contribute to strengthening security and the international order. Institutions are, in this sense, only creations reflecting the current balance of power, and only the strongest centers in regions, may encourage beneficial for themselves systems of forces and alliances [9].

It is an open question as to what extent the idea of regionalism is useful in the theoretical and practical spheres of security issues. On the one hand, it can be assumed that regional security is an element co-creating globe security, at least is a step in that direction. On the other hand, it is frequently claimed that regional security is of supplementary and secondary importance for discussion on global security, and can even be a harmful concept from the point of view of global security. This is connected with the belief that in the institutional sphere global security should be under the responsibility of one common structure submitting universal values over regional particularisms, rather than a team of regional structures. In view of the above, the interests of regional organizations can undermine the pursuit of the "unified", to one or another extent, global security [9]. Regardless of opinion on the effectiveness of regional security institutions, among the contemporary challenges facing them, in particular three issues come to the fore: organization and participation in intervention operations, terrorist threats and uncontrolled spread of weapons, including weapons of mass destruction.

Regarding the first issue, regional players have taken an active part in the interventions since the 1990s. It was the most important thread in their activity in the first years of the twenty-first century as well. They have been the operations of a different character: from "peace building" missions, supervising elections and enacting the peace agreements to the creation of specific institutions. The short-term decline in the commitment was marked in the years 2006-2007, followed by its subsequent renaissance. This fact can be attributed to the increasing dramatic regional problems to ensure security, the lack of or failure of other security organizers in the area, or the ambitions of the major countries in the region engulfed in conflict. The involvement of regional institutions in this activity raises numerous problems and concerns, like the question of the legitimacy of regional actors' activities, the frequent lack of approval of such actions by the UN Security Council, the lack of impartiality (bias) while carrying out a mission, the imposition by the strongest countries in the region their own security priori-



ties to the whole institution and, finally, depriving the poorest and the least attractive regions of international assistance of the highest quality [9].

When it comes to the second issue, i.e. regional institutions' response to terrorist threats, taking up this issue by regional security organizations is nothing new, but now these are problems of significant importance and scale. Meanwhile, regional security structures are not always sufficiently well placed to respond to acts of terrorism, their monitoring and prevention. However, in the last decade, most of the regional organizations referred to terrorist threats by introducing relevant provisions and actions into their structures. The activity of regional organizations in the fight against terrorism is particularly crucial in the face of difficulties, which the United Nations is hit by when trying to obtain a common position on this phenomenon. But also, this activity raises some questions, for example, the extent to which states are inclined to entrust such politicized security problem like terrorism to international institutions. This matter can be seen in the powers' focus on completely independent development of their anti-terrorist policies. Finally: in the view of the developing countries, addressing the problem of terrorism diverts attention from other, in their opinion more important, problems.

As for the problem of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, even though it is traditionally the subject of initiatives and multilateral agreements, it remains the object of interest of regional institutions, and they contribute to enforcement of the existing treaty regime on these issues. While it is true that nuclear-free zones were successfully created in Latin America, Africa and Southeast Asia, the question arises of what role third parties, besides nation-states, including regional security institutions played in shaping the regional nuclear-free zones, and to what degree the existence of those zones resulted from the inability to complete the nuclear ambitions of countries in the regions for objective reasons. In other words, it is rather doubtful that the states of those regions being able to obtain and deliver nuclear weapons, would completely refrain from such activity, under the influence - or sanctions – of regional institutions [9].

## CONCLUSION

To summarize the above considerations, it should be noted that the development of the regional approach to security issues is, in the light of international relations, largely derived from changes occurring in the international system. Each wave of regionalism in the twentieth century was the result of such changes like the end of the Hot War and the beginning of the Cold War, the political and military thaw period, and finally the end of the Cold War and its political and military impact. In those times of change, countries sought, among others, to strengthen their position through regional institutions, raise the level of their own security, increase influences and power. Through the membership in regional organizations, they developed the flexibility to respond to new threats, and the ability to cooperate with different partners. Furthermore, the states appreciate regional institutions, as they create predictable frameworks for cooperation



and negotiations. Therefore, the sources of development of cooperation in the field of regional security can be seen in two ways:

- as the effect of the natural pursuit by states from a given region of cooperation, mutual approach, understanding and dialogue, rooted regional preferences, spilling over of the regional integration process, an expression of regional identity and culture;
- as an expression of states' efforts to ensure the diversification of sources of security within a region, exerting power and influence on partners in a region, striving to keep the relative autonomy of a region, its internal structure and governance, an expression of the awareness that collective action are more effective.

To sum up: the concepts of regional cooperation and regional institutions in the security sphere are tools to counter threats and mitigate the effects of the weakness of nation-states in the anarchic international environment [9].

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