



## STABILITA REGIONÁLNIĀ RÁDŮ V SOUČASNĀM MEZINÁRODNĀM SYSTĚMU: RÁMEC PRO ANALÝZU

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## STABILITY OF REGIONAL ORDERS IN CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM: A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

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K pochopení podob regionálních řádů v současném mezinárodním systému je třeba udělat si jasnější obrázek o jejich základních charakteristikách, stejně jako o kontextu, v jakém se převažující řády formovaly. Ohled přitom musíme brát na povahu vztahů mezi aktéry, převažující vzorce chování entit a instituce, které řády utvářely a měnily – na moc a chování regionálních mocností, na konflikty, spolupráci a integraci v daném regionu a na vměšování vnějších mocností. Tento článek představuje teoretický a analytický rámec určený pro měření úrovně (ne)stability regionálních řádů v současném mezinárodním systému. Cílem textu je napomoci určit míru stability jednotlivých regionálních řádů, stejně jako umožnit jejich komparaci napříč světovými regiony.<sup>2</sup>

**Klíčová slova:** regionální řád, regionální neuspořádanost, regionální systém, stabilita, instituce, anarchie

Understanding the forms of regional orders in the contemporary international system requires a clear picture of its basic characteristics and the context in which the prevailing order was formed. Relationships between the actors have to be taken into account as well as the dominant behaviour patterns of the entities and institutions that created and shaped the regional order – power and behaviour of the regional powers, conflicts, cooperation and integration within the given region, and interference from external forces.

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This article presents a theoretical and analytical framework for determining the level of (in)stability of regional orders in the contemporary international system. The aim of this text is to help to measure the level of stability of individual regional orders and to enable their comparison across world regions.

Key words: regional order, regional disorder, regional system, stability, institutions, anarchy

JEL: F50, F51, F55

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Since the 1990s, the topics of regional institutions, conflicts and powers have been gaining ground in discussions on the new world order, the changing distribution of power in the post-Cold War world and the unequal development of economies and security in different regions. The decentralisation of international relations helped strengthen the autonomy of regions, which were no longer influenced by the great powers' rivalry, and increase the assertiveness of non-Western powers in *international* politics. Already during the period of decolonisation, regional security dynamics in non-Western regions was strengthened by the emergence of new states and the limitation of the influence of traditional powers (Buzan & Wæver 2003, pp. 15–16). Economic and regional institutions were created, and from the 1950s onwards, regional power centres became providers of public goods together with the world powers contributing to the formation of regional orders. The transformation of a bipolar system into a “world of regions” (Katzenstein 2005) therefore helped non-Western entities to rise to power. This, in turn, increased the academic interest in these regions creating the “regional turn in IR theory” (Godehardt & Nabers 2011, p. 1). With greater attention focused on regions, the long-time discussion about the shape of the world order and its transformation turns in the post-bipolar world into questioning how regional systems are formed and shaped and what form regional orders take.

In spite of this, some aspects of the research of regional orders remain largely neglected. For instance, the efforts to theoretically approach the influence of regional powers on the regional order are scarce and insufficient. This leads to the following questions: How do we examine the level of stability of regional orders? What is the influence of the growth of regional powers and strengthening of the autonomy of regions on the form of the world order and individual regional orders? How does the distribution of power, i.e. the existence or, on the contrary, the absence of a dominant regional power in a particular regional system influence regional cooperation and integration? How does the regional order look like in regional systems without any dominant regional power that would support and maintain cooperation and integration within the region, and when regional powers are competing against each other and

cannot supply the role of a dominant power? Is the conflicted and unstable character of some of the world's regional orders and the underdeveloped system of regional governance caused or strengthened by the competition of regional powers?<sup>3</sup> Does the struggle for a privileged position in the region and enforcing different versions of regional order between regional powers not contribute to the deterioration of interstate relations and conflicts?

Therefore, this text aims to partly contribute to the theoretical and methodological debate about the study of regional orders by presenting a theoretical and analytical framework for determining the level of the (in)stability of regional orders in the contemporary international system, and also by explaining the connection between regional power distribution and the character of the regional order. Understanding of the form of regional orders in the contemporary international system requires a clear picture of both, its basic characteristics and the context in which the prevailing order was formed. Relationships between the main actors have to be taken into account as well as the dominant behaviour patterns of the entities and institutions that created and shaped the regional order – power, behaviour and interaction of the regional powers, cases of cooperation and integration within the given region, and interference from external forces. First, this article introduces two crucial concepts – regional order and regional disorder – and explains which particular forms regional orders can take. Further, it presents operational definitions of basic concepts and variables and the framework for analysis, so that the level of stability of regional orders can be measured and compared across different regions.

## 2 REGIONAL ORDERS AND DISORDERS – DEFINING DIFFERENCES

On the most general level, we understand world or regional order as the general arrangement of activities of units in the system and their mutual relations or as the predominant way these activities are governed. This arrangement consists of a set

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<sup>3</sup> The author's paper *The Impact of Regional Powers' Competition on the Middle East Regional Order: 1945–2010* reflects on the influence of the existence of multiple power centres and their relations on the development of regional order in the Middle East in 1945–2010, using the assumptions of the Power Transition Theory (Ponížilová 2016a). The findings of this article were broadened and updated in the book *Regionální řád a mocnosti Blízkého východu: Formování blízkovýchodního řádu na pozadí soupeření regionálních mocností v letech 1945–2015* published in 2016 (Ponížilová 2016b).

of informal (primary)<sup>4</sup> and formal (secondary)<sup>5</sup> institutions which influence the behaviour of individual actors of the given system, their mutual interactions and relations (Barnett 1995, p. 486). To put it plainly, order represents conditions in which units of the international system or individual regional systems exist and operate (Genna 2007, p. 6). The order itself is reflected in the overall functioning of the given system or subsystem – a different form of order displays itself in a distinct nature of relations between the units of the (sub)system. At this point, it is necessary to highlight that the term order can be understood in two ways – order as a normative precept and order as an analytical concept (Rosenau 1992, p. 9), or, in McKinley's and Little's words (according to Rengger 2000, p. 34), order as a “goal satisfaction” (normative order) and order as a “pattern” (descriptive order). The first meaning of order is a result of normative reasoning, which stresses the systemic stability and cohesion as well as cooperative and peaceful relations between actors, where the behaviour is governed by shared rules, norms and “relatively stable expectations” (Barnett 1995, p. 487) while this order distinctly carries a positive connotation. This clearly implies that a situation when conflicts, wars and mutual mistrust among actors predominate the system instead of cooperation and compliance with the rules, is an undesirable state of affairs. Such a system is labelled “chaotic”, “messy” or “disorderly” – in any case, we cannot talk about the existence of order. In case of analytical (empirical) order (Rosenau 1992, pp. 9–10), or, in other words, factual order (Barnett 1995, p. 487), we have to free ourselves from requirements regarding a desirable form of order, that means from the spreading of norms and values the order is built on. If empirical order is an arrangement framing a changing world politics throughout its history (Rosenau 1992, p. 10), then we cannot limit the concept of order to one of its forms – the desirable one – only.

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<sup>4</sup> Primary or informal institutions are “durable and recognised patterns of shared practices rooted in values held commonly by the members of interstate societies, and embodying a mix of norms, rules and principles” (Buzan 2004, p. 181). Among informal institutions we rank, for example, sovereignty, diplomacy, territoriality, market, great power management but also culturally and ideologically grounded institutions such as nationalism, pan-ideologies (i. e. panarabism) or religion (Gonzalez-Pelaez 2009, p. 93).

<sup>5</sup> Among secondary or formal institutions we rank international organizations and international regimes. I work with the presumption that regimes are “sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given area of international relations” (Krasner 1982, p. 186). In case of international regimes, these principles, rules and also financial commitments are accepted by a group of states (Ruggie 1975, p. 570). Organizations are secondary institutions, which are based on “a formal system of rules and objectives, administrative apparatus and formal and material actualities” (Waisová 2003, p. 20). Compared to regimes, organizations dispose of headquarters, budget, own employees, bodies, administrative hierarchy etc.

In this article, we understand the concept of order as an analytical category enabling us to research different social situations, which is why we do not identify the term order with only one specific (desirable) form of systemic order. Thus we do not perceive disorder as an opposite of order but as one of its many forms. Therefore, in this text, we will use the terms stable order (“orderly” intraregional relations prevail) and unstable order (an order taking a form of disorder). In international or regional systems, diverse forms of order can prevail which can be found anywhere on a scale from a high level of instability and conflict (i.e. disorder) up to a stable order characterized by peaceful interactions, widely shared values and norms and respect for rules of behaviour by actors of the given system. Here we agree with Cox (1992, pp. 136–137) who is convinced that an order “is thus not to be perceived as a limited range of social situations, e.g. those which are free from turbulence or conflict” because different values and goals instigate diverse forms of order. An order is, therefore, basically any stable pattern of behaviour or regular interaction, and these occur in various social situations (Hurrell 2007, p. 2). Nevertheless, we cannot see “order” as a completely neutral term regarding its normativity. Rengger (2000, p. 18) comes with an idea that order “must be both ‘normative’ and ‘explanatory’.” Indeed, explanatory or descriptive order fails to capture the social realities of the international system since the behaviour of actors has always a purpose, i.e. it focuses on achieving goals. And this usefulness of all actions of social actors cannot be omitted from the conceptualization of order.

### ***(Dis)order in Anarchy***

According to Bull (2002 [1977], p. 3), relations between constitutive components of an order are never completely random but they follow certain rules and principles – and this applies also to conflicts and wars which are, basically, normative phenomena.<sup>6</sup> Bull (according to Hurrell 2002, pp. viii-ix) adds that “war is as a matter of fact an inherently normative phenomenon; it is unimaginable apart from rules by which human beings recognise what behaviour is appropriate to it and define their attitude towards it. War is not simply a clash of forces ...” Hurrell (2002, pp. viii-ix) says that this Bull's reasoning means that not even armed conflicts are entirely free of rules – wars and conflicts “take place within a highly institutionalised set of normative structures – legal, moral and political”. In English School theorising, the term institution does not relate only to formal institutions such as international governmental organizations, but also to informal institutions such as balance of power or armed conflict (Rengger 2000, p. 23). This answers Rosenau's (1992, p. 2) question

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<sup>6</sup> Cox (1992, p. 136), in this context, adds that “[e]ven the notion of the haphazard can be contested, as scientists now perceive orders within chaos, so may some kind of order be perceived in anarchy.”

if it is possible to consider a wide armed conflict between units in the system as a specific form of order.

In Stanley Hoffmann's opinion (according to Rengger 2000, p. 20), anarchy (an absence of superior authority), together with absence or weakness of norms shared by these units, is an essence of contemporary international order. And it is precisely this (anarchy and weakness of shared norms) what Hoffmann considers a core problem of international order. He continues with a crucial question if both anarchy (in the meaning of an absence of a common authority superior to units) and order (in the meaning of widely shared rules and norms between units of the system, i.e. order in its desirable, stable form) can exist in the international system.

Even Hedley Bull (according to Hurrell 2002, pp. xx–xxi) deals with similar questions – first, if a system of states offers possibilities for the development of a world order, and second, which form this order would acquire. If we understand order as a concept which, in real situations, gains different forms, and if we perceive anarchy as an absence of central authority predominant to states and not as a synonym of chaos, then we can state that order and anarchy are not mutually excluding terms. Wight (1978, p. 105) thinks that anarchy (in the meaning of complete chaos) is not a concept exploitable for the description of the contemporary international system because it does not correspond with the real state of affairs – the international system is not in a state of chaos and permanent conflict. Hoffmann (2002 [1995], p. xxvii) argues that “the ‘anarchy problematique’ does not mean a constant war of all against all.” A state of war is only one possible form of order, nevertheless, since a state system developed, order takes the form of “precarious peace” or “troubled order” when there is not a situation of constant war of all against all but it comes close to the concept of international society (Hoffmann according to Rengger 2000, p. 21). The absence of a central authority affects, in a certain way and to a certain degree, units of the system and has therefore an impact on their behaviour (see below), although this does not imply a permanent state of war of all against all. Because of the anarchical structure of the international system, there are certain structural conditions limiting the behaviour of units but these do not fully reflect specific relations between actors. Relations between actors can be both conflict, and cooperation<sup>7</sup> and actors themselves often try to eliminate or weaken negative effects of anarchy (for example, by creating international regimes or organizations) (Bull 2002 [1977], p. 10, Buzan & Little 2000, p. 108, Wight 1978, p. 105). Therefore, we do not understand the international system and individual subsystems a priori as arrangements characterized by a permanent and omnipresent competition and conflict. Some authors are convinced that “the international system (in

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<sup>7</sup> And Hedley Bull (2002 [1977], p. 10) would add that besides cooperation and conflict, we see also neutrality and indifference with regard to one another's objectives in international relations.

spite of its lack of an overarching regime or world government) is several steps beyond anarchy [in the meaning of chaos and omnipresent conflict – author's note]” (North according to Rosenau 1992, p. 8). This is due to the existence of many international institutions and international laws and treaties regulating the behaviour of states.

In this context, Buzan (1983, p. 96) talks about possible changes in the form of the anarchical system with two utmost forms of anarchy – an immature anarchy and a mature anarchy. Immature anarchy is characterized by mutual non-recognition of the sovereignty of states, by permanent fight for power and dominance between units and their warfare, absence of mechanisms with a potential to regulate the competition between states, and by relations between units which are influenced primarily (but not exclusively) by the distribution of power among them. This anarchy gets the form of chaos and is unstable. It is immature because “it had not developed any form of international society to moderate the effects of political fragmentation” (Buzan 1983, p. 96) (here we can see that Buzan comes close to Bull's thoughts and terminology). That means that the units of this system do not share any norms and rules which would regulate negative effects of the absence of an authority superior to states and their mutual relations characterised by mistrust, hatred and fear. Buzan (1993, p. 341) claims that we can think of a “primitive international system” (or, in his terms, an immature anarchy) but he makes its long-term existence dependent on the development of “at least a few basic elements of international society.” Mature anarchy is characterized by the existence of a society of states recognizing each other's sovereignty, legitimacy, equality and inviolability of borders (Buzan 1983, pp. 96–97).

As has been said, in the system characterized by frequent disputes and armed conflicts, a certain form of order prevails – and it is an unstable one. Thus, in an unstable order, “the minimum conditions of coexistence” have to be met (Aron according to Hurrell 2007, p. 2). Representatives of the English School, Hedley Bull (2002 [1977], p. 13) above all, brings a concept of “international society” which exists in the anarchical system. Bull understands it as a society of states, which may lack a superior authority enforcing law, sanctioning its violations and bearing costs on guaranteeing public goods, nonetheless, states realize the existence of common interests and values, which encourages them to follow a set of rules<sup>8</sup> in mutual relations and to participate in maintaining and running the common institutions. Bull (2002 [1977], p. 13) writes that there can be an international system without an international society. However, the very fact that units mutually recognize their sovereignty creates a certain “minimum of society” in the contemporary international and regional systems.

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<sup>8</sup> These include the rules that states recognize each other's sovereignty or that they comply with international agreements (Bull 2002 [1977], p. 13).

In Buzan's and Little's (2000, p. 107) words, mutual recognition of sovereignty among states creates a social structure of the system the states themselves are part of, thus creating a basis of the international society. Or, to put it in slightly different words, if we accept the existence of a system of states, then only one small step leads to the acceptance of the existence of international society (Wight 1978, p. 105). Such an anarchical society, which is defined by a minimum of shared rules, is, according to Hurrell (2007, p. 3), “necessarily thin and fragile” because its main goals are “the preservation of the society of states itself, the maintenance of the independence of individual states, and a regulation – but not elimination – of war and violence amongst states and societies”. On one hand, the society can be weakened by states choosing strategies to achieve their goals according to the logic of self-help, on the other hand, increasingly thick networks of rules and institution, which exist in the contemporary global system, can strengthen the international society (Hoffmann 2002 [1995], pp. xxvi–xxvii, xxix). This then forms different orders in the international system.

Lake and Morgan (1997a, p. 3) or Hurrell (2007, p. 239) do not speak about one world order but rather about the establishment of several regional orders and about a multi-regional system of international relations. After all, Hurrell (2002, p. xvii) believes that regionalism represents such an important feature of contemporary international relations that it creates opportunities to move away from the research of the worldwide order and to focus on individual “regional international societies”<sup>9</sup>. When we say we can talk about different levels of “maturity” of international society and order in the cases of individual regional systems, we base our assumptions on Buzan's and Little's (2000, p. 105) findings that the level of international society is “quite unevenly distributed” within the global system. This shows differences in the degree of development of orders in individual world subsystems.

Although in some areas of the world, we can see an order where states (usually) recognize each other's sovereignty, negative effects of an anarchic structure prevail and the units' behaviour is not limited by a widely shared network of formal and informal institutions. Relations between actors are thus defined by a low level of trust and cooperation leading to the inevitable reliance on self-help (Stewart-Ingersoll & Frazier 2012, p. 2). In other areas (territories of the European Union member states serve as a traditional example), we can find a society of states whose coexistence is based on sharing a number of rules, norms and a network of institutions, which significantly regulate, manage and coordinate mutual relations and enable foreseeable mutual interactions. A strengthening of trust and collaboration between actors can be

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<sup>9</sup> Besides him also Hoffmann (2002 [1995], p. xxvii) points to the shortcomings in the work of Hedley Bull who focuses solely on the international community and order at a global level but does not sufficiently address how orders vary at different times and in different regions. For example, Buzan and Gonzalez-Pelaez (2009) are trying to fill this gap.



observed and also the promotion and preservation of important values and goals shared by actors of the region, which reflects an “advanced” form of order (Buzan & Little 2000, p. 105). Thus, individual regional orders can differ from each other with regard to their form and they also change in time (see, for example, Wendt's [1999, pp. 246–311] “cultures of anarchy”).

Solingen (1998, p. 3) calls the two utmost forms of regional order “war zones” and “zones of stable peace”. In the contemporary international system, we see mostly different combinations of cooperative and conflictual patterns of actors' behaviour rather than these utmost, ideal-typical forms of regional orders. Hoffmann (according to Rengger 2000, p. 21) names the model of order prevailing in the Westphalian system of sovereign states as “precarious peace” (or “troubled order”) which comes close to the concept of Bull's international society. Thus, he excludes the possibility to qualify the contemporary order as a “state of war”. If there are two utmost forms of order – a system of sovereign states characterized by a necessary minimum of shared norms and rules ensuring its existence (i.e. the majority of states recognize each other's sovereignty and legal equality<sup>10</sup>) on one hand, and a system where states are integrated to such a high degree that a transnational (federative) body is created<sup>11</sup>, on the other hand – then we can think of a spectrum of developmental “inter-levels” of order, which can prevail in the international or regional system.

As mentioned above, authors present various concepts relating to one of the many forms of international order. In each case, individual forms of order are reflected the most by “the manner and degree to which these political practices and institutions have reduced conflict and facilitated some degree of cooperation and stability” (Hurrell 2007, p. 3). Hurrell's comment implies a possibility for an existence of both, an unstable adversarial order where actors fail in reducing conflicts and the level of violence in mutual relations (or they do not strive for it), and the order where armed conflict basically disappeared from mutual relations. And this is precisely the level of stability and cooperation determining the research of various kinds of regional orders.

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<sup>10</sup> Without a mutual recognition of most units of the system, the logic of sovereignty and, hence, a system of states could not exist. According to Wight (1977, p. 135), it would be “impossible to have a society of sovereign states unless each state, while claiming sovereignty for itself, recognized that every other state had the right to claim and enjoy its own sovereignty as well.” Authors Buzan and Little (2000, p. 105) moderate his statement because, from their point of view, it is particularly the great powers and not necessarily all states who have great impact on the definition of the international system of states. Nonetheless, this does not change the fact that without mutual recognition of the right to existence and equality, there would be no system of states. In addition, it is the beginning of the development of rules and institutions in the system on which international law and diplomacy are based. Indeed, Waltz's (1979) theory of international politics largely depends not only on the interactions between states but also on the concept of sovereignty.

<sup>11</sup> And the system of states basically ceased to exist (Buzan & Little 2000, p. 105).

With regard to what was explained earlier in this text, I understand the term “regional order” as a framework arrangement (with)in a regional system reflecting activities and mutual relations of its actors and as an analytical category, which enables us to study different social situations. Therefore, I do not identify order with only one of its possible forms. Rather, I think of a developmental continuum of regional order whose utmost form resembles a highly unstable order characterized by violent and conflicting relations between actors, and the other extreme is a highly stable order where violence disappeared from mutual relations and these are defined by a high level of collaboration and harmony.

### ***The Diversity of Regional Orders***

From Godehardt's and Nabers' (2011, p. 9) statement that “there is nothing like natural [and therefore unchangeable – author's note] regional order”, it becomes clear that orders are the creation of the international community and thus we can refer to them as “political orders”.<sup>12</sup> This fact indicates a possible gradual changeability of orders. As the individual components creating and reproducing order gradually transform, the order is simultaneously reshaped.

What form the regional order acquires we get to know mainly from mutual interactions between actors of the given subsystem, or, to be specific, from the prevailing patterns of behaviour, processes, process formations, norms, rules and, if necessary, also values and the level of their acceptance by regional actors. Authors come up with various concepts regarding the forms of international order. Lake and Morgan (1997a, p. 12) consider to be traditional types of regional order both, the arrangement where states are trying to maintain their security by the balance of power between states, as well as the one where states regulate relations between themselves and ensure security through various types of international security regimes based on cooperation. This category includes, for example, collective security systems or pluralistic security communities. The concept of pluralistic security communities was originally developed by Karl Wolfgang Deutsch (1957), but later also Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (1998) focus on the existence of security communities. Andrew Hurrell's (2007, pp. 3, 5–6) approach also offers few ways of seeing an international

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<sup>12</sup> They speak of *political* order as an order, which was created by the society, thus it is not a *natural* order. They do not use this term in Barša's and Císař's (2008, pp. 331–332) meaning, according to which the political order in the international relations theories is characterized by a monopolization of violence and power dominance due to which a peaceful cooperation in the international system is possible. From this kind of political order they differentiate cultural (social) order representing an “ideological dimension of social relations” and, therefore, being related to the collective sharing of certain ideas and norms about other actors and their actions, to mutual relations and to the rules of international politics.

order. It is either “pluralist and limited society of sovereign states” (i.e. pluralist conception of international order), “liberal solidarist society of states” (i.e. conception of solidarist order), or “complex governance around and beyond the state”. Although it is quite common that in different systems or subsystems various elements of the above mentioned types of regional orders combine, according to Lake and Morgan (1997a, p. 12), one type always prevails depending, among other things, on the interests and preferences of states. In another text, the authors present Europe as an example of the region where states are committed to manage security issues and solve security problems by collaboration (Lake & Morgan 1997b, pp. 345–346).

Therefore, what matters is which specific characteristics of the individual forms of order prevail in the given (sub)system. By researching a specific order, it is necessary to focus on the prevailing patterns of political, security and economic relations between units. Some scholars name these “process formations” (Buzan & Jones & Little 1993, p. 50), others call them “institutions” (Hurrell 2007, p. 4, Wight 1978, p. 111) or “routinized arrangements” (Rosenau 1992, p. 5). No matter what we call them, the important thing is they refer to the processes and relations which prevail in a given (sub)system, and hence to the overall form of order. The great diversity of these process formations or institutions reflects the wide range of different relations the units can enter. On the one hand, they include, for example, conflicts, wars, security dilemmas, neutrality, arms races, balances of power and alliances which emerge due to the effects of the anarchic structure of the (sub)system of units. Their behaviour reflects their uncertainty about the intentions of the others and they must, therefore, follow the logic of self-help. On the other hand, the process formations comprise diplomacy, international formal institutions (regimes, organizations, conventions), international law or economics and trade orders whose formation is brought about by focused and conscious efforts of units of the system to eliminate or overcome the negative effects of the anarchic structure and achieve common profits (such as political stability, peace, trade, resources management or welfare) through institutionalization of mutual agreements and arrangements (Buzan & Little 2000, p. 79, Hurrell 2007, p. 4, Rengger 2000, p. 21, Rosenau 1992, p. 5, Wight 1978, p. 111). The extent of internationalization of rules, norms, ideas and institutions in the region points to the level at which the actors are interconnected. Connectedness of actors refers to the linkage of units of the system “through various kinds of political practices and institutionalized structures” (Hurrell 2007, p. 3), that means, to the different level of mutual (more or less asymmetrical) dependence of actors. And it is particularly this level of connectedness which is, according to Rosenau (1992, p. 13), the main characteristic of the prevailing order. He specifies that some routinized arrangements constituting a basis of an order are the result of conscious and deliberate decisions and activities of actors, their purpose being to maintain the order. Conversely, there are

arrangements that are formed unintentionally by “the aggregation of individual decisions that are designed to serve immediate subsystem concerns but that cumulate to system-wide orderly arrangements” (Rosenau 1992, p. 5).

Buzan and Little (2000, p. 79) suggest that a “nature” of process formations, meanings which processes, institutions, rules, norms and patterns of behaviour prevail in the system, is, to some degree, dependent on the form of the system structure and also on the structure of units (for example, the compatibility of states' ideologies plays an important role). However, scholars in international relations cannot fully agree on the way and degree to which the structure affects patterns of interactions, behaviour and relations among units, and, by extension, of the order. This question does not apply only to the organizing principle of the system (i.e. anarchy or hierarchy), but also the polarity of the system. The order is closely connected to the structure of the (sub)system but it cannot be fully identified with it: when studying an order, we have to take into account also relations between states and type of their interactions (unlike the situation when we study the shape of the structure – in this case, it is enough to know that there are some interactions between units regardless of their type). The changing type of relations, norms, rules and institutions reshapes the form of order. The structure will change only if the distribution of power in the system (for example, from a bipolar to unipolar) or organizational principle (anarchy or hierarchy) changes. But even ideas on what effect the distribution of power between the main actors has on the form of order and stability of the (sub)system, often vary markedly.

### ***Polarity and Order***

In the field of international relations, several theories exist, at the most general level, regarding the connection between the distribution of power among states, or polarity<sup>13</sup> of the system, respectively, and its stability. Many classic realist, neorealist, neoliberal and other authors contributed to the development of these systemic theories to which we rank, for example, the balance of power theory and various hegemonic theories such as the hegemonic stability theory and the power transition theory. These theories focus on the stability of the international system with regard to the power position of states but they differ in the assumptions as to which specific form of polarity is appropriate to maintain its stability. Thus, they come to the conclusions which are inherently contradictory when one group of authors highlights the multipolarly structured system characterized by power balancing through alliances,

<sup>13</sup> Polarity is closely connected to the distribution of power capabilities among units, as is refers to the number of power centres in the system. It is therefore a distribution of power limited to the main actors, i.e. not all actors are involved, as it is the case of the term “distribution of power”. According to Mansfield (1993, p. 105), it is necessary to focus also on the concentration of power when analysing international relations. It indicates how big potential power differences are between the main actors of the system.

while other researches are of the opinion that bipolarity with two competing power centres is the most stable system, and, finally, the third group of scholars supports the unipolarity (sometimes we talk about the hegemonic order), which is typical for its power hierarchy or, in other words, the concentration of power in the hands of a hegemon.<sup>14</sup>

Many authors, both classical realists (e.g. Morgenthau 1948) and authors of different theoretical orientations (e.g. Deutsch & Singer 1964) emphasize the stability of multipolar systems. The balance of power theory<sup>15</sup> highlights positive sides of multipolarity when it says that the balance of power may be either balanced when there is no potential hegemon in the system (even though such a system can be characterized by a certain power asymmetry), or unbalanced (Mearsheimer 2001, pp. 44–45). If multipolar system is unbalanced, meaning when one state significantly increases its power the others would tend to balance the power of this potential hegemon by establishing alliances or by strengthening their own power capabilities. A hegemon or a potential hegemon is, in the eyes of the other (weaker) powers, a significant threat, therefore, it is necessary to balance its relative power and prevent its further growth as this situation may cause the system's destabilization and increase the likelihood of the outbreak of a conflict. The power shift itself is then understood as a cause of conflict between states (Organski & Kugler 1980, pp. 13, 29–30). Peaceful international relations and the stability of the system is maintained when no state has power predominance. However, according to the proponents of multipolarity, this system, contrary to the bipolar one, offers more opportunities to form alliances preventing aggressive behaviour of the state, which increases its power capabilities. Väyrynen (1984, p. 342) goes to the level of a regional system but draws a similar conclusion – the existence of a hegemonic power in the region may be somewhat detrimental because the resistance of weaker states against the hegemonic power decreases the stability of regional systems. Moreover, the presence of the hegemonic power hampers

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<sup>14</sup> For a long time, the debate on the polarity and stability of the system focused on the bipolar and multipolar systems while the interest in unipolarity came later. Unipolarity (or hegemony) should be viewed merely as a hypothetical form of the system, since the balancing of power effectively prevented the emergence of a unipolar system (Kaplan according to Kratochvíl 2002, pp. 28–29).

<sup>15</sup> Besides the balance of power theory, realists also work with Walt's balance of threat theory, which asserts that states cooperate (usually within military alliances) to collectively defend themselves against a common threat. Especially weak states often choose the strategy of bandwagoning and Walt's theory can explain why weaker states take side with a stronger state (or a coalition of states), rather than trying to balance its power (Walt 1985, pp. 6–8). One reason may be the policy of appeasement towards the more powerful state, the second a simple cost-benefit calculation – for the state, it can be more convenient and strategic to join a (regional) power.

the creation of integration groupings for whose formation a relatively equal distribution of power among states is a basic condition.

Among the proponents of a bipolarly structured system we include mainly neorealists headed by Kenneth Waltz (1979). They argue that bipolarity has a positive effect on the stability of the system because the less power poles in the system, the less uncertainty on the part of these powers. And it is exactly this uncertainty that is considered a destabilizing factor. Less uncertainty about the behaviour of others further limits the possibility of miscalculation of the situation and, alternatively, also the outbreak of an armed conflict. With only two powers within the system, these two focus their attention and forces on one another as well as respond to each other (mutually balance their power). In case of multipolarity, the observation of other powers' behaviour and the adoption of adequate responses is complicated due to the higher number of powers within the system. In addition, problems of collective action may arise more probably when states expect that it will be just the other state bearing the costs of balancing of power of the potential aggressor (Levy & Thompson 2010, pp. 33, 52).

From what has been said so far, it is clear the advocates of multipolarity and bipolarity assume that powers are prone to aggressive behaviour and balancing of power prevents such aggression and establishes a peaceful equilibrium (again). Peace is maintained, as in a situation of balanced powers, states cannot be sure if the conflict would end in their favour should the opponent or opponents be relatively equally powerful. This uncertainty about the outcome of a conflict forces them to behave with restraint regarding the possible initiation of a war (de Soysa & Oneal & Park 1997, p. 511). Unlike the hegemonic theory, the balance of power theory argues that a unipolarly structured system is not only undesirable (because it is less stable) but even that no unipolar system should arise, and certainly, the established hegemonic order should not have any legitimacy.

By contrast, the hegemonic stability theory or the power transition theory highlights positive effects of the existence of a hegemonic power for international politics and (international) economy. The original version of the hegemonic stability theory discussed mainly the conditions for the establishment and maintenance of the international liberal economic order. For this, the existence of a hegemonic power advocating liberal economic principles creating and managing the order is necessary (though not sufficient). Without any hegemonic power, the liberal economic order is crumbling and protectionism strengthens in economic relations. Robert Gilpin (2001, pp. 356–357, 359) applied this theory to regions claiming that the presence of a powerful leader state or states is an important factor with a positive impact on regional economic and political integration. It is often in the interest of powers to support the creation of regional economic and political regimes and organizations. Such a power or

group of powers do not only set out the rules of the institutions but also help facilitating cooperation among other countries.

Authors of the power transition theory (see, for example, Tammen et al. 2000) view the existence of a dominant or hegemonic power, or a group of states at this position, as a condition for maintaining security, stable order, cooperative relations and intraregional integration. They form a regional order for the benefit of other states by building structures for regional governance and managing public goods. Therefore, the suppositions of this theory imply that the absence of a dominant power or cooperative group of powers in a region has a negative impact on the stability of the order. The resulting state is conflict in relations and a low level of integration and institutionalisation.

Regarding the agent-structure problem, realist authors such as Waltz (1979, p. 73) believe that the anarchic structure of the international system is a major (though not sole<sup>16</sup>) determinant of the behaviour of units. (Neo)realists suggest that interactions between the units of the system are “structurally determined by some set of physical governing laws” or, to put it differently, the behaviour of units is subject to “objective mechanical laws deriving from material conditions” (Buzan & Little 2000, p. 104). In contrast, social constructivists, for example Wendt (1987, pp. 339, 350), are convinced that units (or agents) and the structure form each other. In other words, the structure determines the behaviour of units and, at the same time, the units support and reproduce the structure of the system by their actions and behaviour, which serve their own interests (they can do so quite unintentionally, simply by the fact that they exist and act within a given system). Behaviour of the units is, in addition to the structure, affected by how the units perceive each other. “If the units share a common identity (a religion or a language), or even just a common set of rules or norms (about how to determine relative status, and how to conduct diplomacy), then these intersubjective understandings not only condition their behaviour, but also define the boundaries of a social system” (Buzan – Little 2000, p. 104). For that reason, the behaviour of actors in the international system is, by securing and protecting their own as well as common interests, determined both structurally and socially. In this context, Hurrell (2002, p. ix) contemplates a realistic concept of the balance of power which, according to his theory, does not work purely by the mechanical logic which would force states to act in a particular way from the outside. He sees it rather as “a conscious and continuing shared

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<sup>16</sup> It is interesting that Waltz (1979, p. 87) assumes that it is mainly the structure what determines the behaviour of units in the system, however, he claims there may be more determining causes of behaviour. In another place in his book, Waltz (1979, p. 123) states it is not only system theories but also theories dealing with phenomena and processes at the unit level what can provide us with an explanation of the behavior of states in the system because both levels are interconnected.

practice in which the actors constantly debate and contest the meaning of the balance of power, its ground rules, and the role that it should play.”

Buzan and Little (2000, p. 108) argue that in the anarchical system, two logics work side by side (the mechanical and the social one) shaping or determining the behaviour and relations of units. The absence of a central authority in the system is a structural condition creating an environment (an environment of mutual distrust between the actors), in which it will always be possible that actors will adopt a competitive strategy rather than the path of cooperation when dealing with others. International society based on shared rules, standards and ideas about mutual relations and interests of units is inherently fragile and could be undermined by the fact that states change their strategies for achieving their own interests according to the logic of self-help and utilitarianism (Hoffmann 2002 [1995], pp. xxvi–xxvii).

A competitive strategy may, therefore, always be one of many possibilities in an environment of international anarchy, but it is not the only one. International system does neither acquire the form of chaos, nor can it be characterized by the omnipresence of wars. In spite of conflicts, units of the system also develop cooperative relations where mutual distrust is eliminated by the existence of common rules of behaviour (Bull 2002 [1977], p. 10, Buzan & Little 2000, p. 108). Thanks to the development of international institutions, diplomacy and law, the mechanisms of power politics are changing (Wight 1978, p. 105). The mechanical logic (power politics between interacting units) resulting in competitive relations is undermined by a social logic (the creation and maintenance of shared rules, institutions and norms, e. g. sovereignty) enabling cooperation between units and reinforcing order (Barnett 1995, p. 487). As Buzan and Little (2000, p. 83) point out, creation and proliferation of norms and rules (e. g. rules for the management of diplomatic relations) has already occurred in historical international systems which were, like the current one, anarchically structured. The influence of the structure on the behaviour of units may be undermined by other factors (whether from other levels of analysis or other sectors). Buzan and Little (2000, p. 85) mention an example when the spread of ideologies between states (which is a process at the unit level) can overcome the structural conditions for their behaviour – liberal democratic states share the same values and norms of peaceful behaviour and collaborate together regardless of the anarchic structure of the international system.

When conducting a system analysis of a specific regional order, the basis is to work primarily with the distribution of power among states of the region and its polarity. The system approach enables to capture the impact of the regional system as a whole on the behaviour of units. Based on the assumption of system theories, we believe the behaviour of actors in the system is to some extent influenced by its structure, or by constraints and incentives stemming from the regional environment,



respectively. This allows us to trace how the change of the system alters the behaviour of its actors. However, the systemic approach alone is not sufficient to examine forms and transformations of regional orders and how it relates to power relations. Besides the characteristics of the system itself, it is necessary to take into account the characteristics of actors, that is the impact of the formal (domestic and regional) as well as informal institutions that shape the interests of actors, their preferences and hence also their behaviour.

Therefore, when analysing regional order, it is essential to analyse also the units, specifically the most powerful states of the given regional system whose power, interests and behaviour must lie at the heart of our research. I believe that a regional system shapes the behaviour of regional powers, just as they form their regional environment. Although partially, we must focus our attention on the distribution of power and the role of power relations in regional policy, moreover, the socialization processes in relations between states should not be neglected either. These processes are under way at least at the level when the states adopt some of the rules and principles of behaviour in interstate relations, such as those concerning sovereignty and diplomacy. In Buzan's and Little's (2000, p.105) opinion, purely material and mechanical interpretation of the international system is not adequate and fails to explain many processes and phenomena in international relations which, in turn, are clarified by the social-constructionist view bringing new elements to international relations research. Both perspectives are therefore highly relevant for the study and for understanding of the current international system and the particular subsystems (Buzan & Little 2000, p. 107). Therefore, they underline the usefulness of the English school's analytical framework to study the international system and order because it combines physical (mechanical) and social aspects of international system's creation and functioning (see the above described Hedley Bull's definition of the international society which retains both aspects).

### **3 DETERMINING THE LEVEL OF STABILITY OF REGIONAL ORDERS**

As can be seen from the above described concept of regional order, it is an abstract concept possibly hard to define. So how can we study the degree of stability of specific regional orders which exist in the contemporary international system, or compare different regional orders, respectively?

The level of stability of a regional order is a variable which can be primarily evaluated by the fact if its actors use, or do not, open violence in mutual relations. When talking about various forms of regional order, what I have in mind, first and foremost, are the different levels of regional stability which can be understood as a continuum. At one end of this continuum is a highly unstable order characterized by frequent conflicts and violent interactions between actors. At the other end, a highly

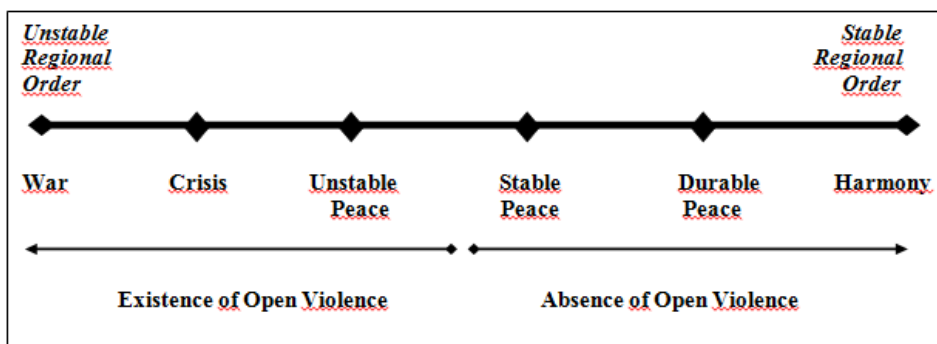
stable order is to be found where violence disappeared from mutual relations and which is thus characterized by a high degree of cooperation and peaceful relations among its actors. Given that orders in different regions take different forms varying from the aforementioned extreme forms in many respects, it is necessary to clarify what forms of regional order can exist in contemporary regional systems.

When examining forms of regional orders, measurable (quantitative) procedures cannot be used. Therefore the operational definition of this concept will be based on qualitative variables. When operationalizing stable and unstable regional orders, I got inspired by the barometer of conflict and peace, or various stages of conflict and peace, respectively, as described in the text *Preventing and Mitigating Violent Conflicts: An abridged Practitioner's Guide* United States Agency for International Development by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The USAID (1997, p. 5) introduces six stages in a row from total war to the harmony of interests, i.e. from highly conflicting to highly cooperative interactions (Scheme 1). These six stages from total war to harmony of interests represent six basic patterns of relations between actors and, by extension, six basic forms of order derived from them. Individual forms of order differ from each other by patterns of interactions and relations that prevail in the given regional system in the period under review. Particular stages of the continuum cannot be separated by precise boundaries, since one stage freely crosses to another and may therefore overlap in some respects and to some extent.

These six stages of the continuum are split into two basic groups – unstable and stable orders – taking into account the incidence of open physical violence in relations between actors. If open violence is used in interaction between actors, then we talk about an unstable order which may take three forms – war, crisis and unstable peace. If the actors managed to eliminate the use of violence completely, it will be a stable order which may again have three forms – stable peace, durable peace and harmony (Scheme 1 and Chart 1).

Scheme 1: Levels of Stability of Regional Orders



Source: author's scheme

War is one of the utmost forms of regional order and we refer to a high degree of instability in the regional system. The regional order is characterized by highly violent relations because there is a continuous struggle between its organized armed forces. This struggle may take the form of a war<sup>17</sup>, state-based armed conflict<sup>18</sup> or non-state conflict<sup>19</sup>. Less violent, but still a highly unstable order is called a *crisis* where actors employ threats to use military force, they mobilize their armed forces and occasional skirmishes can be witnessed. However, the degree of open violence and the use of force is not so eminent as in case of war. There are rather minor and

<sup>17</sup> According to the intensity, Gleditsch et al. (2002, p. 619) recognize *minor armed conflict*, during which at least twenty five deaths per year are recorded and less than one thousand deaths as a total amount of deaths related to the conflict. *Intermediate armed conflict* is a conflict which **claims** at least twenty five but less than one thousand deaths per year and a total amount of at least one thousand deaths related to the conflict. Finally, *war* is a kind of conflict in which at least one thousand deaths related to the conflict are recorded every year.

<sup>18</sup> *State-based armed conflict* is, according to the Uppsala Universitet – Department of Peace and Conflict Research (2017), defined as “a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in one calendar year.” State-based armed conflict can be divided in several subtypes: *interstate conflict* where the main combatants are at least two states, *intrastate conflict* which occurs between a state and a non-state actor without an interference from other countries, and finally, *intrastate with foreign involvement* which occurs between a state and a non-state actor and either side or both of them are directly militarily supported by another state or states which actively participate in the conflict. Alternatively, we can add a fourth type of a state-based armed conflict: *extrastate armed conflict* which “occurs between a state and a non-state group outside its own territory” (Gleditsch et al. 2002, p. 619).

<sup>19</sup> An armed or violent conflict can be divided in *state-based armed conflict* where at least one actor in the conflict is a state, and *non-state conflict* which occurs solely between non-state actors (Uppsala Universitet – Department of Peace and Conflict Research 2017).

intermediate armed conflicts. The probability of a war or armed conflict breaking out between the actors is very high, though.

Also an order where *unstable peace* (alternatively *cold war* or *negative peace*) prevails, is ranked to the (un)stable order. It is still an unstable order because open violence may occasionally occur in the interactions between actors, although its level is rather low. Such order is characterized by high tensions between actors who are very suspicious against each other, and therefore maintain and strengthen their military power as a tool to deter potential aggressors. Given that the actors do not trust each other, their relations cannot be classified as friendly. Peace is fragile, as interactions between actors lack guarantees of non-use of violence or other means of coercion while achieving their own particular interests. That is, among other things, a result of a complete absence or the existence of only few mutual agreements (USAID 1997, p. 7).

Chart 1: Definition of Six Specific Forms of Order

<b>Type of Order</b>	<b>Forms of Order</b>	<b>Definition of Individual Forms of Order</b>
<b>Unstable Order</b>	<b>War</b>	highly violent relations between actors (wars, intermediate armed conflicts), struggle between organized armed forces, highly unstable order
	<b>Crisis</b>	frequent threats of using military force, mobilization of armed forces, occasional skirmishes between armed forces, the lower rate of open violence (minor and intermediate armed conflicts), a high probability of an outbreak of war
	<b>Unstable Peace</b>	fragile peace, occasional occurrence of violence, high tensions between actors, high level of mutual suspicion between actors, strengthening of military power as a tool to deter potential aggressors, absence of guarantees about the non-use of violent measures for achieving own interests, nonexistence or just a minimum of mutual agreements
	<b>STABLE Peace</b>	possible mutual disputes solved peacefully, the outbreak of armed conflict is possible, but unlikely, expansion of joint (generally accepted) rules, predictable behavior of actors

<b>Stable Order</b>	<b>Permanent Peace</b>	high level of cooperation, peaceful settlement of disputes, the existence of institutionalized mechanisms for conflict resolution, almost zero possibility of using physical violence for achieving own interests, high degree of mutual trust, many common goals and values, security does not have to be protected by increasing of military power
	<b>Harmony</b>	the most stable order, harmony of interests and values, widely accepted common standards and rules, solidarity and the bond between actors

Source: author's chart

A form of order named *stable peace* (or *cold peace*) can be considered stable because the actors learned to settle their mutual disputes peacefully. Although the outbreak of an armed conflict is possible, it is rather unlikely, since actors' interests are achieved and potential competition takes place within a set of common (i.e. generally accepted) rules which make the behaviour of actors more or less predictable. A *durable peace* (or *positive peace*) is a highly stable form of order since cooperation between actors reaches a high level despite possible conflicts of interest among them. These conflicts are, however, solved peacefully within the framework of institutionalized mechanisms for dispute resolution. A situation when actors achieve their interests at the cost of using physical violence is virtually impossible because actors value their good mutual, or even friendly, relations more than their particular national interests. A high degree of mutual trust and shared goals and values goes hand in hand with the belief that it is not necessary to protect its own security by increasing military power. The most stable order is the one characterized by the term *harmony*, as mutual relations between communities and actors are basically not affected by colliding interests and different values. Actors feel solidarity with each other and bond with other members of the given group or community (USAID 1997, pp. 6–7). When analysing a regional order it is necessary to study the following:

- a) existence of mutual diplomatic recognition of states,
- b) existence of open violence, that means violent struggles between organised armed forces of individual actors (state and non-state armed conflicts, wars, minor and intermediate armed conflicts),
- c) existence of threats to use military, economic and other coercive measures and their actual use,
- d) maintaining and strengthening military power as a tool of deterring potential aggressors,
- e) existence of military alliances directed against intraregional threats,

f) existence of and respect for agreements among states guaranteeing the non-use of violence or other means of coercion in the case of mutual disagreements,

g) existence of and respect for institutionalized mechanisms for peaceful settlements of disputes,

h) existence of regional regimes and organizations or any set of common (generally recognized) rules regulating behaviour of actors in various areas of social life,

i) membership of states in regional organizations,

j) nature of relations between actors (tensions and mutual suspicion or, conversely, trust, shared goals, interests and values, existence of solidarity and shared identity with others),

k) interference of world powers in regional policy (direct military intervention in regional conflicts or indirect interference through financial, military and diplomatic support of countries).

#### **4 CONCLUSION**

Research in international relations has been focusing for quite some time increasingly on regional systems as subsystems of the global international system, and regional processes, relations and policies which are connected with regional political, economic and security dynamics. To the study of regional systems we also rank the research of stability of regional orders which comprises the analysis of regional politics, interregional relations and regional power hierarchy, or the distribution of power, respectively. Therefore, the main aim of this text was to contribute to the theoretical and methodological debate about the study of regional orders, and their stability in particular. On that account, this article introduces a theoretical and analytical framework for determining the level of (in)stability of regional orders in the contemporary international system. It presents in detail the crucial theoretical concept of regional order and explains which particular forms regional orders in the contemporary international system can take. Further, it explains the connection between the distribution of power within the region and the character of the regional order. In the second part of the article, an analytical framework is described which can be used for the analysis of the stability of various regional orders. This analytical framework was meant to be a useful tool for researchers who want to study stability of particular regions and the form of their order in detail. It can also be used for comparison of the forms of different regions, or regional orders, respectively.

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