

## **The Position of Environmental Threats in Creating Different Models of Regional Integration**

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**ABSTRACT:** After the Cold War, the concept of international security underwent a modification. Among the most important components of such a transformation, the consolidation of 'environmental security', a topic in international security, can be taken into account. Environmental security deal with threats that are not only the unintentional result of social and economic activities but are very slow in comparison with military threats and thus, the timing horizons for necessary political planning to confront them are significantly extensive. This article also reviews the status and role of the environmental threats in creating regional integration using the content analysis method and surveying them. The results indicate that 33/4% of regional integration was created according to the non-geographical variables yet and environmental threats don't play any roles in the so organizations.

**Key words:** International security, Environmental security, Regional integration, Sustainable development, Cold War

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Concerns over the environmental destruction and social conflicts due to climate changes have been added to the contemporary discussions over the security of the planet, militarism, and ruling over the earth. The risk of international conflicts along with increasing environmental pressures and shortages will be augmented, and will destabilize governments more than ever (Homer, 1990). The literature related to the environmental or ecological security was expanded since 1987 when the United Nations introduced the concept for the first time (Kakonen, 1990). The concerns over the international environmental policy issues were raised in the United Nations Conference entitled 'Environment and Development' at the Rio meeting in 1992 in which more than hundreds of non-governmental organizations (NGO) and hundreds of governments as well as their leaders were united to combat the dangers of global ecology. Concerns about the environmental issues have a lengthy history, as a growth in urban industrialization and development has led to new perspectives about the earth as a layer in life (Dads, 2000). Many writers, who have a concern over such environ-

mental problems, believe that ozone destruction, climate changes and environmental erosion will lead to a political turmoil in the world because most of such issues are beyond-boundaries, and are not within the responsibility of a government (Shafer, 1998). Some scientists do not believe that the changes and destruction in the environment may cause international conflicts. Further, some others, criticizing the Rio Conference, state that the basic principles which focus on the sustainable development had been preset by North countries and multi-national companies (Doyle, 1998).

Human beings' healthy living depends on the ability of the governments to cooperate in fighting against environmental pollution, and on accepting the dependence of the fate of local ecology on beyond-national systems of production. The theorists working on globalization as well as the writers working on the Third World issues insist that the environmental problems have become an inseparable part of the concerns over the poverty-stricken areas, consumption, development, and the relations between North and South (Mittleman, 1996).

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In the report published by the United Nations in 1998 on human development, it had been mentioned that the poor countries absorbed 1.1% of the world income although they constitute only 20% of the world population. While the northern countries worry about the changes in the ozone layer, the southern countries worry about their increasing population, lack of resources, human needs and increasing poverty. Therefore, it is necessary to classify the adopted analyses and policies while defining environmental issues (Lipschultz, 2000).

Ernst Haas the founder of the integration theory defines the regional system in this way: '*a process whereby the political leaders of several countries are convinced and willing to direct their loyalty, expectations and political activities to a new center whose symbols have legal authority, or it asks for legal authority and the views representative of peoples and nations*'. During the period after the war, the world witnessed the formation of many different regional systems that had come to provide political and economical stability in the region as well as to enhance a balance between the two superpowers after the Cold War. Thus, countries were forced to work together for their happiness and prosperity, consequently, this cooperation replaced past empires (Fellmann, 2001).

The articles 52, 53, and 54 of the UN Charter have accepted the regional systems and have invited countries to establish regional systems in order to enhance peace and security. In the threshold of the twenty-first century, the process of globalization has become crucial, and it seems that the beginning of this century is entering a new era of economic interaction between nations. Within the globalization, the convergence process is ongoing including:

- 1) economic integration through trade, investment and capital flow;
- 2) convergence of political issues;
- 3) information technology and information, and
- 4) the convergence of cultural environments in this category. Such a situation will lead to a kind of environmental imperialism by which the northern countries seek to impose their demands on the southern countries to reform the programs they are developing while they refuse from relieving their debts and transferring technology to them (Shiva, 1993).

Globalization process, having different dimensions, will leave its effects in all fields. The scope of authority of national governments is reducing worldwide, and different affairs are moving on to the international level, which must, forcibly, be administered by transnational organizations (Falk, 1995). For example, human development affects environment, or trade de-

velopment influences investment and capital flow. The daily flow of about 30 billion dollars to investors has changed the concept of borders. Globalization affects sustainable development and environment even in terms of economy in different dimensions. Globalization influences the trend of economic growth and similarly the environment. Such effects are in some cases favorable but undesirable in some other cases.

Globalization will accelerate structural changes and will transform the structure of countries; as a result, resource consumption and pollution levels will speed. Globalization can cause investment and technology to be developed, but its effect on the environment depends on the environmental characteristics of the areas and their quality; and this is the factor that sets the environment in such areas of globalization is to decline or to improve. Globalization is the cause of market imbalance and political abnormality. This, in turn, founds the background to destruct the environment and can also direct policies that previously considered as domestic toward policies that are completely new via exerting pressure for a reform. Despite increased economic growth as a result of globalization, it will also be possible in some regions and countries that globalization causes the collapse of some industries and sectors; this, in turn, will lead to deterioration of resources and eventually the spread of poverty among the people of such regions and ultimately the destruction of the environment (Baker, 2000).

Globalization can develop the global standards of production. The development of environmental standards and the expansion of consumer markets can bring up a sort of current that may cause a remarkable increase in global standards. Of course, within the stream of events, it is possible that certain activities of unfair competition cause damages to healthy competition, or certain weak standards result in a sort of competition leading to downfall. Economic globalization will change the joints between the market and the government. This process exerts pressure on governments and increases the role of the markets in economic, social and environmental interests. Further, it creates new global requirements for the governments to cooperate environmentally. It will bring convergence with itself and the following objectives are followed: first, to determine the key links between globalization and the environment; second: to determine problems and multilateral international agreements in fields such as finance, investment and intellectual property rights that affect environmental sustainability; third: the priority of revising policies that affect multilateral economic agreements. In this way, we are able to analyze the incentives that play a role in trade and investment policy-making, whose implications affect the environ-

mental sustainability (Kelly, 1994). In fact, creating regional integration can help the establishment of a multi-polar system worldwide; something that seems unwanted by the powerful countries which are willing to have bilateral relations (Huntington, 1999).

### **MATERIALS & METHODS**

The method used in the current study was the library research, which was completed via using the published documents about regional integrations as well as the computerized information about environmental issues and threats. Also, this study used an analytical-descriptive method in which library and documental investigation have been done using principles of geography and other sciences including: environmental and political sciences. In addition, soft wares such as Excel and Encarta have been used as well as necessary maps and charts.

### **RESULTS & DISCUSSION**

The variables that can be effective in the formation of a regional system are different. *Hetten* writes in his paper entitled: 'New Regionalism, Security and Development': '*The emergence of regional systems can be intentional and can be formed based on the predetermined plans of governments, but in most cases, it is non-intentional and is due to various international conditions.*'

In his point of view, the economic, political, social, cultural and particularly security variables are effective in the realization of a regional system and he, thus, points to the regional systems that are based on different foundations including: the geography-based regional system, social-based regional systems which correspond to the cultural-social solidarity among human groups residing in the same vast geographic area, and finally, the cooperation-based regional system which has roots in intra-governmental collaboration in different cultural, political and economic scopes (*Hetten*, 1991). In future, the trend of strengthening the existing international organizations and creating new international organizations will continue as there will be an increase in their volume and number of activities as well as the role they play.

In order to draw more accurate picture of the variables that influence the formation of a regional system separately, the following points are mentioned: Geographical variable: When talking about geography, various dimensions must be considered. Geographical proximity is the most important and the most common factor in the emergence of a regional system, but it should not be mentioned in isolation. In the areas in which there are regional differences and political tensions, the environmental situation will be worsen if

the environment is kept under pressure. The existence of a geographic factor, that creates common or conflicting interests for certain countries, can result in preparing the ground for the establishment of the regional system. In this case, the environmental threats can be considered the most important factors in shaping the regional system.

The Mediterranean has formed a Mediterranean system for its littoral states including European, Asian and African countries; and the Persian Gulf plays the same role for its coastal countries.

This variable has been evaluated as two positive sign (+ +) in terms of the environmental threats in this study. Political variable: Here, integration means: integration in policies. In other words, it includes a sort of coordinated operation/action by a group of countries that follow common strategies in their domestic and foreign policies. The amount and the range of such common strategies are effective in measuring the degree of integration. The inter-consistency of democratic regimes against the authoritarian regimes is among the effective variables in creating a regional system. Environmental threats in such structures are usually devalued for regional integration. This variable has been evaluated as a minus sign (-) in terms of the environmental threats in this study. Security variable: If we define security as: 'The time when human beings' vital values are not endangered.' (*Lippmann*, 1973), then, threatening such values by the one or two powers in a region prepares the ground for polarity in the region, which in turn, provides the foundation of further attempts to create a balance. However, *Mohammad Ayoub* in his book entitled: 'Regional Security in the Third World' points to a distinguishing dimension between the threats to regional security systems in the west and the threats to security systems in the third world countries, and states: any threat to western security is considered to be from external opposition groups and not from minorities or from the actions taken inside, while in the third world countries, all actions and activities no matter from foreign forces or opposition groups are considered anti-security, and thus, governments prevent the emergence of such opposing flows strongly.

It must be accepted that achieving a balanced system in the third world regions (South today) is very complicated, and the relations between nations should be also considered in addition to the inter-governmental relations to be able to analyze the causes of behaviors. Perhaps, if security is introduced using the Cold War conceptions, the environmental threats can be said to have no place in such integrations, but environmental security can be considered a variable in this model with the conceptions of security used in the

21st century. This variable has been evaluated as a minus sign (-) in terms of the environmental threats in this study.

Economic variable: Economic needs and the existence of common or conflicting economical interests are among factors that shape a regional system. For instance, the necessity of unity about the issue of energy which is in the monopoly of certain countries (such as APEC) or the conflict of interest in connection with an economic category that becomes a matter of competition by a group of countries (such as oil exploitation in the Caspian Sea) prepares the ground for a regional system. If the economy is looked at only superficially, the environmental threats seem to have no place in such an approach; however, economy should exist based on the environmental security criteria if a sustainable development is intended. It should be of course noted that open and unrestricted economic growth may lead to environmental erosion and reduces the ability of governments and non-governmental organizations to lessen the resulted environmental losses (Deudney, 1990).

This variable has been evaluated as a minus sign (-) in terms of the environmental threats in this study. Socio-cultural variables : Various variables such as ethnicity, race, historical relations, language and religion can play a role in the formation of a regional system. For example, the expansion of the Arabic language

finds the Arab League, or Muslim nations establish the Organization of Islamic Conference. Usually, the discussed environmental threats do not play any role in such a model of regional integration. This variable has been evaluated as a minus sign (-) in terms of the environmental threats in this study. Variable of Foreign powers: Foreign powers, especially the superpowers whose interests are not restricted to the geographical scope and their local borders, are effective in the emergence, destruction, strengthening or weakening of a regional system based on their security/economical considerations. It is generally known that the measures taken by the Red Army and the Soviet Union have been significantly effective in the formation of the Eastern Europe during the Cold War. Generally during the Cold War, studying the regional systems has been basically possible via surveying the competitive relations of the superpowers, and the two global superpowers, the United States and Russia, have played an active role in regional issues. Usually, the environmental threats play no significant role in such a model of regional integration. This variable has been evaluated as a minus sign (-) in terms of the environmental threats in this study. The six mentioned variables or factors are formed via the combination of two or three of the variables related to regional integration. The role of each variable in creating regional integrations has been illustrated in Table 1. Fig. 1. below:

**Table 1. Variables the formation of regional system (Continues)**

Practice area	Total Users	Variables that influence the formation	Valuation of environmental threats in the formation of	Symbol	The organization
Europe and North America	19	Foreign powers	--	NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
Europe	15	Geography - Economic	+	EU	European Union
South Eastern Europe	11	Economic - geographical	+	BSEC	Black Sea Economic Co-operation Group
South Eastern Europe	11	Geographic	++	--	Danube Commission
Soviet Union	12	Economic	+	CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
Continental America	36	Geographic	++	OAS	Organization of American State
Central America	6	Geography - Economic	+	CACM	Central American Common Market
Latin America	12	Social - Cultural	--	LAIA	Latin American Integration Association

**Table 1. Variables the formation of regional system (Continues)**

* To be continued on next page					
South America	5	Geographic	++	--	The Andean Community
Central and South America	25	Geographic	++	ACS	Association of Caribbean States
The Caribbean	18	Geographic	++	CARICOM	Caribbean community
South West Asia	10	Geography - Economic	+	ECO	Economic Co-operation Organization
Pacific Ocean	21	Geography - Economic	+	APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation
South East Asia	10	Geographic	++	ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nation
Southern Asia	7	Geographic	++	SSRC	South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation
Middle East	22	Social - Cultural	--	--	The league of Arab State
Persian Gulf	6	Geographic - Security	+	GCC	Gulf Co-operation Council
South America	4	Geography - Economic	+	MERCOSUR	Southern Common Market
Central America	8	Geographic	++	OECS	Organization of Eastern Caribbean
Middle East	21	Social - Cultural	--	AFESD	Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development
Northern Africa	5	Geographic	++	--	Arab Maghreb Union
Middle East	21	Social - Cultural	--	AU	African Union
Central African Republic	10	Geography - Economic	+	CEEAC	Economic Community of Central African State
West Africa	18	Geography - Economic	+	ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
West Africa	8	Geography - Economic	+	UEMOA	West African Monetary and Economic Union
East and South Africa	20	Economic - geographical	+	COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
Southern Africa	14	Geographic	++	SASC	Southern African Development community

**Table 1. Variables the formation of regional system (Continue)**

* To be continued on next page					
Central African Republic	5	Geographic	++	--	Lake Chad Basin Commission
West Africa	9	Geographic	++	--	Niger Basin Authority
East Africa	3	Geographic	++	--	East African Community
South Pole	39	Economic	-	--	Antarctic Treaty
Eurasia and America	55	Security	-	OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Europe and other Continents	31	Economic	-	OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
Europe	43	Geographic	++	--	Council of Europe
Europe	10	Geographic	++	WEU	Western European Union
Europe	4	Economic - geographical	+	EFTA	European Free Trade Association
Europe	11	Geographic	++	--	Council of the Baltic Sea States
Latin America	28	Economic Social - Cultural	-	SELA	Latin American Economic System
South Pacific	16	Geographic	++	PIF	Pacific Islands Forum
Middle East	10	Economic Social - Cultural	-	OAPEC	Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries
Islamic World	57	Social - Cultural	-	OIC	Organization of the Islamic Conference
Latin America	10	Economic Social - Cultural	-	LANFTA	Latin American Free Trade Association
North America	3	Economic - geographical	+	NAFTA	North American Free Trade Association
Indian Ocean	19	Geographic	++	IRO-ARC	

\* In cases where another variable plays a role in shaping the regional organization along with the geographical variable, the role of the environmental threats will be pale, thus in the above-mentioned table, one plus (+) has been subtracted from the evaluation of such integrations

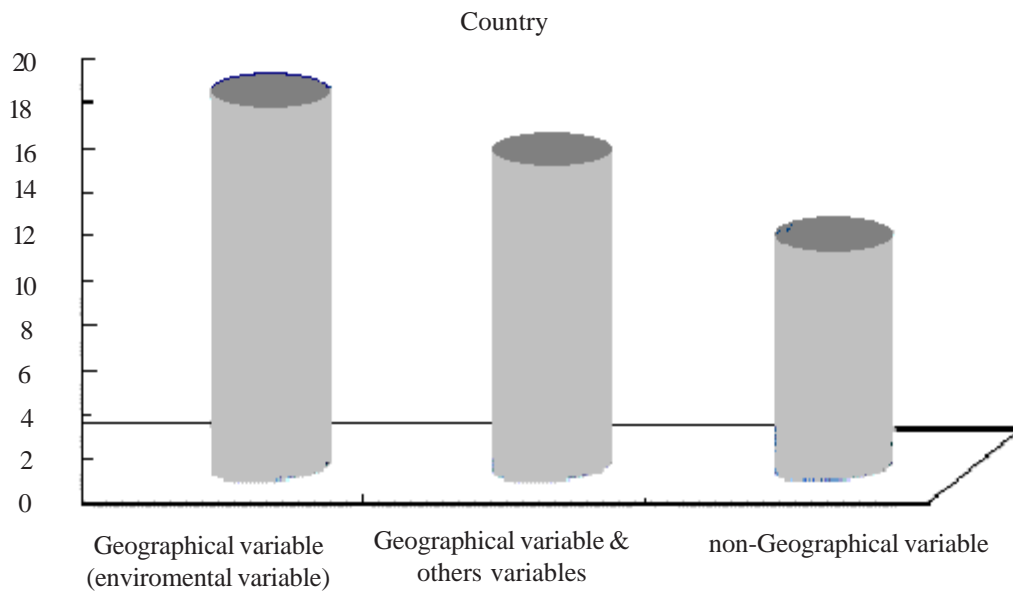


Fig. 1. Position of environmental threats in different models to create regional integration

## CONCLUSION

As has been shown in the table illustrating the division of active regional organizations in the world, only 19 organizations out of 45 have formed a regional organization due to geographical reasons (42.2%). In such regional organizations, the environmental threats can be considered the most important factors in shaping regional organization. In addition to the geographical variables of other factors, eleven organizations have been effective in their formation (24.4%). The interference of the non-geographic and geographic variables necessarily devalues the environmental threats between the member countries so that those countries often ignore environmental threats on the basis of their own security or economical interests. 15 organizations were also formed for non-geographical reasons variables which play no role in the environmental threats (33.4%).

If we also glance at the formation date of the organizations, we will find out that most organizations in which no geographic variables can be seen, are related to the Cold War period; they have lost their value internationally within the years after the Cold War. The importance of economic power during recent years and its superiority over military power in the Cold War period show that we cannot expect nowadays that regional integrations are merely formed on the basis of one of the above-mentioned variables, rather today, the economic variable can be considered one of the most important variables to cause regional integration. It is expected that in future, economy-oriented regional co-operations will have the desired output, provided

that economy becomes the flourishing core in the sustainable development; in addition, the sustainable development that is human-oriented will certainly look at the environmental threats as the major factor that threatens economy. In this case, we can claim that the economic variable will not only avoid reducing the importance of the environmental security in a given regional integration, but it will cause the degree of the environmental security to grow up.

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