

Cross-border cooperation as a key element of internal security – selected aspects

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Abstract— The Cross-border cooperation has become an essential element of internal security in an increasingly globalized and interconnected world. Contemporary challenges such as transnational organized crime, terrorism, cyber threats, and migration require states to engage in collaborative frameworks that transcend traditional territorial boundaries. This article explores the theoretical foundations of cross-border cooperation, emphasizing its role in addressing internal security threats. Drawing upon theories such as functionalism and regionalism, the paper highlights how shared interests and mutual benefits drive cross-border collaboration.

The study discusses the practical dimensions of cooperation, focusing on areas such as data-sharing, joint law enforcement operations, and disaster response mechanisms. It also examines the pivotal role of initiatives like the Schengen Information System, Europol, and regional cross-border frameworks such as Euroregions. Despite its successes, cross-border cooperation faces significant challenges, including political and legal barriers, technological disparities, and social mistrust.

To overcome these hurdles, the article recommends harmonizing legal frameworks, investing in interoperable technologies, promoting social trust through education, and enhancing the autonomy of border regions. Ultimately, the paper underscores that cross-border cooperation is not merely a strategic tool but a necessity for ensuring comprehensive internal security in a borderless world.

Keywords— Cross-border cooperation, internal security, regionalism, transnational threats, Schengen Information System.

I. INTRODUCTION

In an era of globalisation and dynamic political, social and technological change, cross-border cooperation is gaining importance as a key element in the internal security system of states. Borders have ceased to be merely lines of territorial

division and have become areas of cooperation in the context of crime fighting, crisis response and migration management. This article attempts to discuss the theoretical foundations of cross-border cooperation and its impact on internal security, taking into account the perspectives of international organisations, the legal framework and practical examples.

Borders between states are increasingly becoming spaces of cooperation rather than mere territorial dividing lines. The process of globalisation and the development of information technology have significantly changed the way states approach internal security. Challenges such as cross-border crime, migration, humanitarian crises or cyber threats do not respect national borders, forcing the development of integrated security strategies (Sanetra-Półgrabi, Sapiński 2021).

Cross-border cooperation is not a new phenomenon, but its importance is growing in the face of contemporary threats. The theoretical basis for this type of cooperation has been shaped by integration processes, such as the development of the European Union, but also by historical experiences, such as cooperation between bordering states in local initiatives. In the context of internal security, this cooperation goes beyond police and military issues to also include social, economic and technological aspects.

Cross-border cooperation is defined as formal and informal cooperation between state and non-state actors operating in border areas to solve common problems and achieve common goals (Perkmann, 2003). It is based on the assumption that state borders are both barriers and sites of interaction that require the coordination of activities. The history of cross-border cooperation dates back to medieval times, when communities living in border areas developed local cooperation mechanisms. The modern framework for cooperation began to take shape



after the Second World War with the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community, which was one of the first examples of regional cooperation aimed at common economic and political objectives.

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION IN COMBATING INTERNAL THREATS

1) The foundations of cross-border cooperation can be analysed in the light of several theories:

- Functionalist theory (David Mitrany): Cooperation in specific areas, such as security or the economy, leads to stronger integration between states.
- Comprehensive security theory: Internal security is inextricably linked to international security, necessitating cross-border cooperation.
- Regionalism theory (Keating, 1998): Border regions become political actors, promoting cooperation in the context of common interests.

2) Examples of cross-border cooperation:

- The European Framework Convention on Transfrontier Cooperation between Territorial Communities and Authorities (1980, the so-called Madrid Outline Convention) is the key document governing this cooperation in Europe.
- Local initiatives such as Euroregions (e.g. the Nisa Euroregion), which promote interregional cooperation in the areas of economy, tourism and security.

Organised crime, human trafficking, drug smuggling and irregular migration are challenges that do not respect national borders, requiring effective and integrated international action.

Cross-border cooperation includes(info.policja.pl):

1) The creation and use of common databases:

- The Schengen Information System (SIS), which enables the exchange of information between EU Member States, supporting the activities of border services, police and justice.
- Europol Information System (EIS), supporting the exchange of information on crimes and suspects at European level.
- Coordination of law enforcement activities:
- Europol: the EU institution responsible for supporting police cooperation in the fight against international crime, including cybercrime or terrorist financing.
- INTERPOL: an international police organisation facilitating information exchange and inter-national cooperation outside the European Union.

2) Joint operations and police cooperation centres:

- Organising joint anti-crime operations, such as Joint Investigation Teams (JITs), which allow teams from different countries to conduct investigations.

Police and customs cooperation centres at borders, where services from different countries jointly monitor and combat threats.

Cross-border cooperation on crisis management and border protection enables rapid and coordinated responses to modern

world challenges such as natural disasters, pandemics or terrorist attacks (Prokopenko et al. 2019):

1) European Union Civil Protection Mechanism:

- Enables rapid and coordinated assistance between Member States in crisis situations.
- It supports the pooling of resources such as rescue teams, medical equipment or materials needed in emergency situations.

2) Border Protection Agencies:

- Frontex (European Border and Coast Guard Agency):
- Supports member countries in managing the EU's external borders, ensuring effective monitoring and coordination of border surveillance operations.
- Implementation of border surveillance systems, such as EUROSUR, to help monitor migration flows and identify threats.

3) Cross-border exercises and contingency plans:

- Organising regular training and simulations for emergency and border services from different countries, allowing better preparation for joint action in emergency situations.
- Creating integrated response plans, covering both technical and logistical aspects.

Transnational crime, including organized crime, human trafficking, drug smuggling, and illegal migration, poses significant challenges that transcend national borders. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive and unified international response, leveraging cross-border cooperation to enhance efficiency and effectiveness. One of the critical aspects of this collaboration is the establishment of shared databases, such as the Schengen Information System (SIS), which facilitates the exchange of data among European Union member states. This system enables law enforcement, border control, and judicial authorities to access real-time information about suspects, stolen property, and criminal activities. Similarly, tools like the Europol Information System (EIS) enhance data sharing and operational coordination across Europe. Institutions like Europol and INTERPOL play pivotal roles in fostering international law enforcement collaboration. Europol supports joint investigations, intelligence sharing, and coordinated operations among EU member states, while INTERPOL extends this network to countries beyond the EU, creating a global platform for combating transnational crime. Joint Investigation Teams (JITs), which bring together investigators and prosecutors from multiple nations, exemplify this approach by enabling streamlined, cross-border criminal inquiries. In parallel, managing crises and safeguarding borders are crucial elements of transnational security efforts (Witkowski, Suduł 2017). The European Union Civil Protection Mechanism exemplifies effective collaboration by enabling rapid and coordinated responses to natural disasters, pandemics, and terrorist threats. This mechanism pools resources, such as rescue teams and medical supplies, to ensure swift assistance between member states in times of need. Border protection is further enhanced through agencies like Frontex, which supports EU countries in monitoring and managing external borders. Initiatives such as EUROSUR (European Border Surveillance

System) enable real-time surveillance and threat detection, bolstering the ability to prevent illegal crossings and combat cross-border criminal activities. Moreover, transnational preparedness is reinforced through joint training exercises and integrated response plans. Regular simulations for emergency services, law enforcement, and border agencies foster improved coordination and readiness for crises. These exercises strengthen operational ties, ensuring that all involved parties can effectively collaborate during emergencies. By embracing cross-border partnerships and leveraging shared resources, nations can address the multifaceted threats of transnational crime and crises more effectively. This collective approach not only enhances security but also builds trust and solidarity among international partners, underscoring the importance of unified action in an interconnected world. The rapid advancement of technology has introduced both opportunities and challenges in combating transnational crime and managing crises. Harnessing these technologies has become integral to modern cross-border cooperation. Systems like biometric identification tools, automated border control gates, and AI-driven threat detection software enable faster and more accurate identification of individuals and potential risks. For instance, facial recognition systems and biometric databases facilitate the swift tracking of suspects or missing persons across multiple jurisdictions. Moreover, intelligence sharing has become more sophisticated through platforms that allow real-time data exchange. Tools like SIENA (Secure Information Exchange Network Application), managed by Europol, enable secure and efficient communication between law enforcement agencies. These platforms not only accelerate the exchange of critical intelligence but also reduce the duplication of efforts, allowing resources to be directed where they are most needed. As digital transformation continues to shape societies, cybercrime has emerged as one of the most pervasive forms of transnational crime. Cybercriminal networks exploit the borderless nature of the internet to engage in activities such as financial fraud, identity theft, ransomware attacks, and the illicit trade of drugs and weapons on the dark web. To counter these threats, countries are increasingly investing in cyber defense initiatives and international cooperation. Joint task forces and specialized cybercrime units, supported by Europol's European Cybercrime Centre (EC3) and INTERPOL's Global Cybercrime Programme, have proven instrumental in dismantling cybercrime networks. These units work closely with private technology companies to identify vulnerabilities, track malicious actors, and protect critical infrastructure from cyberattacks. Additionally, cross-border agreements ensure that legal frameworks align to enable the swift prosecution of cybercriminals. Effective cross-border cooperation also requires harmonized legal frameworks that address the complexities of transnational crime and border management. Treaties, conventions, and mutual legal assistance agreements are essential tools for ensuring that criminals cannot exploit gaps in national legal systems to evade justice. For example, the European Arrest Warrant facilitates the extradition of suspects between EU countries, significantly reducing delays in judicial processes. Capacity building plays a vital role in equipping

countries with the tools and expertise needed to address shared challenges. Training programs, funded through initiatives such as the European Union's Internal Security Fund, provide law enforcement and judicial authorities with the skills to investigate, prosecute, and prevent transnational crimes effectively. Collaborative workshops and seminars further enhance the understanding of evolving threats and best practices in managing them. The growing interconnectedness of the world necessitates a unified approach to addressing transnational threats. While significant progress has been made, there remains a need for deeper integration of efforts across borders. Expanding partnerships to include non-governmental organizations, private companies, and civil society can further strengthen the collective ability to respond to crises and combat crime. Global challenges such as climate change, forced migration, and pandemics underline the importance of shared responsibility and collaboration. Nations must continue to invest in innovative technologies, strengthen legal mechanisms, and foster trust-based relationships to ensure a secure and resilient future (Sapiński 2022). Only through sustained, coordinated efforts can the global community effectively counter the ever-evolving threats of transnational crime and crises.

III. CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS FOR CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

1) Political tensions

Differences in political priorities between countries can limit the effectiveness of cooperation. An example is the controversy over migration policy in the EU, with southern European countries expecting more support in migration management and central and eastern European countries expressing opposition to the refugee relocation scheme.

2) Technological issues

Interoperability of IT systems remains a challenge. The introduction of RODO (the Data Protection Regulation) has necessitated the adaptation of IT systems in EU countries, which has delayed many cross-border cooperation projects.

3) Public lack of acceptance

Despite the benefits of cross-border cooperation, local communities often fail to recognise its importance. In border regions, conflicts of a cultural nature occur which make it difficult to build mutual trust.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to improve the effectiveness of cross-border cooperation, actions are needed at the political, social and technological level:

- Harmonisation of legal provisions on crime, cyber security and crisis management will facilitate cooperation between countries. Proposal: Create common EU directives that set uniform standards for dealing with cross-border threats.
- Interoperable IT systems: Investment should be made in IT systems capable of communicating between different

countries. An example is the development of e-CODEX, which enables the electronic exchange of judicial documents within the EU.

- Regional education: Educational programmes targeted at the inhabitants of border regions can reduce social tensions and promote cooperation.
- Providing border regions with greater financial and decision-making autonomy can speed up the implementation of local cross-border projects. Example: Programmes such as INTERREG enable direct.

V. CONCLUSION

Transboundary cooperation in the field of security is a critical element in building stability and preventing threats in the international sphere. In today's world, faced with global challenges such as terrorism, migration, organized crime, climate change, and health crises, the collaboration between states, international organizations, and local security agencies has become an integral part of systems designed to protect citizens and maintain order. This cooperation takes various forms, including the exchange of intelligence, joint law enforcement operations, initiatives aimed at countering terrorism and cyber threats, as well as actions to prevent human trafficking and the illicit trade in weapons. Equally important is strengthening cooperation between neighboring states in terms of border protection and crisis response in disputed zones. From the perspective of effective cooperation, a key element is understanding the specific needs and characteristics of individual regions, as well as harmonizing legal frameworks and operational procedures. It is also vital to establish appropriate coordinating structures that will enable quicker and more efficient actions in times of crisis. Despite its achievements, transboundary cooperation in security is not without challenges. These include differences in legal and political systems, which can hinder the coordination of actions, as well as issues related to lack of trust between states, especially in the case of conflicting interests. Moreover, the dynamic nature of contemporary threats requires flexibility in adapting responses to the changing geopolitical situation. Cross-border cooperation in the security domain is an essential component in ensuring global stability and order. Although it faces various challenges, its development, based on trust, knowledge exchange, and experience-sharing, is of utmost importance in countering modern threats and fostering peace and prosperity in transboundary regions.

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