

# THE INFLUENCE OF REGIONAL SECURITY DYNAMICS ON INTERNATIONAL POLICE COOPERATION – THE CONCEPT AND MODELS OF REGIONAL POLICE COOPERATION

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DOI: [https://doi.org/10.18485/isimod\\_strint.2023.ch3](https://doi.org/10.18485/isimod_strint.2023.ch3)

## Keywords:

cooperation,  
police,  
security,  
region,  
complex



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**Abstract:** *All the changes in the world related to the end of the Cold War have stimulated regional security dynamics, and regional level, as a level of analysis, has received a very significant place in modern security studies. One of the most important post-Cold War theoretical approaches (if not the most important), which deals with regional security dynamics, is the Theory of the Regional Security (Sub) Complex. We cannot help, but notice the indirect influence of this theory on changes in the approach to the study of subjects, concepts and methods of international police cooperation. Namely, modern trends of stronger regional connection and strengthening of regional security identities have led to the regional dimension of cooperation being in the foreground. Regional police cooperation implies a series of relations that are established between countries that belong to the same regional security (sub) complex with the aim of undertaking joint activities to solve common security problems. In this paper, we will present the concept and models of regional police cooperation.*

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## Introduction

After the end of the Cold War, significant changes took place in the world security architecture. Until then, all security phenomena, including interstate relations, were determined by the struggle of two opposing blocs – the NATO Alliance led by the United States and the Warsaw Pact led by the Soviet Union. In this sense, the importance, intensity, modalities and levels of international police cooperation were determined by this global security dynamics. Therefore, this important segment of international relations, which includes the cooperation of law enforcement services of different countries, was overshadowed by the Cold War for a long time, fitting, theoretically and practically, into the security paradigm of that time.

The security paradigm, in the post-Cold War environment, has significantly changed, and one of the most important changes is related to the intensification of regional security dynamics. Barry Buzan and Ole Waver developed the theory of the regional security complex, which emphasizes security interdependencies within different regions. Simply put, states that belong to a regional security complex have common security problems that they have to solve together. This is where we come to the concept of regional police cooperation. The importance of mutual cooperation between the law enforcement services of the countries of a region has grown rapidly due to contemporary trends of stronger regional connections and strengthening of regional security identities and institutions (Vejnović et al., 2022).

We cannot help, but notice the connection that exists between the origin and development of regional police cooperation and the development of the theory of the regional security complex. This theory has been developed as a result of the need to supplement theoretical framework of that time for the analysis of international security. This has certainly led to some changes in the approach to the study of international police cooperation. Namely, the theory of the regional security complex has over time become one of the most prominent and useful theoretical frameworks in the studies of security sciences, and the regional security (sub) complex has become rather significant level of analysis in terms of law enforcement cooperation.

Therefore, in order to come to a valid conceptual definition of regional police cooperation, we have to start from the concept and content of international police cooperation. After that, by implementing the theory of the regional security (sub) complex as a theoretical framework, we can also define regional police cooperation.

## The concept and characteristics of international police cooperation

International police cooperation is not the result of modern international relations and globalization processes. Various modalities of police cooperation have been known since the beginning of the police profession, but institutionalized forms

appeared only in the 19th century. In the past, police cooperation was used for political purposes, in the fight against the opposition and political dissidents, and in modern international relations, police cooperation is one of the ways to suppress cross-border organized crime (Guide to cooperation in internal affairs in the European Union, 2015).

Security interdependence is one of the basic characteristics of the modern world, and crime has been known for a long time and does not recognize state borders. The mobility of perpetrators of criminal acts and (international) criminal groups is a by-product of international integration processes carried by the wings of globalization and liberalization of a market economy. The fall of the USSR, the establishment of the Schengen Area within the European Union, the emergence of new global and security forms of communication and highly branched forms of international traffic have contributed to the establishment of criminal organizations that can operate across borders in many countries, without much risk (Picarelli, 2012). Thus, today it is almost impossible to talk about organized crime that in one way or the other does not cross the borders of a country, taking into account the fact that criminal organizations located in various countries establish cooperative relationships, trying to achieve greater profits and stronger influence (Bošković, 2004). In the same way, it is impossible to talk about a terrorist activity that does not have an international or regional feature, and "internationality, as a prefix of terrorism, forms a tip of the blade of the threatening spear of criminal activities, whose modalities of manifestation are less and less aware of the ethnic and territorial borders of modern nations and states" (Krstić, 2015: 313).

By their very nature, transnational organized crime and terrorism are the issues of international security and certainly the subject of collective state actions. The modern process of securitization of migration has only shown the need for joint engagement and cooperation of all subjects of international law in the field of security (we are referring to the broadest interpretation of security concepts). Almost every international organization (United Nations, European Union, WTO), regardless of its main activity, has tried to contribute to the fight against international crime. Such activities resulted in numerous bilateral and multilateral agreements between member states. A part of those agreements referred to mutual cooperation of judicial authorities and security services of different countries, while the other part dealt with the opposition to certain forms of crime (terrorism, monitoring of money, illegal trade, etc.) – (Joubert & Bevers, 1996). Parallel to that, the existing and new institutional capacities for international cooperation have been adapted.

The method of cooperation is also very important for the work of intelligence and security services. The development of high-quality intelligence work, both at strategic, as well as tactical and operational level, is a prerequisite for successfully combating serious forms of crime (Đukić, 2016: 136). The very fact that intelligence and security agencies are increasingly dealing with global security threats, primarily terrorism and organized crime, has influenced the intensity of cooperation with intelligence services of different countries, and also with national law enforcement agencies. The benefits of information exchange are multiple: joint removal of threats,

joint actions, networking and education, elimination of work duplication, cost savings, timeliness of information and decision-making (Đukić, 2017: 77).

Therefore, *conditio sine qua non* of effective management of modern security risks, effective counteraction to global threats and, above all, a high-quality strategic framework for combating transnational crime is the foundation and constant improvement of international criminal law cooperation. The main types of international cooperation between countries in criminal matters are:

- international cooperation of judicial authorities (international criminal legal assistance), and
- international police cooperation – lobby of international criminal legal assistance (Ivetić; Rosić, 2015).

There are different definitions of international police cooperation. Since some authors believe that international police cooperation is a part of international criminal legal assistance, we could start from its definition. International criminal legal assistance can be defined as "taking certain actions of criminal proceedings by national courts or other state authorities at the request of foreign procedural authorities, i.e. taking procedural actions of foreign procedural authorities (courts and other authorities) at the request of national courts" (Banović and Bejatović, 2011: 319). In the definition, we see that, in addition to courts, other state bodies, including the police, are listed as the subjects of providing international criminal legal assistance.

Thus, Professor Nikač (2003: 81) believes that "international police cooperation is an integral part of international criminal legal assistance and in most cases precedes international judicial cooperation, because it enables judicial authorities to fulfill the procedural and legal prerequisites for starting, conducting and ending criminal proceedings."

In general, police cooperation involves the interaction of two or more police agencies (including state and private ones) for the purpose of exchanging criminal intelligence data, conducting investigation and, ultimately, arresting suspects. International police cooperation is a dynamic process of sharing criminal intelligence data across national and geopolitical borders (Lemieux, 2013).

Budimir Babović (1997) distinguishes between international police cooperation in a broader and narrower sense. In a broader sense, we define international police cooperation as an integral part of the overall international cooperation that has a political character and, as such, takes place between the subjects of international law - states and international organizations. In a narrower sense, international police cooperation is understood as a relationship between countries and their police structures established for the purpose of preserving international public order and rendering a joint response to transnational crime. It is, therefore, about official interstate relations, i.e. relations between official police bodies of different countries.

Professor Eldan Mujanović (2015: 9) defines international police cooperation as "cooperation between police bodies of different countries, which the aforementioned bodies undertake based on the request of another country or international organization, while acting according to international or national police regulations."

By international police cooperation Ivetić and Rosić (2015: 29) mean "all the activities that police agencies of a country carry out in order to execute their regular, legally defined tasks, in which they cooperate with the police or judicial authorities of other countries or international organizations, and in accordance with the corresponding international agreement." The same authors add that the subjects of international police cooperation are not exclusively international police organizations, but also any international organization that helps state police agencies in the performance of their tasks.

On the basis of these definitions, we can determine some characteristics of international police cooperation (subjects, cases, content).

The subjects of international police cooperation are national police organizations, judicial authorities (courts, prosecutor's offices, authorities for the execution of criminal sanctions), non-state (non-governmental) organizations and international organizations (not only police).

International police cooperation is a dynamic field, whose range of activities is increasing every day. In the first institutional forms, its content included two segments: the establishment of a system of tracing measures and an accelerated method of data exchange between member state (Ivetić and Miladinović, 2013). At the current level of development, the subject and content of international police cooperation includes information exchange, undertaking appropriate operational and tactical measures and procedural actions at the request of a foreign state (search, arrest, interrogation, detention, extradition), joint actions ("breaking" regional criminal networks), cooperation in the technical and logistical domain, police training, etc. (Nikač and Juras, 2015).

An important characteristic of international police cooperation is that it is based on national and international police law, certain institutional mechanisms, as well as some information systems and databases. In addition to this formal part, we have to also mention the possibilities of informal contacts between police officers from different countries. This informal type of cooperation has always been important at all levels, but its importance has certainly increased in conditions when all types of international traffic are highly developed, especially information and communication channels and technologies. It should be noted that global integration processes have not only led to the association of criminals and criminal groups. Namely, police officers and police managers also communicate and cooperate with colleagues around the world. Combining formal and informal forms of police cooperation is definitely recommended (Đukić and Milić, 2022).

The world leader in the fight against international crime and synonymous with international police cooperation is certainly the International Criminal Police Organization – INTERPOL. Interpol is the world largest police organization, which today has a total of 194 member states. It was founded in 1923 with the aim of internationalizing police cooperation in response to the increase in international crime after the First World War. Interpol has its statute, flag and emblem. Interpol is headquartered in Lyon, France. It should also be emphasized that Interpol does not

represent any supranational police, and it is simply a global network that enables cooperation between the criminal police of different countries. Interpol's work is concentrated on the most current segments of international crime, such as transnational organized crime, terrorism, illegal migration, crimes from the domain of international war and humanitarian law, trafficking in narcotics, people and weapons, economic crime and corruption, high-tech crime, etc. The leading and working bodies of Interpol are the General Assembly, the Executive Committee, the General Secretary, and the General Secretariat as an expert and administrative-technical body. Also, the National Central Bureau is incorporated into the police system of each Interpol member country. These bureaus represent contact points through which the national police of the member states exchange information with each other, and also maintain constant contact with the General Secretariat of Interpol. Interpol is financed from registration fees of member states (Nikač, 2003).

Finally, we must not leave out police diplomacy as a specific type of international police cooperation. Police diplomacy can be defined as "a chain of measures and procedures in the deployment of the police officers and authorities from one internationally recognized entity (internationally recognized state, official international organization) to another in an official capacity, who at the same time possess certain immunities and privileges in the international entity within which they are accredited, whereby they perform tasks important for confronting, preventing and fighting against international challenges, risks and security threats" (Kekić and Subošić, 2009, p. 147). The police-diplomatic representatives are the police attachés and liaison officers.

## The Theory of the Regional Security Complex and international police cooperation

Security studies have long been dominated by two levels of analysis – the international system and states/nations, so that in the post-Cold War period, the research and practical field of security studies have expanded in several directions - downwards, upwards and laterally.

Namely, the fall of the Berlin Wall has caused a change in the global security constellation, which also meant the end of the bipolar international order. After the implosion of the USSR, the world has changed so much that the classical security paradigm became too narrow and insensitive to many essential security problems. The glasses through which the Cold War world was viewed simply had to be replaced with much more sensitive lenses. This is why the theoretical framework for the analysis of international and/or national security was re-examined, where numerous shortcomings of the conceptual apparatus at that time were identified. Since then, the concept of security began to expand both horizontally (shifting the focus from military to non-military threats, environmental, energy and social sectors), and also along the vertical axis (individual and regions as levels of analysis) –

(Buzan, 1997; Lipovac, 2014; Kučeković, 2014). Also, for the first time in history, the main security threats have not come from powerful and, relatively speaking, aggressive states. On the contrary, the problem has become weak, the so-called failed states, which are unable to provide minimum living conditions for their population (Jazbec, 2009).

All the changes related to the end of the Cold War era have stimulated regional security dynamics and led to the removal of the so-called global "overlay" from numerous security hotspots in the world. Until then, almost all the phenomena that bore the sign of security were defined by the global dynamics of the struggle between two superpowers – the US and the USSR. All relations in the world, both those that implied conflict and cooperation, were influenced by such global dynamics. After that, with the establishment of a unipolar order, the relations of conflict, competition or cooperation between smaller countries at regional level, which are not subject to the influence of any major power, have intensified (Ejdus, 2012; Lipovac, 2016). Thus, the end of the Cold War has stimulated interest in regional security, i.e. the security of the region. The region represents a series of "fatally connected and geographically close states, between which a clear and significant subsystem of security relations has been established" (Vejnović and Obrenović, 2019, p. 122), and regional security represents the aspiration towards the absence of threats in the same. It is, in fact, a mechanism aimed at overcoming stereotypes of historical hostilities between neighbors and building security interdependence. This analytical level is suitable for understanding those security challenges that are generated at regional level and which, as such, can only be overcome at that level (Buzan & Weaver, 2003; Mijalković, 2011). One of the most significant post-Cold War theoretical approaches (if not the most significant), which deals with regional security dynamics, is the Theory of the Regional Security Complex (Obradović and Đukić, 2020).

The Theory of the Regional Security Complex (hereinafter: TRSC) was developed, in their works, by Barry Buzan and Ole Waver, in the period from 1983 to 2003 (Buzan, 1983; Buzan & Rizvi, 1986; Buzan, 1991; Buzan et al., 1998; Buzan & Waver, 2003). The goal of these scientists was to neutralize the tendency of (neo) realists to reduce the importance of regional level in security analysis, as well as the tendency of globalists to abolish this level (Vučić and Milenković, 2014). Therefore, the concept of "the regional security complex" has gone through a long development path that lasted some twenty years, so that, in the end, we finally got the well-founded and well-rounded TRSC. For the purpose of this paper, we will only consider the so-called revised TRSC. Thus, Buzan and Waver (2003, p. 44) define the regional security complex as "a set of units, whose main processes of securitization and/or desecuritization are so interconnected that their security problems cannot be logically analyzed or solved separately."

They also believe that TRSC needs to be enriched with the theory of securitization, in order to be able to understand the conditions under which a specific RSC has been created. In this sense, the theory of securitization allows us

to understand how the securitization of certain phenomena in the region took place, i.e. how some social phenomena have acquired a dominant security sign. Precisely in this way, we will later be able to understand the genesis of the emergence of some security interdependence in the region, as well as the etiology of regional security dynamics that gives such a region all the characteristics of RSC (Lipovac, 2016).

TRSC has undoubtedly highlighted the importance of the regional level of analysis in security science. However, the discussions on RSC do not offer a definite solution to the problems that countries face at regional level. Rather, it could be said that they generate a whole series of new questions and dilemmas. The central issue would be, of course, the question of how states can manage their security at regional level, taking into account that the structure of RSC is influenced by patterns of friendship and enmity (social constructivism), as well as the distribution of power between the main states (different levels of development of member states, uneven distribution of resources, etc.) – (Vejnović and Obrenović, 2019). This is exactly where we come to regional security cooperation, its importance, its mechanisms and regional security organizations. States have to be aware of the necessity of cooperation with other states that, together with them, enter the borders of the regional security complex or sub-complex. Those countries face the same problems that they have to solve together and, for this purpose, establish cooperative norms and structures, by creating internal mechanisms and common (regional) institutions that improve security through trust and the promotion of common values. The reality of international relations favors the concept of developing several regional security cooperation systems, which in the foreseeable future could grow into a kind of global federation of those systems (Bajagić, 2007).

According to Louise Fawcett, since the end of the Cold War, regional institutions have contributed to more orderly relations between states, especially if we talk about cooperation. This author also defines regional security institutions as organizations whose charters contain an open indication of cooperation in defense, security and foreign policy. This cooperation has two characteristics. Firstly, regionalism in the field of security was encouraged by changes in the international system that required states to respond to changes in the global and regional balance of power, and cooperation was a means of increasing security, and also influence and predictability. Secondly, states value institutions. By providing a basis for better anticipating cooperation and negotiations in an interdependent world (especially in the region), regional organizations have become invaluable tools of diplomacy and statesmanship (Fawcett, 2012).

We have seen, therefore, how the post-Cold War affirmation of the regional level of analysis in security studies, theoretically supported by TRSC, has affected the quality and content of international security cooperation. This has undoubtedly led to a change in the approach to the study of the subjects, concepts and methods of international police cooperation. To simplify, the regional dimension of international police cooperation has gained a lot of importance.



## Regional police cooperation – the concept and models

International police cooperation takes place at bilateral, regional and global (multilateral) level. Contemporary trends of tighter regional connection and strengthening of regional security identities have pushed regional cooperation to the foreground. Regional cooperation has different forms and is mainly related to certain security challenges, risks and threats, as well as different forms of the police and judicial work. Of course, it is necessary to take into account the specificities of some region in terms of geopolitical and security circumstances that are important for better mutual relations between states and cooperation (Nikač and Juras, 2015). We could define regional police cooperation as a relationship between states that belong to the same regional security (sub) complex and the relationship of their police authorities that is established with the aim of undertaking joint activities to solve common security problems.

We can distinguish between two models of regional police cooperation – horizontal and vertical.

The horizontal model of police cooperation includes adopted state strategic documents (strategies or plans of internal affairs bodies), established priorities in international cooperation and the interests of state and non-state actors (Bigo, 1996).

We could illustrate this model with the formula: strategy + priority + interest = police cooperation. Also, according to the horizontal model, there are three components of police cooperation. The first factor refers to the existence of such a geopolitical environment that requires an accelerated exchange of information that is traditionally kept within the framework of the nation state. An example of such an environment is the regional security sub complex of the Western Balkans, through which the routes of illegal narcotics trade pass, and also the routes by which migrants try to reach the developed countries of Western Europe. Data exchange implies the establishment of information systems that are accessible to all actors (Schengen information system). Finally, the intensity of police cooperation also depends on the ability of the states of certain region to react to security challenges, risks and threats based on some legal or institutional framework. Another factor that is necessary for successful police cooperation is available material, financial and human resources, in terms of information systems that support the exchange of data, budgets and experts from the police and judicial structures. Finally, the third factor refers to the organizational structure of the work of the police initiatives - through informal contacts of the police managers to develop institutional mechanisms (which often develop from informal contacts), such as Europol or Interpol (Guide to cooperation in internal affairs in the European Union, 2015). Therefore, a systemic approach using the horizontal model of police cooperation would imply "a common view of the security challenges, risks and threats of the region, translated into multilateral legal and institutional mechanisms of international police cooperation, with effective use of resources and adaptation of the appropriate organizational structure of the police forums" (Keković and Dimitrijević, 2017, p. 165).

The vertical model of police cooperation includes three levels of analysis – macro level, meso level and micro level (Benyon, 1996). At macro (state) level, internal

security policies and basic methods of cooperation are defined. In other words, state expresses its (un)willingness to cooperate with other states of the region regarding common security challenges and, accordingly, ratifies certain international agreements and harmonizes national legislation with the standards of international police cooperation. At meso level, the organizational structure, practice and existing procedures for the work of the police services are analyzed. The cooperation at this level implies the creation of profiles of the police officers who will know how to work with criminal intelligence data. Those officials become the so-called police diplomats. The police actions at micro level refer to specific police investigation activities – the establishment of joint investigation teams, the exchange of the police officers and joint training (Guide to Cooperation in Internal Affairs in the European Union, 2015).

The needs of regional police cooperation explain the advantages and disadvantages of centralized and decentralized models of information management. The centralized model implies the existence of a special organizational unit within the national police system whose competence is related to sending and receiving data. This service coordinates all activities related to international police cooperation. Such a model does not correspond to contemporary circumstances in international relations. On the other hand, the decentralized model enables all organizational parts of the national police system to exchange data with partner services abroad. No central authority has the need and obligation to be involved in this type of communication. This model, on the other hand, destroys the principle of sovereignty, while the speed of data exchange is often not satisfactory due to the involvement of a large number of the police organizational units. In practice, it is recommended to combine these two ways with the horizontal and vertical model. At the center of such reflection is the concept of multilevel management - vertical, which implies standard communication between traditional bureaucratic state institutions, while horizontal refers to direct functional contacts (Guide to cooperation in internal affairs in the European Union, 2015; Keković and Dimitrijević, 2017).

There are several instruments and techniques of regional cooperation on whose basis the activities of regional initiatives take place. The basis of cooperation is defined not at political level, but through conclusions and declarations. This is followed by concretization through various action plans and programs, and then concrete projects. Regional initiatives also influence the development of specific legal instruments ("memorandums of understanding", "declarations of intent") by which regional states commit themselves to cooperation in some field in a political and/or legal sense. Finally, as a part of the need to implement specific activities of regional initiatives, we come across a smaller number of binding agreements, which also refer to quite specific and narrowly defined areas of cooperation. In this sense, the system of regional initiatives represents a special group of international organizations/forums, which often do not have full legal subjectivity, or are considered the subjects of international law, and which develop specific forms of functioning and rules, thus playing a very special, original and unique role in interstate cooperation (Lopandić and Kronja, 2010).

## *Conclusion*

The post-Cold War intensification of regional security dynamics and the general affirmation of the regional level of analysis in security studies have led, among other things, to the need to approach the problem of studying international police cooperation in a different way. Through the paper, we have noticed how much theoretical importance, in this sense, the Theory of the Regional Security Complex of Barry Buzan and Ole Waver has. On the basis of this theory, we have shown how important it is for states that belong to the regional security (sub) complex to cooperate with each other in order to deal with modern security challenges, risks and threats. The founders of the Theory of the Regional Security Complex spoke precisely about the security interdependent units of the region that have common problems that have to be solved together. In other words, it is about states that have a common security identity. Therefore, regional police cooperation is, in the conditions of stronger regional connection and strengthening of regional institutions, a "conditio sine qua non" (a condition without which one cannot do) in the fight against crime, which has, dominantly, regional features. Using the abovementioned theory, we have defined regional police cooperation as a relationship between states that belong to the same regional security (sub) complex and the relationship of their police authorities that is established with the aim of undertaking joint activities to solve common security problems.

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