Europol and Interpol are international police cooperation organizations that are intended to serve as clearing houses that collect police information voluntarily shared by national police authorities and analyze the data to provide finished intelligence. The intent of these IOs is to coordinate a multilateral fight against transnational crime by addressing the obstacles to cooperation that ensue from isolationist/nationalist attitudes. Because states have traditionally viewed police matters as a core national responsibility, agreement on how much authority these bodies ought to have has been difficult to reach and led to very broad conventions that are entirely left to the interpretation of individual member states. So the adaptation of national infrastructures that are conducive to sharing information with other states is left to individual states. This study argues for a sequence of roles, intended and unintended, that must be performed in order for these international bodies to fulfill their mandates of facilitating cooperation and the sharing of information.

1. INTRODUCTION

Europol and Interpol, the two International Police Cooperation Organizations (IP-COs) formed to facilitate police cooperation and communication between member states, have suffered from less than stellar participation from member states.¹ These international bodies are intended to serve as clearing houses that collect police information voluntarily shared by national police authorities and analyze the data to

---

provide finished intelligence. The intent of these IOs is to coordinate a multilateral fight against transnational crime by addressing the obstacles to cooperation that ensue from isolationist/nationalist attitudes. Because states have traditionally viewed police matters as a core national responsibility, agreement on how much authority these bodies ought to have has been difficult to reach and led to very broad conventions that are entirely left to the interpretation of individual member states. So the adaptation of national infrastructures that are conducive to sharing information with other states is left to individual states. Problems of compatibility of laws and procedures arise because of the diversity in cultural attitudes and government structures among the membership who formulate policies without consulting their neighbors or the larger membership. As a result, national police participation rates vary greatly from state to state.

In this article, I offer a new perspective in the scrutiny of the role that formal international police cooperation organizations play in their membership’s quests to protect themselves from the threats to safety, security and stability that transnational crime poses. I argue that while IPCOs are strictly bound to respect the principle of sovereignty and the supremacy of the state and thus not granted executive powers, these international actors can not fulfill their mandates of facilitating cooperation without engaging in the more interventionist and not mandated, practice of capacity building. Essentially, I show that when the state does not assume its responsibility of providing its own police authorities the tools and competence and do not engage in an integration, or an internationalization, of their national law and order infrastructures, the IPCO steps in. It is a matter of survival and of building legitimacy for the IPCO and they take advantage of the opportunity, albeit to varying degrees of efficiency. The analysis is grounded in the theoretical model that purports that international organizations have three roles that they can assume in order to be effective including raising concern, enhancing the contracting environment and building capacity. This study suggests that these roles are interdependent and that IPCOs play a larger role than originally intended, and even currently accepted.

Using the cases of EUROPOL, a regional supranational body, and INTERPOL, a universal intergovernmental organization, I show that three types of roles are necessary to the fulfillment of their common mandates of facilitating police cooperation. I argue that an IO can only be effective if it performs three roles simultaneously, suggesting an interdependence. Interviews of various officials from both organizations reveal that both IOs have assumed two distinct roles outside their mandates in order to perform their intended roles of facilitator of cooperation. The data from these interviews show how insiders view the needs of states, including what states lack and why they do not

---