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PhD Thesis Summary

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(2026)

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The Internal Affairs Attaché between Diplomacy and Law Enforcement: The Role of the Romanian Internal Affairs Attaché in the Architecture of International Relations

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(2026)

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INTRODUCTION

Society is constantly changing, we live in an era of developments across multiple fields: technology is advancing and revolutionizing all aspects of life, the dynamics of relations between states are evolving, and collective perceptions are changing. These developments have also led to the diversification of criminal methods, and crime today has acquired a transnational character. The occurrence of events with international impact, such as pandemics or regional conflicts, which generate crisis situations, refugee flows, or illegal migration, creates the need for an international, coordinated, and integrated response from the competent authorities.

At present, particular attention is being paid to the international relations component, as bilateral or multilateral partnerships, networks, and specialized international organizations play an important role in supporting the activities of national authorities. Within the context described above, the internal affairs attaché occupies a significant position as a liaison between specialized international organizations and the authorities of the accrediting state, or between those authorities and the authorities of the receiving state. As a thorough expert in the internal affairs systems of both states, the internal affairs attaché facilitates international police cooperation and contributes to strengthening interstate relations in the field of internal affairs.

In Romania, the position of internal affairs attaché has not been sufficiently researched at the academic level, with only two works addressing its status: the first book on the Internal Affairs Attaché was published in 2005, while the second consists of a doctoral thesis written ten years ago. Since then, a series of changes have taken place both in the institutional and legislative architecture of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and within the international system. Although, at the institutional level of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the position of attaché is standardized through job descriptions, there is no scientific research analyzing these job descriptions from an academic perspective and correlating them with other relevant materials, studies, or documents on the subject. The legislative framework is equally unclear regarding the profile of the internal affairs attaché, especially since Minister of Internal Affairs Order No. 462 of 29 May 2003, the only normative act regulating the profile and activity of the internal affairs attaché, was classified.

At the international and European levels, the situation is similar with regard to this subject, as there is no unified academic, doctrinal, or legislative framework that comprehensively addresses the profile of the internal affairs attaché. The only legislative instruments that address the subject are Council Decision 2003/170/JHA and Regulation (EU) 2019/1240 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on the creation of a European network of immigration liaison officers. These two European legislative acts create a common framework for the use of liaison officers, but regulate exclusively the deployment of liaison officers from EU Member States in third countries or within international organizations. They are also applicable to internal affairs attachés; however, they do not establish specific duties for them, nor do they clearly define their status or profile, including responsibilities and obligations, the duration and conditions of their mandate, authority and jurisdiction, rules of conduct, rights and benefits, or obligations.

From a scientific perspective, there is no concrete analysis examining the instrument of the Internal Affairs Attaché from the standpoint of its contribution to strengthening international relations and facilitating police cooperation activities between ministries of internal affairs or equivalent ministries from different states, despite the fact that the institution of the internal affairs attaché exists in many European and non-European countries (France, Italy, Serbia, Bulgaria, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada). The absence of this standardized profile and of a scientific analysis of it in relation to the practical experience of attachés in the field creates a discrepancy between reality and the existing theoretical approaches.

The central problem from which this doctoral thesis originates is the absence, at the academic level, of a unified framework regulating the profile of the internal affairs attaché and its role in the field of international relations. Consequently, the purpose of this doctoral thesis is to identify the role of the internal affairs attaché within the architecture of international relations, considering that the framework for international cooperation differs between EU Member States and third countries. Therefore, the research question formulated to guide the scientific endeavor and to highlight the research problem is: "*How is the role of the Romanian Internal Affairs Attaché configured within the framework of international relations, in relation to the international cooperation framework specific to EU Member States and third countries?*"

In order to achieve the purpose of this doctoral thesis, the following objectives have been established:

1. To create the profile of the Internal Affairs Attaché by capturing the two dimensions that derive from its dual status as both a police officer and a diplomat;
2. To identify the differences between internal affairs attaché accredited to EU Member States and those accredited to third countries, based on the premise that the framework for international cooperation in EU Member States differs from that of non-EU countries.

The creation of the profile of the Internal Affairs Attaché is relevant to the present research because it addresses the gaps identified in the review of the specialized literature and contributes to a deeper understanding of the dual nature of the attaché function. At the same time, the need to distinguish between attachés accredited to EU Member States and those accredited to third countries is justified by the fact that the frameworks for international cooperation already differ between EU and non-EU states. By drawing clear distinctions between these two categories of attachés, the profile can be further developed as a comprehensive and multifaceted one.

In order to achieve the objectives outlined above and to clarify the research question, the thesis is composed of two components: on the one hand, the theoretical considerations and literature review, and on the other hand, the practical component, consisting of a case study based on the Romanian internal affairs attaché. Romania represents a relevant case from this perspective because, geographically, it is located on the external border of both the European Union and NATO, thereby contributing to the security of these organizations. Furthermore, Romania has been expanding its network of external representation through Internal Affairs Attachés since the early 2000s, in the context of its efforts to join the European Union. Moreover, the Romanian Internal Affairs Attaché played an important role in these efforts by managing criminal phenomena generated by Romanian communities in the countries where they were accredited. A more recent example of the decisive role played by the Romanian internal affairs attaché in the field of international relations is Romania's accession to the Schengen Area, a context in which attachés made a significant contribution to overcoming certain obstacles that ultimately led to the achievement of this national objective. Therefore, the

selection of this case study is justified by the contribution made by the Romanian internal affairs attaché to the field of international relations over the past twenty years. Furthermore, the Romanian internal affairs attaché may serve as an important starting point for future European policies or standards regulating the status and use of Internal Affairs Attachés, documents and references that are currently lacking but are nevertheless necessary.

Overall, this doctoral thesis is structured into three chapters, two of which represent the conceptual framework and literature review, while the third chapter consists of the case study on the Romanian internal affairs attaché.

The first chapter is based on the concept of police cooperation and includes aspects relating to the history of police cooperation, institutions, bodies, and cooperation instruments at the national level. Within this chapter, the concept of informal police cooperation is also conceptualized, representing a novel element in the field of police cooperation. Furthermore, the chapter establishes clear criteria for distinguishing between police cooperation and judicial cooperation in criminal matters, two concepts that are frequently conflated in the specialized literature. The second chapter begins by conceptualizing international relations in the field of internal affairs. Together with the theoretical framework concerning police cooperation, this serves to create the complete context within which the internal affairs attaché operates, considering that the attaché's dual status as both a police officer and a diplomat entails responsibilities of both a policing and diplomatic nature. Additionally, the theoretical foundation chapters contribute to creating a comprehensive overview of the field of international relations in internal affairs and of the concept of police cooperation, in order to understand where the Internal Affairs Attaché is situated within these concepts.

The second chapter continues with the review of the specialized literature, in which the most relevant national and international sources concerning the Internal Affairs Attaché were identified. Thus, this chapter traces the evolution of the attaché position, as well as that of the internal affairs attaché, both internationally and in Romania. Through the review of all identified sources, it was also possible to highlight the manner in which the function of internal affairs attaché is integrated within other ministries of internal affairs. Moreover, the literature review enabled the identification of a clear distinction between internal affairs attaché and liaison

officers, as well as between attachés and diplomatic advisers serving within Romania's diplomatic missions.

The third chapter, dedicated to the case study concerning the Romanian internal affairs attaché and representing the practical component of the present doctoral thesis, presents the methodology applied within the case study, as well as the findings obtained through the implementation of the research methods and the interpretation of the available data.

The selected methodology consists of the application of two qualitative research methods, namely document analysis and inductive thematic analysis. The document analysis is based on a total of 71 administrative documents with internal circulation status, issued by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and related to the internal affairs attaché. These documents consist of job descriptions and internal institutional communications. Their analysis aimed to develop a profile of the internal affairs attaché, given that such a profile is currently absent from both national and international academic literature, and without it, the role played by this professional category in the field of international relations cannot be properly analyzed.

In order to complement the profile of the attaché developed through the institutional analysis of job descriptions, it was considered necessary to collect empirical data directly from individuals serving as internal affairs attaché. Consequently, the second research method consisted of conducting semi-structured individual interviews with ten internal affairs attachés, with the purpose of capturing the realities of professional practice. The sample of ten participants is considered relevant because, at the time the study was conducted, the Ministry of Internal Affairs' external representation network through internal affairs attaché consisted of twenty-four officers.

The interviews were conducted on the basis of an interview guide composed of both closed-ended and open-ended questions, allowing respondents to express their own opinions, based on their personal experiences, regarding the questions posed to them. The questions were developed taking into account the theoretical aspects discussed in the first two chapters and the conclusions presented in the literature review chapter. The interview guide contains 31 questions and is structured into four sections, as follows:

- Section I, consisting of 10 questions, designed to provide background information and establish the general context in which the attachés carry out their activities;
- Section II, consisting of 8 questions, focusing on the operational component of the attaché's work, namely the police cooperation dimension;
- Section III, containing 9 questions that address the diplomatic component of the Internal Affairs Attaché's activity, namely the international relations dimension;
- Section IV, consisting of 4 concluding questions aimed at identifying future perspectives as well as possible recommendations.

With regard to the formulation of the questions, several clarifications are necessary concerning aspects that could create confusion among readers. The term "international relations," as used in the interview guide, does not refer to the field of international relations in its general sense, nor is the internal affairs attaché presented as a promoter or facilitator of Romania's bilateral or multilateral relations in general or across all areas of foreign policy. Rather, it refers exclusively to international relations from the perspective of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, namely the internal affairs component (police cooperation, combating cross-border crime, illegal migration, and emergency situations) and the activities that may be carried out by the internal affairs attaché.

The selection of interviews as a data collection instrument is justified by the positivist nature of this research, as well as by the type of results that can be obtained through this method. Interviews constitute a research method through which responses can be collected from all participants and can also be conducted online, particularly given that the target group consists of Romanian internal affairs attaché who, by the nature of their profession, represent a geographically dispersed category of personnel. The expected outcome of the interviews is the collection of additional information that is not found in the specialized literature or through document analysis, but rather is based on the practical field experience of attachés. Such information is intended to contribute to the development of the internal affairs attaché profile and to the clarification of the research question.

Following the completion of the interviews, the data obtained will be analyzed through inductive thematic analysis. Based on a predetermined sample of professionals (Romanian internal affairs attaché), relevant findings for the present research will be identified from the

collected data. The themes used to guide the interpretation of the data will take into account the theoretical framework relating to international relations in the field of internal affairs and police cooperation, as well as the literature review and the gaps identified therein.

Furthermore, at the end of Chapter Three, a discussion section is included. Its purpose is to triangulate the findings with the aspects presented in the theoretical framework and the literature review, as well as to explore certain ideas emerging from this triangulation process.

The conclusion chapter presents the findings in relation to the objectives, purpose, and research question of the doctoral thesis, as well as the limitations of the research and future research directions concerning the subject of the internal affairs attaché.

CONCLUSIONS

The primary aim of this doctoral thesis was to identify the role of the attaché for internal affairs within the architecture of international relations, in the context in which the framework for international cooperation differs between EU Member States and third countries. In order to achieve this aim, the objectives set were: the development of the profile of the attaché for internal affairs, by capturing the two dimensions arising from their dual status as both police officer and diplomat, and the identification of the differences between attachés for internal affairs accredited to EU Member States and those accredited to third countries, based on the premise that within the EU the framework for international cooperation differs from that of non-EU states.

In order to fulfil the proposed objectives, the thesis was divided into two parts: on the one hand, the theoretical framework and literature review, and on the other hand, the case study. The theoretical framework, built around the concept of police cooperation, evolved along two distinct directions: cooperation within the EU and cooperation with third countries. Within the European Union, the notion of police cooperation is carried out within the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (AFSJ), and although it is not yet fully integrated at Union level, there exists a complex and well-defined legislative framework consisting of European legal acts aimed at assisting Member States in the harmonisation of national legislation in the field of cooperation, with the purpose of facilitating specific activities. Police cooperation activities between Member

States are carried out primarily through Europol in terms of operational cooperation, while in the area of professional training cooperation is conducted through CEPOL.

Police cooperation with third countries is not regulated within a unified framework similar to the AFSJ, but takes place on the basis of treaties, conventions, bilateral or multilateral agreements that specifically target the areas in which cooperation occurs, and the main cooperation channel used is Interpol. Furthermore, the United Nations plays an important role in the development of global police cooperation by elaborating and disseminating standards regarding the fight against corruption, drug trafficking, and human trafficking, which can be integrated at the level of each Member State in order to facilitate police cooperation.

In Romania, police cooperation is carried out through the International Police Cooperation Centre, the only national structure specialized in the field of police cooperation, operating within the Romanian Police Inspectorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The components that make up police cooperation consist of activities and cooperation channels, which are conducted on the basis of principles regulated by law. Police cooperation activities include the exchange of information, task forces, and cross-border pursuit, while the channels through which these activities are implemented are the National Europol Unit, the National SIRENE Bureau, the National Interpol Bureau, the National Focal Point through internal affairs attachés and liaison officers.

The concept of cooperation has been updated by the introduction of a new type of police cooperation, namely informal police cooperation, a subject that is not addressed in academic research, is used in practice, and is recognized as an element of novelty. This involves a series of activities carried out either prior to the actual cooperation activities or during them and during investigations, consisting of discussions held with professionals within the authorities with which operational police cooperation activities are planned, either in order to prepare the cooperation framework or to obtain clarifications regarding the procedures to be followed. The introduction of the concept of informal police cooperation in this doctoral thesis is relevant to the field under study, as the internal affairs attaché, through their network of contacts in the accrediting state, also carries out this type of police cooperation, assisting the authorities of the host state or the sending state with information of a non-judicial and non-evidentiary nature.

Pe de altă parte, relațiile internaționale în domeniul afacerilor interne se concentrează pe activități legate de combaterea crimei organizate, a traficului de persoane, droguri, arme, combaterea migrației ilegale și gestionarea situațiilor de urgență, derulate de către structurile de specialitate de relații internaționale din cadrul MAI. Aceste activități au la bază o serie de obiective generale și specifice pe care MAI le-a stipulat în programul de guvernare sau în strategiile elaborate în vederea atingerii acestor obiective. De asemenea, relațiile de colaborare interstatale în domeniul afacerilor interne se fundamentează pe un set de tratate, acorduri, convenții, protocoale de cooperare bilaterale sau multilaterale și care vizează cooperarea în aspecte punctuale, spre exemplu: cooperarea prin schimbul de informații în combaterea traficului de droguri, cooperarea polițienească în securitatea frontierelor și combaterea migrației ilegale, ori cooperarea pe componenta de pregătire profesională în ceea ce privesc mijloacele investigative, ori dobândirea de competențe.

On the other hand, international relations in the field of internal affairs focus on activities related to combating organized crime, trafficking in persons, drugs and weapons, combating illegal migration, and managing emergency situations, carried out by specialized international relations structures within the Ministry of Internal Affairs. These activities are based on a series of general and specific objectives stipulated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in government programs or in strategies developed to achieve these objectives. Furthermore, inter-state cooperation relations in the field of internal affairs are founded on a set of treaties, agreements, conventions, and bilateral or multilateral cooperation protocols, which target specific aspects of cooperation, such as: cooperation through information exchange in combating drug trafficking, police cooperation in border security and combating illegal migration, or cooperation in the area of professional training regarding investigative techniques or the acquisition of competencies.

The need for a theoretical foundation of the concepts of international relations in the field of internal affairs and of police cooperation derives from the dual status of the internal affairs attaché, namely that of police officer and diplomat. From the perspective of a police officer, the attaché undertakes activities within the sphere of police cooperation: facilitating the exchange of information and supporting the conduct of joint operational activities between the authorities of the host state and those of the sending state. The diplomatic status grants the attaché representation prerogatives, consisting of facilitating dialogue between institutions,

promoting the interests of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, representing the ministry at international meetings, conferences, or bilateral discussions, thereby contributing to the strengthening of relations between states in the field of internal affairs. A thorough understanding of the dimensions of international relations and police cooperation supports the comprehension of the profile of the internal affairs attaché and the context in which they carry out their mission.

The literature review was conducted in order to establish the limits of knowledge regarding the subject of the internal affairs attaché, both at national and international level. This process highlighted the evolution of the concept of attaché, the position of internal affairs attaché in Romania, as well as the first attempts to regulate the status of internal affairs attachés at international level.

It was also observed that the subject of the internal affairs attaché is insufficiently studied through scientific instruments, with a lack of academic research at both international and national level. At the national level, there are only two works addressing the subject of the Romanian internal affairs attaché, one from 2005 and the other from 2011. Although these works approach the subject from the same perspective and represent important contributions to the field of international relations and police cooperation, it was nevertheless necessary for the present scientific endeavor to update the status and role of the internal affairs attaché.

Following the review of available sources concerning the internal affairs attaché, the profile of the internal affairs attaché and the manner in which this function is integrated within internal affairs ministries in other countries, both European and non-EU, could be outlined. The countries included in this analysis were selected based on the following criteria: EU member state/third country (United States, Canada), neighboring state/distant state (United Kingdom), states from which the attaché model was adopted (Italy and Spain), and states with the most extensive networks of internal affairs attachés (France). The analysis of the attaché profile in these states indicated that, although the attaché bears different titles depending on the country (Italy – liaison officers; France – internal security attachés; United Kingdom – liaison officers; Spain – internal affairs attaché), the profile is similar to that of the Romanian internal affairs attaché, as they hold both police and diplomatic status. This signifies that the attaché function is internationally standardized, even in the absence of a unified regulatory framework.

Moreover, the literature review allowed for a distinction to be made between the internal affairs attaché and the liaison officer, as two occupational standards with similar responsibilities in the field of police cooperation.

Following the review of the specialized literature, two gaps were identified: the first concerns the distinction between attachés accredited to EU Member States and those accredited to third countries, and the second concerns the lack of official reports or documents and instruments capable of outlining the profile of the internal affairs attaché by incorporating both dimensions of the position, namely the diplomatic dimension and the police cooperation dimension.

The necessity of distinguishing between attachés accredited to EU Member States and those accredited to third countries arises from the theoretical framework, which demonstrates that EU Member States operate within a different framework of police cooperation compared to third countries. The international cooperation framework refers to the totality of police cooperation mechanisms and national, bilateral, multilateral, or international regulations in the field of internal affairs. International cooperation also encompasses both operational-level cooperation and diplomatic-level cooperation. As derived from the theoretically grounded chapter on police cooperation, cooperation within the EU is carried out on the basis of unified regulations at European level, through Europol and SIRENE channels, and through secure databases such as SIENA or SIS. Within the EU, extended police cooperation—consisting of non-operational cooperation on matters related to professional training and exchange of best practices—is conducted through agencies specifically established to facilitate cooperation in this area, such as CEPOL..

At the level of third countries, by contrast, there are no regulatory frameworks comparable to those of the European Union that apply to a specific group of states, such as the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (AFSJ) or the body of European legal acts composed of directives, recommendations, decisions, and regulations governing various aspects of police cooperation. In interactions with third countries, cooperation is primarily based on international conventions, such as United Nations conventions on combating transnational organized crime and corruption. These are complemented by treaties and international cooperation documents of a bilateral or multilateral nature. Cooperation with non-EU states is carried out through two

main channels: Interpol, or internal affairs attachés and liaison officers. It is also considered that EU Member States approach cooperation with non-EU countries differently compared to cooperation with other Member States, in the sense of applying greater attention to information exchange and interactions with authorities from third countries. This is stipulated at the level of national legislation and supports the premise that EU Member States operate within a different police cooperation framework than non-EU states.

Based on the gaps identified in the literature review, the following research question is formulated: How is the role of the Romanian internal affairs attaché configured within international relations, in relation to the international cooperation framework specific to EU Member States and third countries? The expected outcomes derived from this research question include the identification of operational and non-operational activities within the attaché's work, the outlining of the full profile of the internal affairs attaché, the identification of differentiating elements between attachés accredited to EU Member States and those accredited to third countries, as well as the identification of limitations, objectives, governance mechanisms, and underexplored aspects specific to EU and non-EU states.

In order to answer the research question and achieve the objectives of the present study, two types of data were used: existing data derived from job descriptions and other administrative documents, and data produced through semi-structured individual interviews. These data were analyzed using document analysis and inductive thematic analysis.

The analysis of administrative documents highlighted the following elements that define the attaché profile: selection process, accreditation, mandate, duties and competencies, and termination of the mandate. Recruitment notices for the position of internal affairs attaché are addressed to officers within the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MAI) holding at least the rank of senior inspector or captain. In order to participate in the selection process, the candidate must be part of the MAI external representation reserve, and if this condition is not met, completion of the basic training course for internal affairs attachés or liaison officers is required. Officers who meet these conditions, as well as the requirement of a minimum of seven years of service within the MAI, are eligible to participate in the selection process. This process consists of three stages: submission and evaluation of the application file, an interview before a selection committee, and final selection by the Minister of Internal Affairs.

The selected candidate undergoes a professional training program delivered by specialists from both the MAI and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs prior to assuming the position. After completing the training stage, the accreditation procedure follows, along with the granting of a mandate lasting four years, with the possibility of extension. During the mission, the internal affairs attaché is subordinated to the Directorate-General for European Affairs, Schengen and International Relations within the MAI, while functionally reporting to the head of the diplomatic mission in which they operate, and operational police cooperation activity is coordinated by the International Police Cooperation Centre (CCPI). The attaché's office is located within the Romanian embassy or consular office in the host state.

The duties of the internal affairs attaché are divided into two categories: operational duties and representational duties. Operational duties include handling police assistance requests, facilitating information exchange between competent authorities of the host and sending states, participating in operational actions, coordinating joint operational activities (SSO), fulfilling responsibilities specific to migration officers, and participating in judicial-related activities. In relation to these operational responsibilities, the attaché is also tasked with monitoring the crime situation in the host state. The representational function is fulfilled through non-operational duties such as participation in conferences, seminars, and symposia, representing the Ministry of Internal Affairs at such events and in meetings and working groups of interest. These duties are complemented by advisory activities for the head of mission on internal affairs matters, monitoring legislative developments in relevant areas, and supporting Romanian citizens in police-related matters.

In the construction of the profile of the internal affairs attaché, the necessary skills are also added, consisting of managerial abilities, capacity for synthesis and analysis, the ability to act as a competent information analyst, written and oral communication skills in a foreign language, emotional intelligence, as well as rigor, seriousness, and principles of professional and personal ethics. Furthermore, the analysis of administrative documents does not reveal any differentiation between internal affairs attachés accredited to EU Member States and those accredited to third countries. At most, a distinction can be made at the level of job descriptions between attachés accredited to states and those accredited to international organizations. However, these differences are not significant and consist only in replacing police cooperation

activities with activities aimed at supporting the ministry in relation to participation in international missions.

In order to achieve the first objective, namely the completion of the profile of the internal affairs attaché, as well as the second objective of the research, namely the identification of differences between the two categories of attachés (EU/third countries), the first research method was complemented by the interview method, with the aim of generating empirical data to supplement existing data.

The results of the interviews confirmed that international police cooperation systems may differ between EU Member States and third countries. According to Figures 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, and 3.14, the police cooperation framework of EU Member States differs from that of third countries. This is reflected in respondents' perceptions regarding the limitations encountered in the execution of their mandate, the scope of activities undertaken, the legislation of the host state, and the general framework of police cooperation, with reference to both operational and non-operational components. These responses are further supported by the theoretical concepts presented in the chapter dedicated to the notion of international police cooperation, which indicate that EU Member States operate within a different cooperation framework compared to third countries. Within this thesis, the term "police cooperation framework" refers to legislative regulations and cooperation channels. Thus, within Member States, cooperation is regulated by European legislation and takes place through Europol and SIRENE channels, whereas in third countries cooperation is governed by conventions, international treaties (bilateral or multilateral), and is conducted through Interpol or through internal affairs attachés or liaison officers, suggesting a distinction between the two categories of states.

From the interpretation of interview data, the objectives of internal affairs attachés also emerge, contributing to the completion of the professional profile and the fulfilment of the first research objective. These objectives include combating trafficking in persons, drug trafficking, organized crime, improving border security, and managing illegal migration; however, no specific pattern distinguishing EU Member States from third countries is evident. Regarding the specific role in international relations and the manner in which attachés contribute to strengthening diplomatic relations between the accrediting and host states, responses emphasize their role as representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, advisors within diplomatic

missions, promoters of the Ministry's interests within the host state, facilitators of institutional dialogue, and identifiers of opportunities for the ministry. From these responses, no distinct pattern emerges between EU Member States and third countries. Similarly, attachés did not identify areas of international cooperation that are insufficiently explored, with the exception of digitalization and artificial intelligence, mentioned by one respondent, which also prevents any clear differentiation based on this criterion.

With regard to the second objective, namely the identification of elements allowing for a distinction between EU-accredited attachés and those accredited to third countries, it is considered that such differentiation may be made through the nature of legislation and the constraints imposed by the institutional and geopolitical context of the host state in relation to the European Union. Although 60% of respondents indicated that their activity differs depending on whether they are accredited in an EU Member State or a third country (Figure 4.5), the collected data do not concretely reveal which specific activities would support this distinction. No differentiation can be made between the two categories based on objectives, international relations functions, or perceived underexplored domains. Consequently, the research question is only partially answered.

The interpretation of the data highlights that perceptions among internal affairs attachés may differ regarding certain aspects; however, it cannot be conclusively determined whether these differences are attributable to the type of host state. Perceptions may also be influenced by the attaché's level of training, familiarity with the host environment, the specificity of criminal phenomena managed, and the degree of engagement in the interview process.

It is important to note that limitations and legislative differences associated with non-membership in the European Union do not restrict the activity of the attaché in the field of police cooperation and international relations; rather, they may only complicate it. The theoretical framework presented in the initial chapters highlights that EU Member States benefit from more consolidated relations and a higher level of mutual trust, due to the obligation to transpose EU legislation into national law, thereby ensuring a relatively uniform framework of cooperation across sectors, including internal affairs. Legal harmonization within the European Union reduces structural differences between states, making them more manageable and less impactful. In relation to third countries outside the European Union, where no common decision-making

system exists based on cooperation between Member States and European institutions, the process of building trust-based relationships develops over a longer period. This does not imply that legislative differences outside the EU are substantial; although they exist, they do not significantly affect the outcome of police cooperation activities, nor do they hinder the achievement of the attaché's mandate objectives, whether operational or non-operational.

This argument is supported by concrete projects implemented between ministries of internal affairs and at national level, facilitated by attachés. These projects are relevant to the present scientific study, as they demonstrate that differences such as legislative divergence, excessive bureaucracy, and difficulties in data exchange do not significantly impede the results achieved by attachés or their role in international relations. On the contrary, they highlight the attachés' contribution to police cooperation through operational activities and partnerships financed through European or other funding mechanisms, aimed at continuous training and exchange of best practices. Furthermore, joint projects facilitated by internal affairs attachés contribute to strengthening diplomatic relations between states, regardless of EU membership status.

The results obtained from document analysis, corroborated with those derived from inductive thematic analysis based on interview data, enabled the fulfilment of the first objective, namely the development of the internal affairs attaché profile. The interview data complemented the profile constructed through document analysis and clarified the research question, indicating that although academic research and international regulations on this subject remain limited, the attaché's profile can nevertheless be coherently outlined through the combined use of both research methods, resulting in a relatively homogeneous and standardized profile in both formal job descriptions and practical implementation.

The second objective was also achieved, as elements allowing differentiation between EU-accredited attachés and those accredited to third countries were identified, namely legislative differences, bureaucratic complexity, and difficulties in facilitating data exchange. However, empirical analysis shows that these factors are not sufficient to produce substantial differences in the core professional profile of the internal affairs attaché.

Regarding the answer to the research question, it can be stated that the internal affairs attaché should not be viewed solely as a police officer, but also as a diplomat. The attaché

performs both operational activities, such as facilitating information exchange and supporting joint operational activities between the host and sending state authorities, and representational activities, including facilitating institutional dialogue, promoting the interests of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and representing the ministry in international meetings, conferences, and bilateral discussions, thereby contributing to the strengthening of relations between states in the field of internal affairs. Thus, the status of the internal affairs attaché is inherently dual, and in addition to the aforementioned responsibilities, it encompasses a set of competencies and skills that contribute to the development of an ideal professional profile, enabling the effective management of duties according to the characteristics of the host state.

Over time, the internal affairs attaché has proven to be an important component in accelerating and streamlining police cooperation activities, as well as in identifying new opportunities that have been utilized at the level of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and its personnel, such as exchanges of experience, study visits, and joint projects funded through European or other sources aimed at professional training and development. The institution of the attaché has also demonstrated its effectiveness in achieving national-level objectives, the most recent example being accession to the Schengen Area.

Based on the needs identified following the interpretation of the data, a series of recommendations may be advanced, aimed at improving the efficiency of the activity of internal affairs attachés. Starting from the premise that the priorities of attachés in the host state are continuously evolving, the first recommendation consists in establishing clear and realistic priorities and objectives for attachés, as well as providing them with instruments adapted to new forms of crime. The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MAI) must take into account the dynamics of the international system and the fact that it is influenced by global events that have occurred in recent years and that also impact the field of internal affairs, which automatically leads to a shift in the attaché's priorities.

One of the most frequently emerging ideas from the collected data is the lack of funding; therefore, a recommendation in this regard is to increase the financial resources allocated to internal affairs attachés in the execution of their mandate.

Considering the high frequency of attachés' participation in international relations activities, it is deemed appropriate to integrate training courses in diplomacy and international

relations, diplomatic and international public representation, diplomacy and intelligence, as well as courses in etiquette and protocol, in order to develop the skills necessary for representing the MAI at various events, meetings, working groups, bilateral discussions, and so forth, at the highest level, thereby ensuring the coherent promotion of interests in the field of internal affairs.

It is also important to note that it is recommended to update the performance standards used in evaluating the activity of internal affairs attachés. Based on the analysis of job descriptions corroborated with empirical data, it appears that these standards, although present in job descriptions, reflect a purely bureaucratic approach that no longer fully captures the realities of the present day or the strategic value of the internal affairs attaché. For instance, the adoption of the new law on police cooperation, Law no. 51/2025, introduces new responsibilities into the activity of attachés, and the current standards do not reflect these new duties regarding access to databases.

According to suggestions provided by respondents, it is recommended to integrate into continuous professional training programs courses, conferences, workshops, and training placements designed to help attachés develop or improve their written and oral communication skills in the language of the host state as well as in English. In addition, based on respondents' references to emotional intelligence and the need to manage professional stress, it is advisable to identify training programmes aimed at developing socio-emotional competencies.

Taking into account the interpretation of data collected through interviews, which indicates a high workload for internal affairs attachés and increasing and diversifying criminality, it is recommended to expand the number of attachés accredited abroad by extending the external representation network. Based on the interpretation of data collected through the two research methods, it is recommended that the complex and rigorous selection process be continued, ensuring that the MAI deploys the most suitable personnel for each specific context, taking into account the particularities of each country, as well as improving the bilateral cooperation framework in the field of internal affairs. Given the recurring responses regarding the need for exchange of experience, it is recommended to implement exchange programmes between Romanian internal affairs attachés and attachés from other states.

Although over the past 20 years the internal affairs attaché has proven to be an effective link between the MAI and the authorities of the host state, both in police matters and in

international relations within the field of internal affairs, the institution of the attaché has not been the subject of extensive academic research. The literature review shows that, at national level, there are only two works exclusively addressing the subject of internal affairs attachés, namely a book and a doctoral thesis, both written in the early years of the MAI's practice of accrediting attachés, respectively in 2005 and 2011.

Both works approach the subject strictly from the perspective of the attaché's dual status as both police officer and diplomat, focusing mainly on their rights and obligations. However, they do not provide a concrete analysis of the activities carried out, the obstacles encountered during the mandate, and even less do they distinguish between attachés accredited to EU Member States and those accredited outside the EU, attachés accredited bilaterally or with multiple accreditation, or those accredited to international organizations, nor do they establish distinctions based on Romania's neighbouring relations or regional aspects. A lack of academic studies and research on internal affairs attachés has also been identified at international level. The absence of extensive research in this field, both nationally and internationally, has limited the literature review to the two aforementioned works and to the job descriptions of internal affairs attachés.

Another limitation is that the main normative act regulating the activity of internal affairs attachés, Ministerial Order MAI S/207 of 22.08.2012, is a classified document; therefore, its content cannot be made public or used within the present scientific approach. This has restricted the analysis of the attaché's status and specific activities strictly to job descriptions and discussions with professionals within the MAI, who themselves are bound by the provisions of Law no. 182/2002 on the protection of classified information. Equally, the fact that the subject of internal affairs attachés is insufficiently explored constitutes a limitation in itself. Without the support provided by specialists within the Ministry of Internal Affairs—through the provision of job descriptions, non-classified administrative documents, and other relevant information—this research would have been significantly more difficult, if not impossible.

Future research directions include the integration of artificial intelligence into the activity of internal affairs attachés and the analysis of the opportunity to expand the network of attachés in the Middle East.

Another valuable future research direction would be the exploration of the ecosystem of international relations and police cooperation in the absence of the internal affairs attaché function. Such a study could examine the redistribution of responsibilities in police cooperation and diplomacy towards central or territorial structures of the MAI or other members of diplomatic missions, the pressure generated by the dual nature of attaché responsibilities, as well as the consequences for Romania's internal affairs objectives resulting from the absence of this function. Such research would not only contribute to the field of international relations, but would also further strengthen the profile of the attaché as an essential instrument of international relations, as outlined in the present scientific endeavour.

This thesis contributes to the expansion of scientific knowledge in the field of international relations by introducing the concept of the internal affairs attaché as a promoter of this domain. In terms of police cooperation, it is important to note that most existing literature addresses other cooperation channels such as Interpol, SIRENE, the National Focal Point, or liaison officers, and less frequently the internal affairs attaché. Consequently, this thesis has the potential to provide a more in-depth perspective on the specific role of the internal affairs attaché in facilitating and intensifying police cooperation.

Furthermore, the added value of this research lies in the fact that its results and conclusions may be utilized at the level of competent structures within the MAI. These structures coordinate the activity of attachés, and the findings of the research may be integrated into future strategic directions in order to enhance institutional support provided to attachés in the execution of their mandate. The thesis may also serve as a detailed guide for internal affairs attachés for MAI personnel wishing to apply for such positions, for categories of personnel interacting with attachés, or even for attachés themselves.

The relevance of the topic within the field of study is justified by its contemporary nature and by the fact that it is among the few works capable of providing a comprehensive overview—based on qualitative research methods and relevant empirical data—of the profile of the Romanian internal affairs attaché as an important instrument in international relations.

The original contribution of this research consists not only in outlining the profile and role of the internal affairs attaché and updating this occupational standard, but also in the theorization of police cooperation, the introduction of the concept of informal police cooperation

at national level in an academic format, the distinction between police cooperation and judicial cooperation in criminal matters (two concepts frequently confused in national literature), the conceptualization of international relations in the field of internal affairs, the clear differentiation of internal affairs attachés from other professional categories in the field of internal affairs—namely liaison officers and diplomatic advisers—and, finally, the outlining of models of internal affairs attachés in other states relevant to this study.

The contribution is further defined by proposals for optimizing the activity of internal affairs attachés based on shortcomings identified through individual interviews. All these elements may also be considered innovative contributions to the field of study.

Thus, the original contribution is relevant both academically, within the fields of international relations and European studies, and practically, within the field of internal affairs.

The conclusions formulated in this chapter and the answer to the research question highlight that the internal affairs attaché is an instrument of police cooperation and consolidation of interstate relations, holding both police officer and diplomatic statuses. This model of attaché has been implemented within the Ministries of Internal Affairs of several countries and is standardized, even in the absence of international regulations explicitly defining such a position. The data obtained through the two research methods contribute to the delineation of the attaché's profile and place it on the international stage as an essential component of the architecture of international cooperation in the field of internal affairs.

The internal affairs attaché provides a specialized channel for dialogue, information exchange, and operational and non-operational coordination between Romania and partner states, and its role becomes even more important in the current context of cross-border challenges and the evolution of emerging technologies, and may be analyzed at national, European, or even global level.

At national level, the role of the internal affairs attaché is to support national structures in conducting police cooperation activities, both operational and non-operational, as well as to unlock partnerships and cooperation opportunities across various domains. The attaché reflects the need to maintain a constant and strategically oriented international component at national level in the context of increasing crime and the diversification of criminal methods. This

component is important nationally as it facilitates not only cooperation on specific issues but also the transfer of best practices and ensures the visibility of the MAI in relation to foreign institutional partners.

At European and international level, the role of the internal affairs attaché is shaped not only by facilitating specific police cooperation activities, but also by functioning as a soft power instrument in international relations, acting as a bridge and sometimes as the only communication channel between two states in matters within its competence.

The subject of this doctoral thesis is relevant in the field of international relations and European studies, as the internal affairs attaché represents a strategic security instrument capable of combining responsibilities in the field of international police cooperation with those of diplomacy—attributes that are essential in the context of the dynamics of international relations and the diversification of criminal methods. This work is particularly relevant given that the subject of the Romanian internal affairs attaché has not been studied since 2011. Since then, Romania has undergone major changes in its institutional security architecture, as well as events with significant national impact, such as accession to the Schengen Area. Thus, this research aims to update this occupational standard by outlining the profile of the internal affairs attaché and capturing the new challenges encountered in the execution of the mandate, with the purpose of highlighting its essential contribution to the field of international relations.

The study contributes to the consolidation and optimization of Romania's presence in international cooperation networks in the field of internal affairs, and may serve as a starting point for future research, including more in-depth analyses using alternative methods such as interviews with decision-makers or institutional partners in host states, which could provide new perspectives on the effectiveness of missions and the level of integration of Romanian internal affairs attachés. Comparative studies between models from other countries could also be developed, identifying best practices that could be adapted to the national context.

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