

Duleba, Alexander et al.: Borders and Crossborder Cooperation. Introduction to Border Studies. Prešov: ADIN, s.r.o. – Research Centre of Slovak Society for Foreign Policy, n.o., 2017, 1st edition, 152 pages. ISBN 978-80-89540-82-2.

The publication refers to the project CBC No. 01018 „Sharing know-how for better management of the Schengen Border between Slovakia / Ukraine and Norway / Russia“ and presents itself as an output of the project closing conference which took place in Prešov in April 2017. The conference was held under the financial support of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism and the State budget of the Slovak Republic within the program SK08 - „Slovakia – Ukraine: Cooperation across the Border“. The board of authors guided by doc. PhDr. Alexander Duleba, PhD. is quite wide and diversified though still each of the authors presents accurate and relevant information on the topic through the variety of chapters related to the issue of foreign cooperation and border studies. The authors of the publication should be definitely mentioned: Mgr. Vladimír Bokša, Mgr. Michal Cirner, PhD., PhDr. Vladimír Dančišin, PhD., doc. PhDr. Irina Dudinská, CSc., doc. PhDr. Alexander Duleba, CSc., Mgr. Lukáš Januv, Ing. Martin Lačný, PhD., Mgr. Anna Poláčková, PhD., Mgr. Gabriel Székely, Mgr. Veronika Vašková, PhD. The topic of the research deserves a great attention because of its topicality and interdisciplinary character. The main line of the research can be primarily described as the insight into the political processes influenced by the border research and the cross-border cooperation. The whole attention is paid to the study of factors determining the behaviour and acceptance of decisions by regional and local actors representing communities on both sides of the border, i.e. factors which explain their motivation to develop cross-border cooperation or just the opposite, its conflicting arguments and behaviour and consequently conflicting border relations caused by various factors in terms of politics, economy, identity or culture. However, from the traditional point of view, the main attention within the border research is quite different and is usually aimed at international relations interests if considering the behaviour of the national actors.

The publication offers a detailed survey of the basic common theoretical approaches to border studies. Based on its main features, the book presents the main border conceptualizations and their functions, followed by the conceptualization of the political processes either influenced or activated by the functions or the character of the border. The text is divided into six main chapters related to the topic that, as a matter of fact, does not even seem to be continuously searched for or aimed at before, especially within the Slovak environment. The potential

of the authors is undoubtable and is claimed not only in the professional line, but also in the pedagogical line (all the authors are researchers from the Institute of Political Sciences of Prešov University). The prologue and the first chapter present a detailed view on both the American and the European Schools trying to introduce the main research questions such as „Would the partial loosening of the state sovereignty over its own border automatically lead to the change in the state description as known so far? How would the state border perception possibly change within the international integration conditions? Is there a proof that the border would influence the quality of life of the border communities, and if there is, what would that influence be related to? What is the main difference between the cross-border cooperation on the local and national niveau if considering the activities of political actors?“ In order to find the relevant answers to the questions set within the research (but also the familiar ones), the authors devote their attention primarily to the border studies and present their conclusions within the publication. The text is logical and factual; the authors have based their research on the publications of the foreign authors and recent studies published on the science websites and within the research journals worldwide.

The modern border research is based on the previous research studies of both the political geography and the international relations theory. The border would no longer be described as just a natural or political product; it would be viewed as the part of social identity if taking the whole processes of bordering into consideration. That is what the second and the third chapter of the publication are devoted to. The fourth chapter deserves an attention because of the 4.2.1 section, where the ideal institutional types of cross-border cooperation would be described and stimulated. The last two chapters lead to the presentation of the results and discussion on the topics of the European enlargement, the potential border conflict solving, the role of the citizen society, the involvement of the enterprise subjects, the border perception changes, etc. Each chapter is a complete unit of knowledge presented to the reader, reflecting its content in a formal final conclusion at the end of the chapter. The graphic materials such as maps, schemes or tables are presented for easier perception of the written material.

There are many ideas and thoughts presented in the publication that, as far as I am concerned, should be highlighted and discussed in public. On the page 22, Alexander Duleba presents his view of the citizen versus political system claiming that „There is no universal power in the so called human world...It is necessary to understand that there is no such a human community that would be organized though still independent from the political system! There would be no states if there are no borders so it is obvious that there would be neither any

society nor the political system in this case!“ Referring to this statement, in the chapter 2.2 Vladimir Dančišin presents his point of view on the topic of borders acceptation due to the geographic understanding so common in the past. Trying to show all the perspective insights, Dancisin describes the whole range of border perception based on the variety of science fields involved (geography, social policy, anthropology, history, sociology, economy, etc.). His review of critical approach to border definition is quite untraditional, though still of much interest. The authors of the Chapter 4.2.1 present the ideal types of the cross-border cooperation based on the research performed in the United States of America and Europe as well. These four ideal types are described comprehensibly to a reader. Chapter 6 defining the main conclusions of the variety of authors’ research is the most progressive and much discussed part of the publication. It is necessary to mention that the final conclusion includes not only the publication authors’ studies, but also the results of the foreign and national research and projects implemented and performed within the last fifteen years on the outer border of the European Union. In comparison with such publications, that is quite unexpected. This approach sets a whole new potential for the published material.

Reading the publication it is clear and proved that the research goal is fulfilled. From my point of view, if the original aim of the published material was to become a textbook for the university students, it definitely exceeded this level for many particular reasons. The efforts of the authors should be admitted and honoured. The publication presents an innovative quality approach to the cross-border studies and is not only a complete summary and review of the topic research presented so far but is surely about to become the subject of many further discussions within the professional research field.

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