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Patchwork of Counterterrorism: Analyzing European Types of Cooperation in Sahel

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The overlapping of a series of events in the region has brought the Sahel under the spotlight of many European countries. It has been argued that the peculiar transnational nature of many terrorist groups of the area represents a concrete threat to European security. France, specifically, has led and encouraged a series of European initiatives, which aim to stabilize the region, calling for different degrees of counterterrorism cooperation with its European allies. Many European countries, such as Spain, Germany, the Netherlands, or Italy, have indeed increased their engagement in the area. Yet, not only a variety of new actors are now involved in the response to terrorism, but European cooperation among key actors is also developing along political-strategic, organizational, and procedural dimensions largely unexplored by the existing literature. This paper specifically accounts for the different multilevel configurations of European counterterrorism cooperation in the Sahel between 2012 and 2018. More specifically, the aim of this contribution is twofold. First, theoretically, through the concept of "patchwork" the paper proposes a conceptual framework able to investigate and analyze the apparently confusing multidimensional and multi-actor European cooperation in counterterrorism. Second, it empirically researches and analyzes the types of cooperation and the actors that fulfil key strategic positions in the patchwork. Overall, this paper provides a first complete account of the universe of European actors involved in the region and the types of cooperative patterns.

La coincidencia de una serie de acontecimientos en la región ha puesto al Sahel en el centro de atención de muchos países europeos. Se ha sostenido que el peculiar carácter transnacional de muchos grupos terroristas de la zona representa una amenaza concreta para la seguridad europea. Francia, en concreto, ha liderado e impulsado una serie de iniciativas europeas, cuyo objetivo es estabilizar la región, solicitando distintos grados de cooperación antiterrorista con sus aliados europeos. Muchos países europeos, como España, Alemania, los Países Bajos o Italia, han aumentado su participación en la zona. Sin embargo, no solo hay una variedad de nuevos actores implicados en la respuesta al terrorismo, sino que la cooperación europea entre los actores clave también se está desarrollando a lo largo de dimensiones político-estratégicas, organizativas y de procedimiento, en gran medida inexploradas por la literatura existente. Este documento da cuenta, en concreto, de las diferentes configuraciones multinivel de la cooperación antiterrorista europea en el Sahel entre 2012 y 2018. De manera más específica, el objetivo de esta contribución es doble. En primer lugar, desde el punto de vista teórico, a partir del concepto de "patchwork" (almazuela), el documento propone un marco conceptual que

permite investigar y analizar la aparentemente confusa cooperación europea multidimensional y multiactoral en la lucha antiterrorista. En segundo lugar, investiga y analiza empíricamente los tipos de cooperación y los actores que ocupan posiciones estratégicas clave en el mosaico. En general, este documento ofrece una primera descripción completa del universo de actores europeos que participan en la región y de los tipos de patrones de cooperación.

Le chevauchement d'une série d'événements au Sahel a amené cette région sous les projecteurs de nombreux pays européens. Il a été affirmé que la nature transnationale particulière de nombreux groupes terroristes de la région représentait une menace concrète pour la sécurité européenne. La France, en particulier, a mené et encouragé une série d'initiatives européennes visant à stabiliser la région, en appelant à différents degrés de coopération antiterroriste avec ses alliés européens. Nombre de pays européens, tels que l'Espagne, l'Allemagne, les Pays-Bas ou l'Italie ont en effet accru leur engagement dans cette zone. Pourtant, non seulement divers nouveaux acteurs sont maintenant impliqués dans la réponse au terrorisme, mais en plus de cela, une coopération européenne entre acteurs clés se développe dans des dimensions politico-stratégiques, organisationnelles et procédurales en grande partie sous-explorées par la littérature existante. Cet article propose précisément un compte rendu des différentes configurations multi-niveaux de la coopération antiterroriste européenne qui est intervenue au Sahel entre 2012 et 2018. Plus précisément, cette contribution a un double objectif. D'une part, d'un point de vue théorique et par le biais du concept de « patchwork », cet article propose un cadre conceptuel permettant d'étudier et d'analyser la coopération antiterroriste européenne multidimensionnelle et multi-acteurs qui semble prêter à confusion. Et d'autre part, il étudie et analyse empiriquement les types de coopération et les acteurs occupant des positions stratégiques clés dans ce patchwork. Globalement, cet article offre un premier compte rendu complet de l'univers des acteurs européens et des types de modèles de coopération impliqués dans la région.

Keywords: counterterrorism, patchwork, cooperation, European security, Sahel
Palabras clave: Antiterrorismo, Patchwork, Cooperación, Seguridad europea, Sahel
Mots clés: contre-terrorisme, patchwork, coopération, sécurité européenne, Sahel

Introduction

On May 24th 2021, the Malian President Bah Ndaw and Prime Minister Moctar Ouane were arrested after 18 months transition following a coup in August 2020. This is just the final of a series of events across the Sahel region that have confirmed the key strategic interest of several Western countries in the area. Other than political instability, many policy-makers and experts highlight how the peculiar transnational nature of growing terrorist groups of the area represents a concrete threat to international security, especially in light of an alleged connection between violence, criminal activities and irregular migration. From a strict European perspective, such an interest grew substantially as a consequence of the temporal overlapping of new waves of terrorist attacks across Europe along 2015 and 2016 with the so-called "migration crisis." This convergence has been discussed as the perfect storm for European countries to rally around a shared approach to counterterrorism so to respond cooperatively both internally as well as externally. Indeed, the initiatives only grew

in scope and complexity. On April 16th 2021, the European Council approved the final conclusion on the new Integrated Strategy for Sahel, a new initiative coming after the launch of the 2019 Plan Security and Stability in Sahel (P3S) and the Coalition for the Sahel announced on January 2020. France, specifically, has led and encouraged a series of European initiatives aiming at stabilizing the region, while calling for different degrees of counterterrorism cooperation with its allies. Recent events across the Sahel region have confirmed the key strategic interest of several Western countries in the area. For many policymakers and experts, the peculiar transnational nature of growing terrorist groups of the area represents a concrete threat to international security, especially in light of the connection between violence, criminal activities, and irregular migration. From a strict European perspective, such an interest grew substantially as a consequence of the temporal overlapping of new waves of terrorist attacks across Europe along 2015 and 2016 with the so-called migration crisis. This convergence has been discussed as the perfect storm for European countries to rally around a shared approach to counterterrorism so as to respond cooperatively both internally and externally. France, specifically, has led and encouraged a series of European initiatives aiming at stabilizing the region, while calling for different degrees of counterterrorism cooperation with its allies. The most recent military initiative named "Takuba" was launched in the fall of 2019 and has received increasing support from several European countries. Overall, the French call for cooperation seems to have been proven quite effective, as many European actors have shown a practical and strategic interest in the region, by investing in a diverse series of policy instruments. Hence, the dynamics and implications of this renewed international attention on the Sahel deserve the space and attention that a recent discussion within the literature has offered (Cold-Ravnkilde and Lindskov Jacobsen 2020; Recchia and Tardy 2020). Yet, there are still a few key points that are worth exploring and clarifying. By focusing on the ensemble of European actors involved in the region, this paper addresses remaining gaps in relation to different forms of interventionism in the field of counterterrorism.

Specifically, this paper takes on two necessary tasks. First, in terms of theoretical contribution, it builds on the existing literature on international interventionism, counterterrorism cooperation, and security governance (Hillebrand 2012; den Boer and Jelle 2012; Lavallée, Léonard, and Kaunert 2017; Perlinger 2017) but goes beyond by proposing the concept of "patchwork." Patchwork of counterterrorism refers to a composition of different parts, which, from a distance, displays a sense of coherence that is, however, in fact characterized by a critical variance in terms of shapes and links that keep all the parts together. I believe the term "patchwork" is able to provide a more refined and multifaceted evaluation of the cooperation types that connect a variety of actors via different initiatives. In their contribution, Cold-Ravnkilde and Lindskov Jacobsen (2020) talk about "security traffic jam" and theorize about the "constitutive effects" of Western liberal interventionism in the Sahel along three dimensions: *spatiality, temporality,* and *relationality.* While their work is essential in shedding light on how threat perceptions, rationales, and problematizations become consolidated during ongoing intervention practice, questions remain about under exactly what conditions the "traffic jam" is generated and what kind of conceptual framework can account for that. The idea of patchwork, I believe, enables us to answer these questions.

Second, this paper goes beyond the typical binary approach to European interventionism quite established in the literature that focuses on either the European Union (EU) level (Argomaniz 2011; Kaunert, Leonard, and Pawlak 2012; Bossong and Rhinard 2016; Cold-Ravnkilde and Lindskov Jacobsen 2020) or a country-specific level (von Hippel 2005; Foley 2013; D'Amato 2019; Pannier and Schmitt 2019). Indeed, this paper empirically researches and analyzes types of European cooperation in its larger understanding. I believe this is a quite necessary objective as European interventionism in the Sahel is still characterized by an unexplored

variance of mixed instruments and connections. As highlighted, we see fluid, over-lapping, and sometimes contrasting groupings of cooperation operating in different formats, ranging from bilateral to minilateral and supranational initiatives. Yet, what remains puzzling is that we still know very little about the range of actors involved along diverse counterterrorism projects and, more importantly, what type of cooperation results from these different formats. Overall, although strategically crucial, a comprehensive study combining cross-national and EU levels of analysis to understand the varieties of cooperation in counterterrorism policies remains a glaring blind spot among specialized accounts on the matter.

Specially, I focus with this paper on three dimensions of cooperation, meaning political-strategic, operational, and procedural, as well as on the actors that fulfil key positions within the patchwork. In a nutshell, the paper offers a first complete account of the universe of European actors involved in the region and the types of cooperative patterns. In addition, while counterterrorism has traditionally been understood as a state-based prerogative and approached from a unitarian—strictly military—perspective, current forms of engagement in the Sahel seem to display a more fragmented panorama. Indeed, this case is highly relevant when addressing different practices of counterterrorism that today involve a variety of actors beyond typical governmental ones at different levels of governance, and of a different nature, a variety that is still largely unexplored. In this regard, the paper will detail the conditions under which the process of grouping among the different actors within the patchwork is constituted, between the existence of a crisis and the willingness of a group leader to lead the collective response.

In order to do so, the paper unfolds as follows. After reviewing the main debates surrounding the question of European cooperation in the field of counterterrorism and the existing gaps, it elaborates on the concept of patchwork. Specifically, we will see the defining characteristics of a patchwork, the theoretical expectations it generates, and the operationalization of cooperation along three dimensions: political-strategic, organizational, and procedural dimensions. Before delving into the analysis, the paper also provides a brief overview of the main security issues related to the Sahel region, focusing on the key elements that are today treated as an imminent threat for European countries. Hence, the following section draws on the results gathered from the analysis and details the different existing configurations of cooperation as well as the empirical elements supporting the overall argument. Finally, in light of the empirical findings, the concluding section reviews the key points of the subject matter and its theoretical relevance, as well as its importance for European counterterrorism dynamics.

European Counterterrorism between the EU and Europe: Debates and Missing Pieces

As a plurality of studies on counterterrorism in Europe testify, the debate on European counterterrorism has been significantly shaped by the 9/11 attacks and subsequent events. Indeed, since 9/11, despite the important historical dimension of the phenomenon and the quite extensive European experience on the matter, the academic production on terrorism and counterterrorism has probably never been so prolific. Today we know that both meaning and practices of terrorism and counterterrorism are largely debated and contested (Jackson 2005; Bryan 2018). We also know that there is an important gender dimension to account for when discussing participation in political violence as well as in terms of implications for states' security responses (Cook 2020). We know that, as with many other security fields, European states as well are relying much more on private actors in their fight against terrorism (Phelps 2020).

Yet, overall, the academic production has almost exclusively focused on two research axes, which have, surprisingly, never really talked to each other. On the one

hand, a number of single-case and comparative studies focused on contextual specificities and historical experiences to analyze states' approaches to terrorism (von Hippel 2005; de Graaf 2011; Foley 2013). On the other hand, a prolific strand of the literature has emphasized the changes and evolution happening in Europe at the supranational level under the pressure of terrorism (Bossong 2013; Argomaniz, Bures, and Kaunert 2015).

Scholars interested in EU policies and the process of integration have analyzed and evaluated developments and the different dynamics of cooperation under the umbrella of EU institutions. By focusing on the concept of EU counterterrorism governance (Christou and Croft 2014; Monar 2014), few of these accounts have usually addressed intra-institutional cooperative dynamics and analyzed the design and implementation of coherent and less coherent modes of governance. Yet, despite an overall dominance of research on internal security (Kaunert and Léonard 2013; Argomaniz, Bures, and Kaunert 2017), many outstanding works have investigated the external dimension of counterterrorism cooperation within EU institutions (Martins and Ferreira-Pereira 2012; Monar 2015; Lavallée, Léonard, and Kaunert 2017). Such an interest in EU external efforts in the field of counterterrorism was developed in conjunction with the broader debate on whether, and how, the EU "actorness" in the field of security was sparking (or not) (Kaunert 2010; Brattberg and Rhinard 2012; Ferreira-Pereira and Martins 2013). Despite critical views (Niemann and Bretherton 2013; O'Brien 2016), an increasing number of scholars interested in questions related to EU security and military strategy (Howorth 2012, 2019; Chappell, Mawdsley, and Petrov 2016) focus on institutional developments, while analyzing cooperation under the EU umbrella as a product of shared institutional arrangements and a normative rationale. Yet, while institutionalist approaches do offer convincing analysis of the impact of institutionalized relations in forging (shared) interests and (cooperative) policies, limitations arise with respect to what happens when countries form a variety of cooperative links, engaging in different programs—EU-supported projects or bi-minilateral agreements—which require different degrees of cooperation. The same can be said with respect to a structural approach to international cooperation that would highlight the instrumental convergence of (national) interests based on material capacities (Posen 2006; Jones 2007; Rynning 2011; Hyde-Price 2012), discrediting EU-related cooperative projects as mere propaganda initiatives. In the analysis of inconsistencies of cooperative behavior, interesting insights can be borrowed from an important body of research originating in peace and conflict studies where similar questions are addressed in relation to UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding cooperation (Bellamy and Williams 2013; Kathman and Melin 2017; Bove, Ruffa, and Ruggeri 2020).[1] What we learn from these studies, when focusing either on different political or humanitarian objectives of actors involved (Campbell 2008; de Coning 2019) or on intra-agency coherence (De Coning and Friis 2011; Rietjens and Ruffa 2019), is that different structures, working and military cultures (Ruffa 2018) other than capacities among members, all have an impact on the way missions are implemented. However, with this work, I expect to shed light on how different types of cooperation among similar actors interact with each other rather than analyzing cooperation in terms of coherence and effectiveness. Indeed, I believe that the existing literature still lacks a systematic consideration of the different degrees of commitment that many European countries, within and beyond the EU, are showing with respect to different projects. These projects usually range from mere political support, to economic and technical contributions, and up to the development of proper, shared procedural practices among national forces.

In sum, the existing literature does not yet offer a comprehensive account of diversity of cooperation able to grant due consideration to both Brussels-based

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[1] The author would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for raising this point.

cooperation and the rest of the initiatives that might overlap but also contrast with cooperative trends. In fact, while few studies have empirically substantiated the dynamics of cooperation and fragmentation at play in other areas of European defense and security (Michalski and Norman 2016; Aggestam and Bicchi 2019; Meijer and Wyss 2019), counterterrorism remains largely underexplored.

In this sense, this paper provides a useful contribution to the literature on security cooperation, and specifically on counterterrorism cooperation as it unearths, from a theoretical and empirical perspective, these complex and overlapping dynamics at play while considering counterterrorism cooperation as a multilevel dimension.

Patchwork of Counterterrorism: Theoretical and Methodological Note

As said, what bridges European actors in the Sahel area is a structure of connections based on bilateral, minilateral, and supranational, occasionally overlapping, initiatives. In order to make sense of the complexity of the current architecture of European cooperation, this paper draws on the concept of "patchworks," first elaborated by Cha (2011) to address the case of military alliances. Patchwork allows to go beyond the network nomenclature popular in studies of regime complexity (Alter and Meunier 2009; Henning 2017), and interorganizational relations (Hofmann 2011; Phelan 2012; Biermann and Koops 2017), as well as beyond a bilateral versus supranational approach more common in military and defense cooperation scholarship (Taylor 2013; Satake and Hemmings 2018; Henke 2019). Differently for these previous works, the interest of this paper lies in the complexity and the contradictions of the intervening actors, i.e., Europeans, rather than in the relationship between the intervening actor and the "regional" players. Also, theoretically, patchwork goes beyond the kindred concept of network as it offers two additional advantages. First, as networks, patchworks provide evidence of existing connections between different actors, but differently, they transmit the idea of a more composed structure. In a sense, a patchwork allows us to account for cooperation as a composition that, from distance, shows a relatively homogeneous and orderly image, which however, once looked at more closely, reveals diversity and variance in shapes and links that keep all the parts together. Second, more and better than networks, patchworks treat the different parts as both components of a larger picture and potentially detached elements that somehow get attached to the rest of the composition.

Indeed, patchwork of counterterrorism intends to capture the set of organized groupings of actors generated in an attempt to solve a problem, in this case, to counter terrorism. Specifically, patchworks can be identified with three defining features: membership fluidity, networked groupings, and collective goal sharing.

Membership fluidity entails the idea that members are connected through links that vary in terms of type and extent of cooperation. Hence, within patchworks, membership might and usually is composed of overlapping initiatives including the same, or proxy, actors that develop alongside alternative interventions, projects, or programs. Hence, the second characteristic of patchworks is the inclusion of networked groups. This means that not only single members' participation is fluid but also groups can generate a variety of networks that come together and form the patchwork. Therefore, through patchwork we can take into due account the variety in the status of these groupings, ranging from more institutionalized forms of cooperation to strictly need-based or target-based initiatives. Finally, by sharing a collective goal, patchworks usually entail an on-the-go nature and grouping of actors happens under two conditions: the existence of a crisis and the willingness of a group leader to lead the collective response.

To investigate the patchwork empirically, the coding strategy concerned any connection between two actors aiming at addressing terrorism. Specifically, cooperation has been analyzed and disaggregated into three dimensions (table 1): (1) *political-strategic*, which refers to the degree of convergence in actors' interpretation of the

Table 1. Operationalization of types of cooperation within counterterrorism patchwork

Political-strategic	Organizational	Procedural
Convergence over the interpretation of the threat, objectives, potential solutions, and instruments	Convergence and cooperation between law enforcement agencies, agencies, and intelligence services, including operative support in terms of resources and manpower	Development of shared operative working procedures and standard protocols

threat, objectives of the interventions, and shared ideas on potential solutions and needed instruments; (2) *organizational*, which refers to cooperation between law enforcement actors, agencies, and intelligence services—it includes operative support in terms of economic resources and/or manpower; and (3) *procedural*, which refers to arguably the highest degree of cooperation and convergence concerning the development of shared operative and working procedures and standard protocols. In this sense, procedural cooperation entails the possibility for professionals to develop comparative learning of practical procedures (Den Boer and Wiegand 2015).

In terms of data gathering, a database collecting data on the actors' connections has been built on the basis of a systematic triangulation of different and multiple sources.[2] With regard to the type of interactions coded—patchwork boundaries—I have included all those connections entailing some form of exchange between two European actors, being private or public, in the realm of the fight against terrorism and security issues with respect to the Sahel area. Specifically, in terms of coding rules, a coding scheme has been created, consisting of a category system of relevant policy *actors* and *types of cooperation*. With respect to actors, the coding includes all the actors exercising a function in the field of counterterrorism in relation to their level of governance (supranational, national, subnational, and transnational) and their status (private versus public) and their relations coded according to the types of cooperation they entailed. Specific attention to account for structural variations has been dedicated to collecting as many data points as possible for each dimension over the duration of the analysis. The data gathering strategy has prioritized data sources from either available database (EU Global Engagement, Foreign Policy Instruments—IcSP, and the Financial Transparency System developed by the European Commission) or primary strategic documents (nationally and EU published reports) and original primary interviews conducted with EU and national policymakers and practitioners.[3] However, additional data have been collected from secondary data sources, including news reports or academic publications. The data collection has been considered completed when the information on the different clusters could not produce any additional new information.

The case of the Sahel seems to be particularly relevant to grasping such a complex scheme for different reasons. First, as for other cases, existing research has been mostly sectionalized between EU perspectives (Korteweg 2014; Jayasundara-Smits 2018; Raineri and Strazzari 2019; Cold-Ravnkilde and Nissen 2020) and counterterrorism state to state cooperation either between the United States and Europe (Anagnostakis 2016; Wing 2019) or between European and Sahelian countries (Wing 2016; Charbonneau 2017). More than in any other case, the Sahel as intervening space displays a multifaced picture of European interventions, made of different initiatives ranging from military to nonmilitary counterterrorism tools.

[2]The database is available upon request to the author.

[3]Nine semistructured interviews conducted between December 2018 and June 2019 with policymakers and experts of European security and cooperation.

For these reasons, the empirical analysis of this study concerns a critical moment in the development of European responses, meaning 2012–2018. The selection of this particular time span relies on the interest to capture the optimal time period for the formation of the counterterrorism patchwork in Sahel as the European engagement has sparked in an unprecedented manner. Indeed, 2012 signals the beginning of at least two: a period characterized by a new wave of political instability represented by the declaration of the independence from the Azawad Movement and the clash of the Malian civil war. The combination of following increasing transnational political instability, criminal activities, and political violence soon strengthened the concerns and pressure for intervention of many European actors.

European Patchwork in Sahel: Varieties of Counterterrorism Cooperation

Setting the Scene: The Sahel "Crisis" and European Views

In light of its colonial history, the Sahel has been a region of interest of Europeans for many decades. Progressively more interested in the socioeconomic conditions and signs of political instability, it is with the clash of the Malian civil war in 2012 that Sahel started to be properly interpreted, narrated, and approached as a region "in crisis" by the international and European actors (Baldaro 2020). Despite its contested meaning and labeling, today the Sahel—also named Sahara-Sahel, G5, and West Africa—is generally understood as the area including Chad, Mauritania, Nigeria, Niger, and Burkina Faso. Today, the region is characterized by increased transnational terrorist and smuggling activities in and across borders, renewed conflict in Mali, and important flows of irregular migration directed toward Europe, where a new wave of—disconnected—violent attacks has reinforced generalized fear and insecurity.

According to the data gathered by the International Crisis Group,[4] the whole Sahelian band displays political and institutional instability and diffused—transnational—political violence. More than thirty-seven terrorist and national insurgency groups are currently active in the area, totaling 31 percent of all such groups in the African continent. Chad, for instance, has been in a critical situation since the rise of violence in southern Libya, where many Chadian rebel groups, taking advantage of the situation, have instead established offshore bases. Once based in northern Nigeria, Boko Haram has also spread its activities in the country across the Lake Chad Basin,[5] while also intensifying its operations in the Zamfara State, leaving about one hundred casualties in 2018 alone. In the meantime, the Malian crisis, which began in 2012, only seems to have worsened despite the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation and the following 2018 renewed commitments by the Government of Mali and the signatory armed groups to ensure the full implementation of the deal.[6] Whereas the international efforts focused on the rebellious north of Mali, the rest of the country, mostly around the regions of Mopti and Ségou, has witnessed increasing intragroup hostilities, such as the mounting tensions between Tuareg and Fulani pastoralists (Raineri and Strazzari 2019) and more recently between Fulani and Dogon.[7]

Burkina Faso is also experiencing extensive security issues. Since 2015, the north of the country, which borders Mali, has experienced dozens of attacks, mostly conducted by Ansar ul Islam, a local group founded in December 2016 to preach a radical version of Islam, which turned into an armed movement under the influence of Dicko. Niger, in particular, seems to represent a specifically difficult case. The

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[4] See   https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/database?location%5B%5D=2940&date_range=latest&from_month=01&from_year=2018&to_month=01&to_year=2018.

[5] See https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/lake-chad-basin-controlling-cost-counter-insurgency.

[6] For a reconstruction of the conflict, see Baldaro (2018).

[7] Founded in 2016 under the authority of Youssouf Toloba, Dan Na Ambassougou is an example of a Dogon-affiliated "self-defense militia" operating across the areas of Bankass, Bandiagara, Koro, and Mondoro.

country is at the crossroads of these transnational terrorist and smuggling activities, and it has suffered from different terrorist attacks in the southeast region, along the border with Nigeria, as well as the western borders with Mali and Burkina Faso. In addition, suspected members of Boko Haram—now allegedly turned into the organization Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP)—have also increased their activities in the southeast.[8] Overall, the region seems today divided under two spheres of influence. On the one hand, there is Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin, an umbrella organization that includes Katiba Macina, Ansar ul Islam, Ansar Dine, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, and Al-Murabitoun. On the other, there is a growing influence of the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, mostly in Mali and Niger, and the mentioned ISWAP across Nigeria and Niger.

On top of concrete security issues, in the last few years, the humanitarian situation across the region has seen a rapid deterioration, triggered by scarce and erratic rainfall in 2017. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), nearly 6,000,000 people struggled to meet their daily food needs in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal; the situation was the worst it had been since the region's extreme food crisis of 2012.[9] Considering also the strong geological changes produced by climate change (Raleigh 2010; Freeman 2017), which foster migration and political instability, it seems that diverse sociopolitical and security issues are also likely to characterize the region in the near future.

On the European side, the response so far has focused on a combination of security and development initiatives. The EU specifically manifested the intention to be engaged in the area through the 2011 Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel[10] and the launch of the 2012 EUCAP Sahel-Niger, especially pressured by the Malian crisis. A few years later, following a slow implementation of the Sahel Strategy and several Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions, the Sahel Regional Action Plan was adopted in April 2015, identifying four key priorities: (1) preventing and countering radicalization, (2) creating appropriate conditions for youth, (3) migration and mobility, and (4) border management, tackling illicit trafficking and transnational organized crime,[11] while also insisting on the humanitarian aspect through intensified economic assistance to regional development (i.e., Africa Trust Fund). Overall, it is fair to say that the Malian crisis, other than intensifying international interventionism embodied by the 2013 United Nations' Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSMA) and the 2013 French Operation Serval, substituted then by Operation Barkhane in 2014, did open the path for stronger European interventionism in the whole area, even beyond the EU. Specifically, while traditionally less prone to security cooperation in the area, France today seems to be supportive of a durable European presence across Sahelian countries (Erforth 2020).[12] After the shift from Operation Serval to Operation Barkhane, reflecting French interest in employing a more versatile force, including 3,000 troops and support aircraft headquartered in Chad to secure its interests regionwide (Harmon 2015), many initiatives have been welcomed by European partners. In sum, the Sahel today represents a particularly problematic

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[8] For an overview of the security situation in Niger, see https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/niger/245-niger-and-boko-haram-beyond-counter-insurgency.

[9] See https://www.unocha.org/story/sahel-5-things-you-need-know-about-one-world's-poorest-and-most-vulnerable-regions.

[10] European External Action Service. 2011. "European Union External Action Service Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel." Available at https://cdn1-eeas.fpfis.tech.ec.europa.eu/cdn/farfuture/S52zF-NRdSE1nT_vJCMWe5uRfpDn025h4kP7iW9M-Fw/mtime:1466498265/sites/eeas/files/strategy_for_security_and_development_in_the_sahel_en_0.pdf.

[11] Council of the European Union. 2016. "Council Conclusions on the Sahel, 3477th Foreign Affairs Council Meeting, Luxembourg." Available at http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-10393-2016-INIT/en/pdf.

[12] The above-mentioned Operation Takuba is a confirmation of this trend and the French interest in burden sharing (see Guichaoua 2020).

Table 2. Types of actor involved in counterterrorism initiatives across Sahel

Actor category	Actor name	Total
Supranational	DEVCO; EEAS; EUROPOL	3
National (governmental)	Austria; Belgium; Bulgaria; Czech Republic; Denmark; Estonia; Finland; France; Germany; Hungary; Ireland; Italy; Latvia; Lithuania; Luxemburg; Norway; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Slovenia; Spain; Sweden; The Netherlands; United Kingdom	27
Subnational	Civipol; FIIAPP; Guardia Civil; Carabinieri; Promediation; Agence Nationale du Development; Moore Stephens LLP; Ernst & Young Bedrijfsrevisoren Cvba; Promediation; Deloitte Bedrijfsrevisoren; Enabel; Gendarmerie Nationale; Guarda Nacional Republicana	16
Transnational	EUROGENDFOR	1
Total		47

hotspot in the eyes of European and indeed many policymakers have insisted on increasing efforts in order to limit the consequences that transnational activities might generate on the other side of the Mediterranean. Overall, the Sahel works as a perfect laboratory (Lopez Lucia 2017) for many European actors to pursue their different agendas converging in the fight against terrorism while generating crucial political, social, and economic consequences (Cold-Ravnkilde and Lindskov Jacobsen 2020).[13] The discussion and analysis of power dynamics and relational implications of forms of security interventionism, such as counterterrorism, in the region are beyond the intent of this paper.[14] However, there is an important point to be made about counterterrorism as a crucial issue area displaying much political legitimacy and therefore allowing a number of actors to collaborate in this security field. The following analysis of the patchwork of counterterrorism in the case of the Sahel will also provide interesting insights to build on this point.

European Actors and Relations in Counterterrorism

The case of European counterterrorism in the Sahel appears to be particularly revealing when addressing the question of multilevel and multi-actor cooperation. The analysis indeed confirms the existence of a complicated picture of political alliances, military bi- and minilateral assistance, and economic connections between European actors engaged in the area ($n = 45$). Yet, the actors involved go beyond the usual suspects such as France, the United Kingdom, or the Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO). They, indeed, actually respond to different levels of governance (table 2) ranging from subnational to national, supranational, and even transnational, such

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[13] The case of Niger offers an interesting case in point. Research has shown the historical dimension of smuggling in the county and the system of general impunity characterized by a critical alignment between smugglers and traffickers, on the one hand, and governmental actors, on the other hand, which have facilitated and profited from formally irregular smuggling. Raineri (2018, 73) argues that "the smuggling industry in Agadez has been so blatant and normalized that smugglers can set up and run undisturbed a Bureau des Trafiquants, a Traffickers' Union, to foster coordination and protect their collective interests." Yet, the externally imposed criminalization of migration pushed by the European Union has significantly impacted the local dynamics. As the US State Department's Trafficking in Persons Report on Niger has underlined "European support for the government's implementation of its 2015 anti-smuggling law, intended to limit irregular migration through Niger, has forced previously open (albeit illicit) migration underground and increased migrants' vulnerability to forced labor or sex trafficking by criminal networks" (US State Department 2019, 353).

[14] For recent contributions on this, see Frowd (2020) and Osland and Erstad (2020).

as EUROGENDFOR, namely a European multinational police force with military status.[15]

Public actors remain the majority of the population involved, accounting for 84.09 percent of relations, against the 15.91 percent of the private sector. Within such a variety of projects connecting the actors across different initiatives, France and the EU currently represent two key brokers of cooperation, although to different extents. With respect to the EU, this seems to be the case because of two cooperative clusters developed within the institution: first, much of the cooperative behavior develops through the European External Action Service (EEAS) in the form of CSDP missions. Second, a fair part of the existing cooperation passes through different initiatives implemented by single states or subnational actors but hosted or, more often, financed by the EU institutions and specifically by DG DEVCO. Concerning the former, since 2012 Europeans have been engaged in the Sahel through three CSDP missions, namely EUCAP Sahel-Niger, EUTM Mali, and EUCAP Sahel-Mali, which pursue three different strategic goals, i.e., border control, security, and training (see table 3).

Not surprisingly, however, table 4 confirms that member states (MSs) are contributing to a different extent in these missions, revealing a diverse interest in cooperation. France appears to be the leading actor with the highest engagement in all three operations (a total of 238 personnel units), followed by Spain (65 units), the United Kingdom (42 units), Sweden (17 units), and Italy (17 units). Yet, interestingly, other members have contributed with a significant contingent to one mission, such as Belgium (34 units), Czech Republic (33 units), or Poland (20 units) for the EUTM Mali that, overall, appears to be the CSDP mission in the Sahel with the largest contribution.

It is important to note here that, on the one hand, the ensemble of coded relations—available in the appendix—confirms that, beyond their involvement within the CSDP mission, the contribution by the majority of MSs remains quite marginal as they do not appear in other cooperative initiatives. Such a finding reinforces the argument that the EU is functioning as a key broker as it encourages the engagement of those countries that would not otherwise be involved in the area. On the other hand, the remaining connections seem to confirm patterns emerging from the strongest EEAS-based cooperation. Indeed, with the exception of the Czech Republic, those countries contributing the most to CSDP missions, namely France, the United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, and Sweden, are also those that are mostly engaged with alternative programs and missions. In other words, it is fair to say that European engagement in the area is only in part captured by the CSDP umbrella.

Another important finding concerns the heterogeneity of the actors involved that go beyond typical governmental ones and range from multilateral to subnational, as well as from public to private. An interesting case to consider here relates to the clusters of military forces composed of Gendarmerie corps such as the Italian Carabinieri and the Spanish Guardia Civil. Indeed, these special forces are either engaged via different formats in minilateral programs like the GAR-SI Sahel[16] or connected as direct recipients of EU funding through DG DEVCO to implement counterterrorism-relevant activities, as well as in cooperation with different types of public or semiprivate subnational actors like Civipol[17] and the Belgian Organe de Coordination pour l'Analyse de la Menace (OCAM)[18] through the CT MORSE

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[15] Current members include Gendarmerie Nationale (France), Guarda Nacional Republicana (Portugal), Koninklijke Marechaussee (The Netherlands), Arma dei Carabinieri (Italy), Jandarmeria Română (Romania), and Guardia Civil (Spain).

[16] Groupes d'Action Rapides—Surveillance et Intervention au Sahel.

[17] Officially created as a consultancy agency for the French Ministry of the Interior, Civipol is a semiprivate company 40 percent owned by the French government.

[18] Created in July 2006 under the scrutiny of both the Belgian Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Justice, OCAM is dedicated to analysis of the terrorist threat against Belgium.

Table 3. European cooperation within CSDP framework

Mission	Time span	Mission goal	Contributing MSs	Engagement Index 3	Cooperation with UN	Cooperation with NATO
EUCAP Sahel-Niger	2012–2018	Border control	Bulgaria; Denmark; France; Germany; Italy; Lithuania; Romania; Spain; Sweden; United Kingdom	Medium (2)	No	No
EUTM Mali	2013–2018	Security	Austria; Belgium; Czech Republic; Finland; France; Hungary; Ireland; Italy; Latvia; Lithuania; Luxemburg; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Slovenia; Spain; Sweden; United Kingdom	Medium (2)	Yes	No
EUCAP Sahel-Mali	2014–2019	Training	Bulgaria; Finland; France; Germany; Italy; Luxemburg; The Netherlands; Romania; Spain; Sweden; United Kingdom	Medium (2)	Yes	No

Source: Adapted by the author from EU Global Engagement (2019).
Note: Engagement Index 3 measures the proportional troop or personnel deployment among cooperating MSs at the known peak of operations and missions (EUMSs only). The resulting index has three categories: high = 3 (no single cooperating MS contributes over 33 percent of total troops or personnel deployed); medium = 2 (one cooperating MS contributes between 33 and 50 percent of the total troops or personnel deployed); and low = 1 (one cooperating MS contributes over 50 percent of total troops or personnel deployed).

Initiative.[19] Yet, the analysis reveals that there is also an additional range of private actors connected through EU funding opportunities engaged—along with Gendarmerie forces—in the implementation of different practices and duties, both on the ground as nongovernmental organizations (Promediation and Enabel) or in Brussels, as financial controllers of counterterrorism missions (Moore Stephens LLP, Ernst & Young Bedrijfsrevisoren, or Deloitte Bedrijfsrevisoren).

Hence, in the case of the Sahel, the EU shows a clear predominance in promoting EU initiatives, but even more frequently cooperative projects, among MSs, subnational public or private actors that go beyond the EU direct responsibility. An additional important actor in this sense is EUROPOL in its external operations. With the intent of enhancing intra-EU cooperation, EUROPOL has created liaison offices in CSDP missions of the area (following the Crime Information Cell model, e.g., in Mali or Niger).[20] Moreover, it is also currently coordinating the Joint Investigative Team financed by the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa involving Spanish and French forces deployed in Niger to assist and train Nigerien law enforcement authorities that are investigating criminal networks.

[19] See http://ct-morse.eu.
[20] See proposals to further strengthen the fight against migrant smuggling, July 6, 2018. Available at http://www.statewatch.org/news/2018/jul/eu-council-europol-note-migrant-smuggling-action-10944–18.pdf.

Table 4. EUMS contribution to CSDP missions in Sahel

Contributing member (personnel)	Mission		
	EUCAP Sahel-Niger	EUTM Mali	EUCAP Sahel-Mali
Austria	0	8	0
Belgium	0	34	0
Bulgaria	6	0	1
Czech Republic	0	33	0
Denmark	1	0	0
Estonia	0	2	0
Finland	0	11	2
France	18	207	13
Germany	2	0	2
Hungary	0	13	0
Ireland	0	8	0
Italy	5	7	5
Latvia	0	2	0
Lithuania	1	2	0
Luxemburg	0	1	1
Poland	0	20	0
Portugal	0	1	0
Romania	1	1	1
Slovenia	0	3	0
Spain	4	59	2
Sweden	2	13	2
The Netherlands	0	0	1
United Kingdom	1	40	1

Source: EU Global Engagement (2019).

Beyond this Brussels-based cooperation, a case worth considering concerns Norway and its significant engagement in the area, raising interesting questions with respect to differentiated cooperation. In fact, despite being one of the most engaged third state contributors to CSDP missions across the world,[21] and while providing significant political, economic, and operative support to France for the Operation Barkhane and the Sahel G5 as well as to the UN operation MINUSMA, the country is not involved in any CSDP mission in the area. In this sense, in the case of the Sahel, Norway seems to privilege bilateral support on military operations like Barkhane and political–economic support to the French minilateral initiative, rather than engagement through EU channels.

Hence, we confirm here the relevance of France as the other "natural" pivotal broker of cooperation. Historically significantly more involved in the area than its European counterparts, in the post-Malian crisis, Paris has been particularly capable at leading and promoting the development of a European engagement in the area. Much of the cooperation outside, but even within, the EU has been supported and incentivized by France, which has promoted a stronger European presence along different configurations and formats, meaning multilateral (EEAS missions), minilateral (Sahel Alliance; GAR-SI Sahel), or bilateral as external support to its operations (Operations Serval and Barkhane). Interestingly, and differently from other cases (Krotz and Schild 2012; Hofmann and Mérand 2020), the historically effective bilateral cooperation with Germany does not appear to be crucial in pushing for a closer Europe in counterterrorism. However, interviews did confirm that the

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[21] See https://www.dahrendorf-forum.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Known-Unknowns-for-soft-copy-080318.pdf.

Table 5. Coded cooperative connections

Political-strategic	Organizational	Procedural	Total
25	55	29	109

German decision to increase its military presence in the area after 2015 has been important in convincing other European countries to invest more in the area.[22]

Overall, so far, we have seen a number of initiatives and forms of interventions mostly based around the EU and France. Yet, we still know very little about the types of cooperation these connections entail that eventually form the European counterterrorism patchwork in the Sahel. Hence, the following section focuses on the features of the patchwork by revealing the distinct cooperative instruments that have been used in the case of the Sahel.

Varieties of European Counterterrorism Cooperation(s) in Sahel

This section is specifically concerned with the types of cooperation that different cooperative connections entail. Table 5 visualizes the distribution across the three cooperative dimensions of the total ($n = 109$). The organization dimension displays the highest number of codes ($n = 55$). This means that European actors operating in the Sahel are mostly cooperating by providing operative support in terms of resources and manpower. There are nonetheless an interesting number of connections that entail a strict political-strategic cooperation on the interpretation of the characteristics of the terrorist threat ($n = 25$), with only few more designed to implement shared procedures ($n = 29$).

By combining type of cooperation with actors, the ensemble of coded relations[23] confirms that the core of cooperative efforts lies around key states involved in the area, France, the United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, Belgium, and their subnational actors, either police forces or development agencies.

Specifically, the analysis reveals that two cooperative clusters—groupings—of countries more likely to cooperate with each other seem to emerge: a Nordic one, mainly composed of Sweden, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, and a Southern one, mostly composed of France, Spain, and Italy. Germany seems more likely to align with the Southern cluster. Overall, governmental engagement usually takes the form of organizational cooperation, as is the case of national economic and manpower contribution to CSDP missions, or the bilateral support to Operation Barkhane by Belgium, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Spain, or more recently Estonia. Specifically, within Barkhane, the United Kingdom and Denmark provide significant air-force—organizational—support to Barkhane via the Groupement Tactique Désert—Aérocombat, where forces are, progressively, trained to increase interoperability, and therefore procedural cooperation.

The Border Security and Management program in the Sahel region by the Danish Demining Group, while including parts of these actors, provides community-based initiatives to address factors facilitating political violence. Indeed, the project aims "to reduce armed violence, improve community safety, and enhance border security and management capacity in the Liptako-Gourma region"[24] and it is based on the contribution of Denmark, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands.

A similar aim is promoted by the more recent Sahel Alliance, launched in July 2017 under French leadership. This instead is a case of a single initiative including different types of cooperation. Indeed, we have a political-strategic cooperation with

[22] Interviews 2 and 3.

[23] See the appendix.

[24] See https://danishdemininggroup.dk/danish-demining-group/where-we-work/sahel.

Table 6. Actors and initiatives displaying procedural cooperation

Actor	Initiative
AEI; Civipol; Carabinieri; EEAS; EUROPOL; EUROGENDFOR; Gendarmerie Nationale; FIIAPP; OCAM; Guardia Civil; Guarda Nacional Republicana	IcSP CORSEC (2016–2018); CT Sahel (2014); CT MORSE 2018—Programme de l'Union européenne de Prévention de l'Extrémisme Violent; First joint training EUCAP Sahel-Mali/MINUSMA Bamako (2014); Crime Information Cell model; Sahel EUROPOL liaison officers; GAR-SI SAHEL; Support to Justice, Security and Border Management Niger—Sahel Alliance; Appui au Collège de Défense du G5 Sahel; "Sahel—Terrorismo nell'area sub saheliana"; PARSEC Mopti-Gao (2017–2020)

a significant operational contribution made by Denmark, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain, and the United Kingdom. Interestingly, however, in the case of security and border management initiatives within the Alliance, France and Italy display an additional procedural type of cooperation. In fact, differently from the rest of their allies, in the context of the project "Support for Justice, Security and Border Management" in Niger, the two countries are indeed exchanging practices and working protocols in the realm of internal security and justice.[25]

A disaggregated approach to cooperation also reveals that, other than common training responsibilities, the role of subnational security agencies is particularly crucial in driving procedural cooperation, and therefore a stronger convergence toward a European approach to counterterrorism. Table 6 provides a focus on procedural cooperation by detailing some the initiatives that foresaw the implementation of shared working procedures among different European actors.

Within the umbrella of EUCAP Sahel-Mali, for instance, EUROGENDFOR—which also displays a political-strategic cooperation with DG DEVCO—has been asked to be involved to provide security assistance and training to local forces, hence operational cooperation. Yet, in practice, these functions are conducted by different European Gendarmerie forces that are part of the organization, as already mentioned, such as Arma dei Carabinieri, Guardia Civil, and Gendarmerie Nationale, and they are based on the sharing of a variety of procedural protocols. Similarly, through the CT MORSE Program, subnational security and police forces not only access economic support but also develop shared programs and projects to be implemented in the area. The launch of the aforementioned GAR-SI Sahel Initiative[26] in June 2016 is another example of European—procedural—cooperation managed at the subnational level but accomplished within the EU umbrella. Led by the Spanish Fundación Internacional y para Iberoamérica de Administración y Políticas Públicas (FIIAPP), GAR-SI Sahel puts together, again but in a different form, European multi-forces, namely Guardia Civil, Gendarmerie Nationale, Arma dei Carabinieri, and Guarda Nacional Republicana, to enforce different counterterrorism-related activities across Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad, and potentially Senegal. Here, cooperation consists in a contribution of one hundred units per country with a twofold nature: (1) preventive, based on police-type functions, force deployment on the border, and search and sweep operations; and (2) reactive, to support local forces or in the case of serious incidents. As the GAR-SI Sahel Action Document describes (European Commission 2016, 7), "being multidisciplinary units, they will be able to fight terrorism, organized crime, including human trafficking." Taken together, these initiatives provide interesting insights into *transnational policing* in counterterrorism (Hillebrand 2012), meaning the role played by law enforcement, investigative, and prosecuting agencies beyond national boundaries (see also Bowling and Sheptycki 2015).

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[25] See the project "Support for Justice, Security and Border Management in Niger." Available at https://www.alliance-sahel.org/en/projects/support-to-justice-security-and-border-management-ajusen/.

[26] See European Commission (2016).

Overall, the analysis confirms the theoretical expectations of the patchwork that grounded on a shared vision of the threats posed by the Sahel across different European countries. As mentioned, the on-the-go nature of patchworks relies also on the condition that actors share a sense of crisis. In the case of the Sahel, the condition has been satisfied by a progressive asserted connection between the question of terrorism and two elements: development and irregular migration. The underlying idea was that stability and security are necessary conditions for economic development: by increasing the living standards of the population, it will make the recurrence to violence, and forced migration, less likely. In other words, we find here an additional case confirming the security–development nexus established as one of the pillars of the European foreign policy, today still largely shared by different European actors.

The relevance of development efforts in the area certainly relates to the second aspect on which European actors have focused their attention when dealing with the terrorism threat in the area, i.e., migration. Long before the so-called migration crisis and its peak in 2015, the question of irregular migration has indeed represented a driver for European efforts in the area that, in fact, connected counterterrorism activities to the management and regulation of migration flows. However, as confirmed by several interviews,[27] the sense of crisis generated by the overlapping between the unprecedented increase of migrants traveling to Europe and the wave of terrorist events across European countries finally pushed for an intensification of the active collaboration in the area within the general framework of the fight against terrorism.

In sum, this section as well confirms that both the EU and France function as brokers in counterterrorism affairs in the Sahel, although they are often playing on different dimensions of cooperation: increasingly procedural for the EU in the form of minilateral projects, and operational for France in the form of bilateral support. This finding begs for a final consideration. It is indeed worth considering that the increasing presence of the EU and other European members within procedural types of cooperation seems, ultimately, to respond to a French strategic design. France has indeed designed and developed different multilateral projects to align European efforts on what they understood to be different dimensions of the fight against terrorism, such as internal security, border control, and development. Therefore, as interviews have confirmed,[28] the EU has functioned as a—broker—amplifier of French interests in the area, in the need to share the burden, i.e., economic support or a source of additional political legitimacy for external interventionism in an area that was formerly a French colonial possession. In this sense, these findings further confirm the French interest in maintaining a key role within multilateral initiatives in the security realm, especially among its European partners. The case of European involvement in the Sahel therefore also displays features of the French "multilateralism to lead" type of approach to counterterrorism cooperation (D'Amato 2019; Erforth 2020). Specifically, France appears interested in sharing the costs and burdens of the intervention while also carving out and securing its position at the center of the patchwork to control resources, flows of information, and strategies developed in the area.

In this sense, the structure of the patchwork allowed France and other European states to diversify their connections and forms of engagement. The apparently confusing overlapping and fluid set of initiatives and programs, generated to respond to different problems linked to transnational terrorism in the area, enabled key actors to posit themselves at the center of the patchwork and use such centrality toward the preferred outcome. Hence, by going back to the third feature of the patchwork, meaning collective goal sharing, the case of European counterterror-

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[27] Interviews 2, 3, and 8.

[28] Interviews 3, 4, and 9.

ism in the Sahel shows that both conditions of grouping—existence of a crisis and the willingness of a group leader to lead the collective response—were present. To sum up, grouping has been possible because of the existence of a terrorist transnational threat topped by the alleged migration crisis. However, grouping has also been possible because France and the EU emerged as key brokers of cooperation, satisfying the interest of the former in collective burden sharing, and the interest of the latter in increased influence and a role in the area.

Final Remarks and Conclusions

This paper has addressed the question of cooperation through the analysis of the existing European counterterrorism patchwork in the Sahel region. Specifically, by building on recent debates on international interventionism and counterterrorism cooperation, this paper explored dynamics of convergence or fragmentation within European security efforts during a critical period for European security. However, it expected to move beyond these results and sought to contribute to this debate in several ways. First, by analyzing the whole spectrum of configurations of cooperation from bilateral to supranational initiatives, the paper contributes by outdoing a long-standing binary approach to cooperation, i.e., EU versus cross-national accounts, which characterized leading accounts of the topic.

Second, by relying on the concept of "patchwork," the paper has proposed a conceptual framework able to account for a whole variety of types of cooperation among European actors across different levels of governance. The analysis has revealed that the grouping dynamics in this case has been possible because of the existence of a transnational terrorist threat coupling with a perceived European migration crisis and the actions of two brokers of cooperation, namely France and the EU, willing to lead cooperative efforts. Through patchwork it has been possible to evaluate European engagement in a larger sense, beyond a typical EU versus nation-state divide that, in light of the complex interconnection among actors, missions, and initiatives, does not seem to make sense anymore in the case of counterterrorism in the Sahel. In fact, much of the diversity within the patchwork is due to the multilevel dimension of current forms of counterterrorism, which is far from being a unified, strictly military-based, or monolithic issue area.

The analysis has also shown the need for a disaggregated approach to cooperation as both France and the EU did indeed attract other willing and capable actors, but they did so via different formats and to fulfill different counterterrorism activities. On these lines, the paper has contributed to the existing literature on counterterrorism by disaggregating the realm of cooperation, investigated by relying on three dimensions: political-strategic, organizational, and procedural cooperation. It has been shown that much of the existing procedural cooperation relies on law enforcement bodies displaying both internal and external security status, such as Gendarmerie forces confirming what has been identified as an increased role of *transnational policing* (Hillebrand 2012) in counterterrorism.

Overall, I believe, this focus on counterterrorism cooperation though the concept of patchwork raises a series of crucial implications for future scholarly work. Theoretically, the use of patchworks across different cases, issue areas, and time periods might increase our understanding of complex forms of cooperation. We now know that cooperation among actors in the field of security is much more diversified and fluid, as interests per se are more variegated and rarely only and purely military ones. Hence, a focus on different security patchworks, I argue, could allow to see and make sense of different networks and conditions at the basis of such interrelated types of interventionism.

In the specific case of European security, the idea of patchwork would allow future scholarship to better emphasize the connections, or inconsistencies, between internal and external security. Indeed, future literature might provide deeper—and

comparative—insights on which levels states cooperate to respond to security issues both internally and externally. Overall, this could help us clarify differences in security practices of cooperation across different territorialities and layers of politics.

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Appendix

Table A1. List of conducted interviews

Interview number	Position of the interviewee	Place and date
Interview 1	EUCAP Sahel	Brussels, December 2018
Interview 2	EU Anti-Terrorism Coordinator Office	Brussels, December 2018
Interview 3	EU High Representative for Sahel Office	Brussels, December 2018
Interview 4	EEAS operative	Brussels, December 2018
Interview 5	DEVCO Project Manager for MENA and Sahel	Brussels, December 2018
Interview 6	EEAS—Counterterrorism Unit	Brussels, December 2018
Interview 7	CSDP Expert	Florence, March 2019
Interview 8	Member of the Senat de la République Française	Paris, June 2019
Interview 9	French Ministry of Defence	Paris, June 2019

Table A2. Actor to actor initiatives coded per type of cooperation

Actor 1	Actor 2	Political-strategic	Organizational	Procedural
Civipol	Carabinieri	×		×
Civipol	FIIAPP	×		×
Civipol	OCAM	×		×
Civipol	AEI	×		×
Civipol	DEVCO	×	×	×
Civipol	Gendarmerie Nationale	×		×
Civipol	AFD	×	×	
Civipol	Moore Stephens LLP	×		
Deloitte Bedrijfsrevisoren	Belgium	×		
Denmark	United Kingdom	×	×	
Denmark	The Netherlands	×	×	
EEAS	EUROGENDFOR	×		×
EEAS	Germany	×	×	
EEAS	Spain	×	×	
EEAS	Italy	×	×	
EEAS	Bulgaria	×	×	
EEAS	Denmark	×	×	
EEAS	Lithuania	×	×	
EEAS	Luxemburg	×	×	
EEAS	The Netherlands	×	×	
EEAS	Sweden	×	×	
EEAS	United Kingdom	×	×	
EEAS	Austria	×	×	
EEAS	Romania	×	×	

Table A2. Continued.

Actor 1	Actor 2	Political-strategic	Organizational	Procedural
EEAS	Belgium	×	×	
EEAS	Czech Republic	×	×	
EEAS	Estonia	×	×	
EEAS	Finland	×	×	
EEAS	Hungary	×	×	
EEAS	Ireland	×	×	
EEAS	Latvia	×	×	
EEAS	Poland	×	×	
EEAS	Portugal	×	×	
EEAS	Slovenia	×	×	
EEAS	EUROPOL	×	×	×
EEAS	France	×	×	×
Ernst & Young Bedrijfsrevisoren	United Kingdom	×		
DEVCO	FIIAPP	×		
DEVCO	EUROGENDFOR	×		
DEVCO	EEAS	×	×	
DEVCO	Enabel	×	×	
DEVCO	AFD	×	×	
DEVCO	Moore Stephens LLP		×	
DEVCO	Ernst & Young Bedrijfsrevisoren		×	
DEVCO	Promediation	×	×	
DEVCO	Carabinieri	×	×	
DEVCO	Spain	×	×	
DEVCO	AEI	×	×	
DEVCO	OCAM	×	×	
DEVCO	Gendarmerie Nationale	×	×	
DEVCO	Guardia Civil	×	×	
DEVCO	Guarda Nacional Republicana	×	×	
DEVCO	France	×	×	
DEVCO	Italy	×	×	
DEVCO	Germany	×	×	
DEVCO	The Netherlands	×	×	
DEVCO	United Kingdom	×	×	
DEVCO	Belgium	×	×	
DEVCO	Expertise France	×	×	
DEVCO	Deloitte Bedrijfsrevisoren		×	
EUROGENDFOR	Carabinieri	×	×	×
EUROGENDFOR	Gendarmerie Nationale	×	×	×
EUROGENDFOR	Guardia Civil	×	×	×
EUROGENDFOR	Guarda Nacional Republicana	×	×	×
EUROGENDFOR	Jandarmeria Româna	×	×	
EUROGENDFOR	Koninklijke Marechaussee	×	×	
EUROPOL	France	×	×	×
EUROPOL	Spain	×	×	×
Expertise France	Germany	×		×
Expertise France	EEAS	×		
Estonia	France	×	×	
France	Germany	×	×	×
France	Norway	×	×	
France	Italy	×	×	×
France	Spain	×	×	×
France	Civipol	×	×	×
France	United Kingdom	×	×	
France	Luxemburg	×		

Table A2. Continued.

Actor 1	Actor 2	Political-strategic	Organizational	Procedural
France	Denmark	×	×	
France	Belgium	×	×	
FIIAPP	Carabinieri	×		×
FIIAPP	France	×		
FIIAPP	Italy	×		
FIIAPP	Portugal	×		
FIIAPP	Gendarmerie Nationale	×		
Germany	Italy	×		
Germany	Spain	×		
Germany	Luxemburg	×		
Germany	United Kingdom	×		
Gendarmerie Nationale	Carabinieri	×		×
Guardia Civil	Carabinieri	×		×
Guarda Nacional Republicana	FIIAPP	×		×
Guarda Nacional Republicana	Carabinieri	×		×
Guarda Nacional Republicana	Guardia Civil	×		×
Guarda Nacional Republicana	Gendarmerie Nationale	×		×
Italy	Portugal	×		×
Moore Stephens LLP	United Kingdom	×		
Promediation	France	×		
Spain	Luxemburg	×		
Spain	United Kingdom	×		
Spain	Portugal	×		×
The Netherlands	United Kingdom	×	×	