

Anna Ayuso

CIDOB

aayuso@cidob.org

The Atlantic Ocean was central to history over a period of five centuries. Multiple links were created that still survive today, but in constant evolution. The European colonization of the Americas and Africa represented a dramatic transformation in the societies and territories of three continents. Over the course of the centuries, structural changes occurred in the relationships across the Atlantic following domination, but also cooperation patterns, both East-West and North-South, and also according to diagonal or triangular schemes. However, the Atlantic Ocean has not been considered an integrated space as a whole. Rather, a fragmented view of the Atlantic Space in various areas of influence has prevailed. Given the increasingly interpolar nature of the global order (Grevi 2009), the Atlantic Space works as a subsystem in the Global Order, composed of different regions interacting and making up different geopolitical spaces, in the North and the South, or diagonally.

Not only the Atlantic, but the world is fragmented into multiple spaces, with respect to dialogue and cooperation, but also to competition. These tensions are augmented by the difficulties involved in accommodating the emerging powers in the traditional governance structures that emerged from World War II. However, the interaction between the different shores of the Atlantic evolves, adapting to the prevailing trends in the restructuring of the international system, and a variety of rules and ideas spread through a multiplicity of actors that go beyond the traditional powers (Hurrell 2007). Therefore, the Atlantic Future project, funded by the 7th Framework Programme of the European Commission, is intended to provide a fresh look at the relationships and interactions across the Atlantic in order to identify changes and continuities, as well as major expected perspectives.

The dominant growth dynamics in the last decade, especially in economic terms, but also according to other parameters, such as population, were located in the Pacific, with China as a major player in Asia. The Atlantic has been seen as a shrinking space that reflects the decline of the West, eclipsed by the emerging powers. The focus of the Obama administration on strengthening its position in the Pacific and decreas-

The focus of the Obama administration on the Pacific, the stagnation of the European integration process, and the mismanagement of the financial crisis have contributed to the idea of the North Atlantic's decline. Nevertheless, other trends contribute to enhancing transatlantic relations.

ing its involvement in European Affairs, the stagnation of the European integration process, and the mismanagement of the financial crisis in the Eurozone have contributed to the idea of the North Atlantic's decline. To this should be added the growing presence of China and other extra-regional actors in the Atlantic, competing with the European Union and the United States in influence. Nevertheless, other trends contribute to enhancing transatlantic relations: the increase in South-South relations, the dynamism of sectors like energy, growing cooperation in the management of marine resources, and new programs established to combat transnational crime offer examples of the emergence of new dynamics to respond to the challenges of the 21st century in the context of globalization.

The aim of the Atlantic Future project was, firstly, to amass a huge number of relevant indicators to put them together in order to ascertain what is really happening in the Atlantic, based on empirical data. Secondly, to analyse the specific trends and identify in a broad perspective the main drivers, actors and factors shaping the Atlantic Space. Finally, it sought future plausible scenarios according to the different alternative variables identified, mainly: prospects for cooperation or competition within the Atlantic Space, the evolution of regulatory convergence or divergence across the Atlantic, and the emergence of centripetal or centrifugal forces within this vast space (Grevi 2015). The idea was not to study the Atlantic as a space separated from the rest of the world, but rather the opposite: to analyse the Atlantic as a laboratory of globalization to provide other regions of the world with useful lessons learned.

The Atlantic matters

Although the Atlantic Space's golden era as the main engine of globalization is over, it continues to be an essential part of the global picture (Vaquer, Tarragona and Morillas 2015). It is still relevant enough to merit attention to what is going on in order to understand the main trends and drivers behind the world's growing interdependence. The Atlantic Future project described the main connections across the Atlantic, how they have been changing over time, and what implications these connections have for the EU and its major partners (Hamilton et al. 2015). As explained in former chapters, some main trends can be highlighted:

- The new key position for the Atlantic in global energy markets is supported by the shift in demand to emerging Asia-Pacific markets, as well as structural declines in energy demand within the Atlantic Space (Isbell 2014). The shale revolution, advances in petroleum technology and exploration, as well as the movement towards low-carbon economies present new opportunities, interdependencies and perspectives for all Atlantic actors, but particularly for the EU, to diversify its energy resources.
- Merchandise trade among the four Atlantic continents more than doubled over the last decade and accounts for more than half of all trade in the world. While the Atlantic's share of global trade in goods has declined, in absolute figures it has actually been growing. The main drivers of trade and financial cooperation in the Atlantic Space

continue to be levels of economic development and pre-existing relations, especially between developed economies, and between European countries and former colonies. However, the presence of new actors from emerging states also creates new incentives for economic cooperation, while growing GDP, lower trade barriers, the entry into the world economy of former centrally-planned command economies, as well as the BRICS and NIC (Newly Industrialized Countries), and the operations of multinational companies, have all created incentives for increased trade. On the supply side, a decline in transportation costs brought about by technological changes affecting ships and aircraft, along with increased investment in seaports and airports, as well as the development of hub and spoke networks, has generated an increase in trade (Barron et al. 2014).

- Atlantic economies are each other's most important service markets, and they are poised to be major beneficiaries and drivers of the growth in global services. The US is the largest single country trader in services, while over half of US and EU service exports go to Atlantic Basin countries, and each is seeing an increasing share of its trade in services conducted with South America and Africa (Hamilton and Quinlan 2015). Services are increasingly important to South Atlantic economies such as Brazil, South Africa, Mexico and Colombia. As governments seek to diversify their economies away from commodity production, demand will grow for services such as health care, education, entertainment, tourism, insurance, telecommunications and finance.
- Investment among Atlantic economies is also denser than anywhere else in the world. Foreign investment provides millions of jobs and affiliate sales within the Atlantic more than double sales in the entire Asia Pacific region. Foreign direct investment (FDI) ties between the US and EU are the main driver, and affiliate sales, not trade, are the primary means by which European and American companies deliver goods and services to consumers across the ocean (ibid.). European and North American companies are also active investors in the Atlantic South. US companies invest more in South and Central America than in Asia, even if those investment levels are likely to become more balanced (Hamilton et al. 2015). EU investments in Africa are likely to remain significant, but the more dynamic investors in Africa are likely to come from Asia. FDI ties between South and Central America and Africa are weak, but Brazilian companies are investing in Africa to diversify their export markets and internationalize their production (Pereira da Costa 2014).
- The Atlantic Basin has been considered a relatively peaceful zone in military terms in recent decades. However, non-traditional security concerns are growing. The major global conflict issues will be driven by challenges such as weapons proliferation, instability caused by failing states, humanitarian crises, piracy and organized crime. The Atlantic Basin features some of the world's main routes for drug trafficking (Jacobson and Daurora 2014). The availability of drugs and arms is very significant in the Americas, but drug cartels are also carrying out illegal activities in some West African countries. The Gulf of Guinea is emerging as a hotspot for pirate attacks in the Atlantic. Trafficking in arms, drugs, people and money are common challenges in the Atlantic Space, posing important risks but also presenting opportunities for increased international cooperation. Combating drug trafficking and organized crime has been and remains a key issue for interregional cooperation.

The Atlantic can be seen as a subspace for joint governance to achieve effective multilateralism for the global order, and as an area of opportunities to meet the challenges coming in the 21st century.

- The environmental challenges faced by countries in the Atlantic Space are mutually reinforcing: climate change mitigation, food security, wildlife trafficking and biodiversity loss are challenges for the Atlantic Ocean itself and for the countries in the Atlantic Space. While these problems are not unique to the Atlantic, they have a marked impact on the different regions (Stefes et al. 2014). Atlantic biophysical systems have a significant capacity to mitigate the impact of industrial activity on the climate at the regional and global levels. The Atlantic serves a unique function as the locus of the planet's thermohaline system reducing extremes in the planet's climate. Any change to this pattern could have untold effects all across the globe, and there are indications that change is already underway (Hamilton et al. 2015)

The abovementioned trends, including the fragmentation and transnationalization of production, trade and investment, increased economic interdependence, energy dependency, climate change and environmental risks, all lead to common challenges. But governance structures to deal with them are still underdeveloped. The Atlantic Space offers a good illustration both of the need for transnational approaches to regional and global issues and of the complexity of creating the governance structure needed to effectively address them across the North-South divide.

Governance challenges in the Atlantic

Dynamics of regional integration and transnational relations coexist in the Atlantic with multiple trends that entail both opportunities and challenges. The decline of the West, the rise of the rest, the global shift of power and the increased levels of interdependence have transformed the global balance of power, but have not yet been reflected in a new system of multipolar governance. The Atlantic is a space where we can observe the gaps and obstacles for the global governance of interdependencies and common assets in a shared way. It is also a space where we can analyse how the changing relative figures and balances in terms of demography, economics, security, energy and resources impact traditional North-North and North-South relations and the emergence of South-South and new triangular relationships between two or three regions in the area.

The Atlantic can be seen as a subspace for joint governance to achieve effective multilateralism for the global order, and as an area of opportunities to meet the challenges coming in the 21st century, including those in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Agenda. The Atlantic Future project devoted special attention to studying the evolution of regionalism and interregionalism in the Atlantic Space, maintaining a pluralistic vision of how the experiences in the different regions under construction have evolved. As mentioned above, the world is fragmented into multiple spaces for dialogue and cooperation, but also for competition, and the Atlantic is no exception. These tensions are amplified by difficulties accommodating the emerging powers in traditional governance structures. The intra-regional and inter-regional relations in the Atlantic are embedded in a multipolar context in which complex interdependences and the competition of ideas interact (Garzón 2015). The current framework of interregional relations in the Atlantic

is limited by several obstacles, among them: the acute asymmetries that exist between the various regionalist processes in Europe, the Americas and Africa; their different regional institutional structures, which make interaction difficult, and the existence of overlapping regional institutions competing with different leaderships. There are also disparities in the meaning of the concept of *region* used in different geopolitical areas, which creates new subspaces and ideological borders. For example, some authors consider NATO a region (Alcaro and Reilly 2015), rather than an inter-relationship based on shared values and common interests. However, there are also regions that are fragmented into overlapping subareas, such as in South America with the Common Market of the South (Mercosur), the Andean Community (CAN) and the Union of South American Nations (Unasur). All this makes regional comparisons difficult, but we can observe also some convergence in trends.

By studying the different regional and interregional initiatives, we analysed how the dynamics evolve and what the implications were for the future development of the governance of the Atlantic Space, using the three types of interregionalism categories proposed by Hänggi (2000): *pure interregionalism* between regional institutional groupings; *transregionalism*, in which states participate in grouping interregional relations, but in an individual capacity, and *hybrid regionalism*, including relations between regional groupings and single powers. But we added a new category: *transgovernmental networks*, including the links and initiatives of transnational civil society and business contacts, empowered by new information and communication technologies.

The convergence of non-state actors' contributions to international cooperation and the evolution of less institutionalised and more flexible forms of transgovernmental governance have paved the way for public-private partnerships (PPP) in fields like development cooperation, culture, science and social affairs. In these sectors, non-state actors play an important role in fostering ties at the interregional level. Another emerging trend is the proliferation of South-South interregional forums through the establishment of more or less institutionalized cooperation mechanisms that impact North-South relations, leading to triangular North-South-South cooperation. The multiple, overlapping interregional initiatives of different natures, such as economic integration initiatives and other political cooperation bodies, lead to multiple memberships of the states in different entities, and overlapping instruments of interregional cooperation that make it difficult to identify stable partners and the consolidation of regional identities. This plethora of subregional actors hamper the EU's designing of its interregional strategies, while accentuating asymmetries with partners. This is less problematic for other actors (like the US, Brazil and South Africa) that have more flexible regional approaches and assign priority to bilateral relations.

We can say that Atlantic geopolitics are currently dominated by heterogeneity rather than uniformity, as emerging economies and groups of states in the South Atlantic develop competing strategies vis-a-vis the West traditional powers, and new regional and interregional initiatives of different natures and configurations proliferate. But, as Bentley (1999) pointed out years ago, the study of transoceanic relations allows for a more complex and realistic vision of the historical process of engagement, exchange, the aggregation of ideas and the fusion of cultures,

The Atlantic is, in many regards, where globalisation as we know it started, and it is a useful unit of analysis upon which to model solutions that could contribute to enhanced global governance.

than that which is obtained from the study of fragmented regions. The challenges in the Atlantic Space are similar to those faced by the rest of the world, and illustrate the shortcomings, but also the opportunities, involved in addressing global issues through a common approach. Regional and interregional relationships developed in the Atlantic Space provide experiences that are useful for other regions. The Atlantic is, in many regards, where globalisation as we know it started, and it is a useful unit of analysis upon which to model solutions that could contribute to enhanced global governance.

Prospects for the EU in the Atlantic Future

The main and equally important trends in the current global context, increasing multipolarity and interdependency, promise to continue to be relevant in the future. The effects of globalisation across the entire planet make it urgent to find effective governance structures and practices that can provide and protect global and regional common assets. Although the idea of a cohesive Atlantic Space has yet to emerge, there could be some impetus for it to develop in the years to come. A thorough understanding of obstacles and drivers for cooperation provides an opportunity for the EU to adapt its external policies to the possible new scenarios (Ayuso and Viilup 2015). Growing interdependence is the greatest driver for cooperation in the Atlantic. Due to the existence of a greater number of actors, with diverse interests and capabilities, the task of building an Atlantic agenda may start, firstly, with identifying common interests for the protection and construction of regional and global assets. Secondly, it would involve identifying common challenges in terms of global and regional risks. The identification of critical factors and actors shaping change in the Atlantic should address three main dimensions: prospects for cooperation or competition within the Atlantic Space, the evolution of regulatory convergence or divergence across the Atlantic, and the emergence of centripetal or centrifugal forces within the regions in this space (Grevi 2015).

Significant obstacles to cooperation still exist. One of the most pivotal obstacles to further Atlantic cooperation is political will. The fact that the Atlantic as a space per se does not yet occupy a core position in the foreign policy agendas of most countries in the Atlantic represents a barrier to cooperative action. For many leaders, the idea of an Atlantic Space is still quite controversial, on the basis of existing differences. Divergences in political institutions and cultural diversity make it difficult to conclude that there is a shared Atlantic identity around the basin. At the same time, interviews over the course of the project reveal that many stakeholders do believe in the rise of a shared Atlantic vision of the world in the future, one which could be based on the common values, interests, threats, challenges and opportunities uniting the four Atlantic regions (see De Castro and Tarragona in this monograph). Moreover, when compared to the Pacific, the Atlantic remains a space in which a certain convergence of norms and values exists (on the basis of shared languages, a common colonial past and religious beliefs), along with shared interests. However, a common pan-Atlantic agenda is still more a wish than a fact. Although democracy is the prevalent form of government across the Atlantic, major regional variations exist, including authoritarian regimes, mainly in Africa. Socio-economic challenges also

differ considerably among Atlantic countries. Social inequalities within countries have been growing in recent years, in both advanced and developing countries. Beyond states, the influence of multinational companies, NGO, social networks, subnational entities and migrant communities is poised to grow. Therefore, future convergence in the Atlantic Basin cannot be planned top-down, but needs to be built on the priorities of societal actors, from the bottom up (Gratius 2015).

Of all the many environmental challenges faced by the entire Atlantic Space, climate change may be said to be the most far-reaching and consequential. Atlantic Basin countries feature marked diversity in climatic and biophysical conditions, and a wide range of experienced or expected climate change impacts. Obstacles to cooperation on environmental and climate issues include providing sustained, sufficient levels of funding, as well as moving from building capacity and knowledge to the implementation of concrete measures. Cooperative frameworks that balance top-down governance with experiences and knowledge from bottom-up initiatives may be able to take advantage of both the flexibility and adaptive nature of small- and medium-scale organizations with the resources available from global institutions.

Atlantic global energy flows will become increasingly dense. This Atlantic energy renaissance is beginning to challenge the long-held assumption that the global centre of gravity for energy supply would remain in the Middle East, Central Asia, and Russia. Future political developments, such as instability and conflicts, may obstruct investment and partnerships in the exploitation and trade of new Atlantic energy resources. As a driver, the offshore revolution has presented southern Atlantic countries with an opportunity to attempt to transform projected increases in hydrocarbon revenue into the longed-for authentic seeds of both sustainable development and the low-carbon revolution. New players and technologies have emerged that are already notably altering both the Atlantic Space and global energy maps, as new conventional and unconventional fossil fuel sources and renewable energies come online, and as opportunities for pan-Atlantic energy cooperation begin to emerge.

Deeper economic connections across the Atlantic depend strongly on favourable growth perspectives for the US economy and the medium-term growth prospects for parts of Africa and Latin America. African societies, however, are still very poor, and their exports, like those of most Latin American countries, are dominated by raw materials whose prices are decreasing. Trends suggest that the US will continue to be the most important investor in Latin America, but will be less present in Africa due to the slackening of the commodities super cycle (Gratius et al. 2015). The dynamic interaction between trade and investment is and will likely continue to be a distinctive feature of the pan-Atlantic economy (Hamilton 2015). The main drivers for trade and financial cooperation are the levels of economic development and pre-existing relations, especially between European countries and former colonies. The presence of new actors from emerging states creates new incentives for economic cooperation. The main obstacles to trade and financial cooperation are governance and institutional problems, and commercial risks (e.g. price fluctuations in commodities and oil). Government responses, regime change, and potential disinvestment could have a huge effect on the development of economies in the South Atlantic.

In order to meet the political and economic challenges in the coming decades, the objective should be to find new forms of relationships that overcome the traditional North-South divide and contribute to a more balanced governance of interdependencies and regional commons.

The main pattern observed in terms of security in the Atlantic is related to threats to human security and resource control. Illicit activities, such as piracy, terrorism, and illegal trafficking of drugs, weapons, human beings and wildlife are clear non-conventional risks in the Atlantic. The Atlantic features some of the main routes for illicit trafficking in the world. Organized crime interests and resources are creating an “economy of violence” that threatens the governability of certain states in Latin America, while in Africa concerns over terrorism have grown. The risk is higher in states with weak institutions and high political instability. There exists North-South political and historical divergence in perspectives on security and global governance. Although there may not yet be a tangible shift in military terms, existing regional dynamics and bilateral partnerships are supporting the proliferation of South-South links, and provide us with evidence of a changing security landscape. An increasing number of southern Atlantic countries are providing aid and participating in security operations. New political spaces and opportunities are created for southern Atlantic actors to develop their own frameworks of South-South dialogue and cooperation, with a view to addressing common challenges through security structures such as the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic (ZOPACAS), but also by engaging with South-South groupings like BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and IBSA (Dialogue Forum India, Brazil, South Africa) (Ayuso and Viilup 2015).

Against this complex backdrop, cooperation in the Atlantic Space will probably take place *à la carte*, including different formats and geometries, rather than on the basis of a clear institutional design encompassing all or most of the countries in this space (Gratius 2015). The EU, as a multilevel governance organisation, is particularly affected by the aforementioned transformations, and is being forced to consider either managing its decline gracefully or resolving to elevate its status as a global actor functioning as a normative power. First of all, the EU must be able to resolve its own contradictions and internal crises. If this is achieved, the EU can exercise leadership in building consensus to meet the political and economic challenges in the coming decades. The objective should be to find new forms of relationships that overcome the traditional North-South divide and contribute to a more balanced governance of interdependencies and regional commons. If the variety of actors involved in the Atlantic could agree to common strategies to face these challenges, the Atlantic could become a pioneer in more effective global governance. The Atlantic Space could become a laboratory for innovative approaches to cooperation and regulatory convergence, preparing the region to face the developmental challenges of the 21st century.

References

ALCARO, Riccardo and Patrick REILLY. Regional and Interregional Interactions in Europe, North America and across the North Atlantic. *Atlantic Future Working Paper*, 2015, 22.

ALESSANDRI, Emiliano. Atlantic Multilateralism and Prospects for Pan-Atlantic Institutions: An Historical Perspective. *Atlantic Future Scientific Paper*, 2015, 28.

AYUSO, Anna and Elina VILLUP. Atlantic Future concept paper on EU foreign policies. *Atlantic Future Concept Paper*, 2015, 2.

BARRON, Nicola; Sangeeta KHORANA; Steve MCGUIRE and Nicholas PERDIKIS. Technology, Trade and Changes in Transport in the Atlantic Space. *Atlantic Future Scientific Paper*, 2014, 5.

BENTLEY, Jerry H. Sea and Ocean Basins as Frameworks of Historical Analysis. *Geographical Review*, April 1999, 89: 2, pp. 215-25.

GARDINI, Gian Luca and Anna AYUSO. EU-Latin America and Caribbean Inter-regional relations: complexity and change. *Atlantic Future Working Paper*, 2015, 24.

GARZÓN, Jorge F. Multipolarity and the future of regionalism: Latin America and beyond. *GIGA Working Papers*, Hamburg, January 2015, 264.

GRATIUS, Susanne. Political, social and cultural trends in the Atlantic. *Atlantic Future Scientific Paper*, 2015, 35.

GRATIUS, Susanne; Giovanni GREVI and Alfredo VALLADÃO and Bernardo VENTURI. Charting the future of the Atlantic. *Atlantic Future Policy Report*, 2015, 1.

GREVI, Giovanni. The inter-polar world: a new scenario. *Occasional Paper*, June 2009, 79.

GREVI, Giovanni. Atlantic Scenarios 2025. *Atlantic Future Scientific Paper*, 2015, 39.

HAMILTON, Daniel S. The Future Pan-Atlantic Economy. *Atlantic Future Scientific Paper*, 2015, 33.

HAMILTON, Daniel S.; Camilla ADELLE; Paul ISBELL; Jon KOTSOPOULOS; Katriona MCGLADE and Lucy O. SMITH. Changing intra-Atlantic interdependencies: Implications for the EU and its major partners. *Atlantic Future Report*, 2015, 1.

HAMILTON, Daniel S. and Joseph P. QUINLAN. Commercial Ties in the Atlantic Basin: The Evolving Role of Services and Investment. In: Daniel S. HAMILTON, ed. *Atlantic Rising: Changing Commercial Dynamics in the Atlantic Basin*. Washington, DC: Center for Transatlantic Relations, 2015, pp. 25-58.

HÄNGGI, Heiner. Interregionalism: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives. *Workshop "Dollars, Democracy and Trade. External Influence on Economic Integration in the Americas"*, Los Angeles, CA, May 18, 2000.

HURRELL, Andrew. *On Global order. Power, Values and the Constitution of the International Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

ISBELL, Paul. Atlantic Energy and the Changing Global Energy Flow Map. *Atlantic Future Scientific Paper*, 2014, 17.

JACOBSON, Mark R. and Max DAURORA. Significant Trends in Illicit Trafficking: A Macro View of the Problem and Potential Means to Address It. *Atlantic Future Scientific Paper*, 2014, 8.

PEREIRA DA COSTA, Katarina. Continuities and changes in patterns of direct investment flows between South America and Africa. *Atlantic Future Scientific Paper*, 2014, 1.

SOUSA, Ines. Maritime Territorial Delimitation and Maritime Security in the Atlantic. *Atlantic Future Scientific Paper*, 2014, 7.

STEFES, Christoph; Andrew REID; Lucy SMITH and Elizabeth TEDSEN. Climate change impacts in the Atlantic Basin and coordinated adaptation responses. *Atlantic Future Scientific Paper*, 2014, 16.

VALLADÃO, Alfredo. Reviving pan-Atlantic interdependencies – A laboratory for global governance. *Atlantic Future Scientific Paper*, 2015, 29.

VAQUER, Jordi; Laia TARRAGONA and Pol MORILLAS. An emerging and Globalised Atlantic Space? *Atlantic Future Scientific Paper*, 2015, 31.