



ATLANTIC PERSPECTIVES INTERVIEWS REPORT

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Perspectives from France (Paris)

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ABSTRACT

The Atlantic Future project explores the concept that new relations are emerging in the Atlantic space beyond the traditional North Atlantic alliance and the North-South dependency. GMF, with their respective office in Paris, France, used their networks to interview the relevant actors based on their professional and academic expertise. The main consensus on the emergence of a pan- Atlantic space was mixed. The main concerns on the current and future state of the Atlantic region from the Paris perspective touched on the following: future of the trade and investment, along with the negotiation of free trade agreements such as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) between the U.S. and the EU. The respondents identified the need for different priorities between North and South Atlantic. It was strongly expressed that Europe and the U.S. remain the most important actors for the global economy, along with China and India. However, countries like Brazil or South Africa have been rising as economic models rather than as economic powers, and show an increased influence from the Southern Atlantic countries.

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1. Introduction

The Atlantic Future project aims to provide new evidence from a regional perspective on whether there is a new pan-Atlantic system of relations emerging in the Atlantic space beyond the traditional North Atlantic alliance and the North-South dependency. This portion of the project focuses on gathering empirical evidence on perceptions on whether a pan-Atlantic space is really emerging through a standardized set of questions. The regional perspective of Europe was broken down geographically by key city-states that will be combined with for an overall European perspective. The German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) was selected to analyze Paris, France, through its experts and report on their general views towards the Atlantic space.

Paris was analyzed by first gathering a list of interviewees with the assistance of the GMF based office in Paris. Interviewees were selected from GMF-wide network of contacts related to the transatlantic community, which has been developed since 2000 and the opening of GMF's third European office in Paris. GMF aimed at different sectors (public, private, academia, journalist and civil society) focusing on thematic areas such as: economy and finance, security, people and institutions and resources and environment. The interviews were conducted in person or by phone and the interviewees were asked a series of pre-selected questions based on their thematic backgrounds.

In accordance with the general project structure, the interviews in Paris included members from the public sector, which comprised of national, regional and international institutions. Within the private sector, GMF aimed at international and regional companies in the energy industry, consultancies and investment companies. From the academic sector, we focused on international institutions and research based facilities, included representatives from the local academic institutions and research facilities. The media sector was notably represented by leading agencies in Paris. Lastly, GMF examined Paris civil society by interviewing various international and state-supported NGO's, agencies and political research institutes.

2. The Developing Regions in the Atlantic

When comparing the last 20 years of the Atlantic's four regions' economies', Latin America appeared to be the big winner as countries like Brazil, Chile and Mexico experienced economic success. In spite of Africa's irresolute reforms, internal political issues and inefficiency of trade liberalization, the main economic actors seemed to be focusing on the continent. This factor made Africa likely to be the main region facing a major increase of its economic growth. Among the experts, there was a large consensus on the fact that North America and specially Europe, were stable and remained important actors regarding the economy, but were becoming relatively less and less influential when compared to the South Atlantic and more generally within the global economy.

Politically, over the past twenty years, security experts based in Paris stated that Latin America stayed far from most global security concerns such as terrorism or failed states, and the countries within this region were not interested in being included within transatlantic discussions on global security. Global issues such as Russia's drive for power and political influence, Iran's nuclear proliferation or China's increasing sphere of influence could affect U.S. and EU global strategy and was likely to determine their decisions on security and defense topics

especially in the Atlantic space. Experts interviewed in Paris also emphasized that France, along with the United Kingdom, were the only relevant security actors in Europe and that the EU should follow their lead as the Union will not likely grow as a strong security player since it had a “genetic code” that denies and refuses any solution by strength.” Furthermore, Europe had lost a lot of influence mainly due to the crisis and important internal divisions (far right movements, etc.). The Ukraine crisis made the situation more complicated for European leaders, as much as it highlighted their absence of important common strategic decisions.

For the next ten years, Brazil, Africa, and the EU were noted as becoming more and more important politically and culturally speaking. North America would lose importance compared to the rise of the BRICS, and Europe may become more important but it was mentioned that they could only “if they have the political will to shift their focus”. But in the end, Africa would be the most important because of population dynamics and migration. The movement of persons was likely to be the main debate and subject to extreme decision that could reveal new risks in the North.

The environmental and resource perspectives for the next ten years were that Europe would clearly diminish its energy market while the U.S. would have an increased role as an energy exporter, and North America and India would become more important. When it comes to the nuclear sector, Brazil and South Africa, the BRICS of the Atlantic space but at a global level, mainly China will most likely become the main actors. On the one hand, they are closing more and more nuclear plants and on the other hand, nuclear is not rising in the EU and there has been a fall down in America due to the emergence of shale gas.

3. Section on Questions on Thematic Areas

3.1 Economy and finance

When it came to comparing the relative gain or loss of economic and financial influence of the Atlantic region as a whole, the Paris’ experts agreed as a consensus that the four regions suffered a loss of influence and would keep losing influence when compared to Asia. Despite this, it was strongly expressed that Europe and the U.S. remained the most important actors for the global economy, along with China and India. Within the Atlantic regions, countries like Brazil or South Africa had been rising as economic models rather than as economic powers, and showed an increased influence on the Southern Atlantic countries.

There were four main changes in economy and finance that were identified in the Atlantic space as key in shaping the Atlantic region from previous stages of the Atlantic Future project. These changes were: the growth of trade and investment flows, the negotiation of new free trade agreements (FTAs), new transport routes, and the construction of new infrastructures. The selected experts from Paris had to rate these issues from the more relevant to the less relevant for the transformation of the Atlantic regions. Growth of trade and investment flows had clearly been designated as the most relevant of the items, being the best way to make optimum use of the infrastructure, allowing them to create and share growth among the regions. While investments remained relatively low, a new phenomenon of investments between African countries appeared; African countries had become the second investor in Africa behind Europeans. The construction of new infrastructures had been pointed out as the second most important change for the regions of the Atlantic. As seen through the Ebola crisis, without sustainable investments in infrastructures, health and education, there could be no growth.

In Europe and North America, this challenge mainly meant developing the institutions and the regulation of goods and services, especially regarding the use of the internet where the North of the Atlantic still had a strong comparative advantage. However, the construction of infrastructure was also meant to increase competition between companies. According to the interviewees in Paris, the negotiation of new Free Trade Agreements between countries around the Atlantic was the third main change in economy and finance. Almost all of the ACP agreements did not help growth, and were the last of the worries for Africans who had little insight on the impact of major external agreements. In addition, an agreement like the TTIP could be very important for the northern regions, but with many questions on the consequences for the South. The less important change identified was the set-up of new transport routes. However, it was mentioned that it could be a very important matter in Africa where, where most of the time, roads are a more important barrier for trade than taxes and it would enable countries to open up and vitalize their economies. Even though, experts were able to define and priorities these issues for the whole region, they also emphasized the important difference between regions, as an almost unanimous choir. According to them, priorities needed mostly to be divided between the North and South Atlantic. For the South, the priority was definitely the construction of new infrastructure. For the North, the attentions needed to be focused on the growth of trade and investment flows.

Some of the main concerns from the Paris economic sector were the future of the trade and investment, along with the negotiation of free trade agreements such as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) between the U.S. and the EU were received with a mix of positive and negative reviews. Europe could re-boost itself by investing more in Africa and play a bigger role in the internet sector. North America should win more influence as well as Europe if it succeeds on bringing forward reforms relevant for our time. For Latin America, the 10 years expectations were mostly uncertain because of Brazil's hesitations. For Africa the unpredictability comes mostly from external factors. It is mainly due to the growing importance of the role played by Chinese and Indian investment in the continent.

It was noted that the United States and the EU (especially France, the UK, and Germany) remained as some of the more important actors in the economy. The Atlantic is a natural space. Even if this is a North Atlantic negotiation, that should somehow include the South. There is a real stake in standards that could otherwise be imposed by northern countries. Indeed, South America should be included but for Africa the situation is more complicated as it was noted for being difficult to invest in based on various variables such as economic and political instability and high levels of corruption. Although, a slower integration of Africa is possible if the TTIP actually turns out to be a multitude of smaller agreements.

3.2 Security

In the last two decades, events in the Middle-East have shifted the main security concerns within the Atlantic space towards Africa, especially the Sahel region but also the more generally with movements like Boko Haram, AQMI or in another vein with Ebola. For these and other reasons, Africa was currently the center of the security threats in the Atlantic region. Migration issues appeared as a concern for European and North American security, as it seemed to bring forward the same kind of perception of threat on both sides of the Atlantic. The main political

concerns in the region were the differences in norms and values between the Atlantic spaces, specifically on human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Four main security challenges had been identified in the Atlantic space in the previous stages of the project. These challenges were: illicit trafficking of drugs, weapons and humans, terrorism, maritime security, and fragile states. The selected experts from Paris had to rate these issues from the more relevant to the less relevant for the transformation of the Atlantic region. Terrorism was identified as the biggest challenge for the continents of the Atlantic space and it was pointed out that it was the most challenging threat without a doubt, mostly because it touches directly the interests of these regions and there is no international forum to tackle terrorism. According to the experts the fragile states issue was the second most important. Like for terrorism, there was a lack of an efficient international platform to address and find solutions to keep states from failing or to help them. The UN has not proven to be reliable in that area of expertise. Some important failed states from the four Atlantic continents are Libya, Somalia, Nigeria, Ukraine but also Mexico and Colombia. Illicit trafficking of drugs, weapons, and humans comes in third position. The traffic could be contained in the EU at a criminal level and does not represent a threat for global security. However, some experts agreed on the need to separate weapons from humans trafficking. Maritime security could be handled to a large extent. Pirates in the Atlantic do not represent a real threat since they are not a danger for the supply lines, unlike in Asia where it represents a real threat. However the Gulf of Guinea was noted for already being a hot spot. When identifying the challenges by regions, the experts ended up with different perspectives. North America is affected by drugs and trafficking, so is Latin America. Africa suffers from all threats at the same time and for the EU it is mainly home-grown terrorism and Russia.

Regarding the next ten years security developments, Africa and the Middle East were likely to become more and more important. The North of the Atlantic would lose influence, but the U.S. as a single actor should gain some legitimacy especially through NATO as the United States continues to serve as a main security actor within it. The main actors in Latin America like Brazil and Mexico should become more influent on security matters. However, even if Latin America is not threatened at the same level today, future security threats are still unpredictable and the four Atlantic regions have to be prepared for a surprise. Nevertheless, there must be a general awareness that the military power of the North will not be enough to prevent all the future problems. The evolution of the economy and the demographics was described by the interviewees as likely to have a strong impact in terms of global security in the future.

From the French perspective, the main actors capable of playing a role in the Atlantic Basin, when it comes to security, were NATO and to some extent the EU as a passive actor. There has been a growth of the importance of NGOs to handle crises, like it has been seen with Ebola. The civil society strengths have sometimes become more important compared to states. Even with the decreasing role of states, due to the change when it comes to address security policies, some of them were still playing an essential role in the Atlantic region. The United States, France, and the United Kingdom were the countries of the region that have been identified as key players and as having a global approach of security. However, terrorist groups play an increasingly important role overruling states and making some of them fall. At a regional level in Africa, Morocco, Algeria, Nigeria, Chad, and the African Union are important players. The interviewees agreed to say that international organizations are less efficient, and therefore that an organization that used to be more important like the UN, is losing influence.

3.3 People and institutions

As for the political, cultural and social relations in the Atlantic space, French respondents viewed the EU's role as having a growing political influence. Europe was described as being the continent that has relatively gained more importance. Europe and Africa specifically have become more important and in this case at local level, as well as regional level (partnerships between the cities). There are also partnerships created with Mali, Mauritania, and the city of Dakar in Senegal. These have had to do with the strong African communities living in Paris. But there were more and more nationalities represented in Europe's main cities, which force us to rethink at a more global scale the local challenges. We are more interconnected globally, but the French experts expressed that there were no real links between France and Latin America.

Four main changes in political, cultural, and social relations were identified in the Atlantic space in the previous stages of the project. These changes were: the state of democracy, respect for human rights, diplomatic exchanges, and migration trends. The selected experts from Paris had to rate these issues from the more relevant to the less relevant for the transformation of the Atlantic regions. The state of democracy has been identified as the most relevant mainly because it was what we were going through these days. There was a demand for a strong improvement of the relation between citizens and politics, and public authority. The other changes or challenges were all derived from this one. There was a strong demand for it within civil society, even in Europe. It's a danger for our societies if no solution is found for this desire of transparency and efficiency. Migration trends were the second most important challenge as European cities have attracted many migrants and with that, many social strains that comes along with an influx of people and is directly linked to the issue of security. The respect for human rights was described as being "not as advanced as 20 years ago", referring to the social and political attention that nations in the EU for example are giving regions who suffer – it has become an issue on political platforms but rarely implemented. Lastly, there was a consensus that diplomatic exchanges had no visibility and merit in the Atlantic region.

The main state actors for political, cultural and social relations in the Atlantic would be the larger states, such as the United States, France, the United Kingdom, and Brazil, but also the EU as an institution. However, the head of states of these democracies have not been elected with strong majorities for the past couple of decades and it reveals a weak leadership and governance issues. Populist actors such as the Tea Party, the Front National, or Viktor Orbán, play an increasing role among these states. The lack of energy from the leaders blocks the progress of necessary reforms. Therefore the lobbies from companies and civil society are playing a more important role in blocking the governments. European constitutions should be "revised" in order to improve the way our democracies work, but the current situation makes it almost impossible. The models have to be reconsidered. There is particularly a problem with youth that has to be integrated in society again. The digital flow can be a counter power to some old international actors. It could be a revolution that creates economic and cultural value. Despite its internal problems and differences, the EU cooperation model contributes to peace broadly. The French experts have perceived it as a weak diplomatic machine, mainly because of its lack of a real defense sector, but a strong cultural machine. Africa as a whole was increasingly an actor mainly through the African Union, but should still do more to engage the area. Despite the optimistic vision for the growth of economics in Africa, the visions have been mostly pessimistic with regard to a potentially politically strong Africa. There is a need for the continent to tackle the

main issues without negating relations with Europe. The South Atlantic has to tackle the political issue and things have been moving.

3.4 Resources and environment

Europe also struggles for a common energy, climate, and environmental policy. In general, climate change was identified as less important despite its global impact, and the depletion of resources is an important issue especially in Europe and Latin America. The most important change in energy was due to the development of shale gas leading the U.S. to become self-sufficient regarding energy and modify its consumption pattern, thus leading to major changes in the global market. The energy sectors were also becoming more important in Latin America, especially in Brazil and Mexico where the nuclear sector was gaining momentum. However, the Atlantic space remained divided with regards to the regulations of their energy sectors.

Three main energy challenges were identified in the Atlantic space from previous stages of the project. These challenges were: the transformation of the energy sector, impacts of climate change, and resource depletion. The selected experts from Paris had to rate these issues from the more relevant to the less relevant for the transformation of the Atlantic regions. The answers had to be divided by region since in the energy sector it is quite different. For Europe, the transformation of energy sector and depletion of resources are keys. For the U.S., the transformation of the energy sector is important since they were changing their consumption pattern. For Africa, the biggest issue was the transformation of energy sector as they need investments to exploit their resources. For Latin America, resource depletion was an issue (enough uranium), especially in Brazil (which is at the core of their business plan: sustainable development, clean energy).

The UN and the OECD were the main international organizations that could play a role in energy policies. North America and the United States particularly was an important actor because of its changing position in the energy market. Overtime, it would become more isolated as it becomes more self-sufficient. The U.S. remains the most relevant actor in the Atlantic region. The EU is still very dependent on external actors with regard to its energy supply.

4. Section on Norms and Values, Cooperation and Regionalism

4.1 Convergence or Divergence in norms and values

According to French economic experts, there are no common values with regard to economics or specifically, economic liberalism. The liberal economy model is not integrated by Africa. The colonial past plays a lot. Common values are based on the cultural past that the Atlantic basin has in common. We could say that there is a shared history if we look the four regions. However, the divergence and differences among the Atlantic area are still significant. Economic and societal values are controversial in the North and South. The North-North remains strong though. There are common grounds, but unique values. On norms, the Western influence from the 20th century is very much changing, Europe is no longer the center of trade, neither is the United States.

In security terms, the Atlantic possesses strong institutions and solid systems of international cooperation such as NATO, OSCE, or the EU. There are common norms between the transatlantic “West”, among the G7 for security and among Latin America. Despite of the current tensions with the North Atlantic and Russia, the area is very well regulated, when compared to China hegemony that lacks of institutional regulation. The security values and norms dictated by NATO are the strongest in the area but there are still strong disparities and zones of power play. Despite the growth of influence of the African Union, there is no unity in Africa regarding security.

French experts on political, cultural and social issues indicated that some old ties exist in the region because of our common history and the strong bases around the Atlantic on democracy, liberties, and the role of the State, but nowadays, there are no Atlantic values shared by the region as a whole. However, if we exclude Africa we could definitely say that the Atlantic area shares democratic values, economic liberalism and politics. There are undeniable links due to history and migration flows, which gives common references, but no common and shared values. The Paris respondents emphasized the convergence of interests are very present between Europe and the United States with regard to resources and energy issues. North Africa and Europe are very close, especially now with the energy crisis on Russia. Lastly, it was mentioned that the Atlantic has more shared values than with Asia – supporting the grounds for future cooperation on issues in the Atlantic.

4.2 Drivers and obstacles for cooperation

EU nations’ colonial pasts with Africa was pointed out several times as an obstacle for economic cooperation, especially for the case of France. At the macro level there might be a syndrome of neo-colonization with the role of China. Furthermore, it appears that with Africa there is a difficulty to collect high quality data. Sovereignty, solvability for development countries, norms and economic constraints has been identified as the main obstacles. In the relation between the EU and North America there is an asymmetry of intellectual input. The United States for example, have no problem telling Europeans how to solve their economic crisis, while the other way around is very rare.

The Atlantic space faces challenges with finding common political measures on tackling security issues. The challenge of implementing the idea of democracy, in autocratic regions is very high. There is an important lack of credible interlocutors in Africa. Like-minded actors with similar structures are important factors for cooperation. It is easier for international organizations than for states though. The UN or UNESCO will be able to cooperate in Africa while other actors will have some difficulties. The image of the state is very important to collaborate. For media representatives, the most dangerous situation in Africa is still the hostage takings, the general violence's, and the health dangers with Ebola for example. The shifting policies of the U.S. from its classic transatlantic connection to a more Asia pacific - has also been pointed out as a major challenge for security in the Atlantic area.

Cultural differences between the North and South Atlantic, especially with regard to Islam, will create hurdles, including problematic legislations that are currently implemented in the South. Africa still has to catch up on a lot of governance issues before having a good and stable cooperation, the main obstacles are still corruption, and the lack of stability and trust. For Latin America, protectionism or nationalism shows a lack of opening to external actors. Between Europe and North

America, there are no major obstacles but there was always this intellectual imperialism which enabled the United States to decide the agenda. One obstacle is a cultural gap, even within Europe. Even with the development of ICTs, which have facilitated connections between the Atlantic regions, there is still an important lack of coordination. There must be a broader understanding that cultural settings are not a "one size fits all" solution.

The Atlantic space faces challenges with home, regional, and international competition when it comes to tackling resources and energy issues. The main obstacle for the relationship between the United States and Europe is that the weight of the EU's energy market is not that important anymore. The role of Asia is a big factor in this development as they are a big new global consumer on the energy market.

4.3 Regional and interregional cooperation initiatives

When it comes to identifying what were the main actors and what are the relevant platforms and forums where these matters could be discussed, the answers had been very different. Infrastructures were very much discussed, but there was no real debate about it. The same goes for trade and investments. It was noted that it was difficult to get the real actors of these issues around a table and discuss issues. A large majority of the CEOs do not want to deal with the administration of their country, which makes it difficult to have these two groups talk to each other. Despite the need to reform international organizations, the best platforms currently available were the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, the OECD and the World Economic Forum in Davos. The IMF suffered a severe loss of credibility. Regional cooperation initiatives on security issues within the Atlantic space are mainly provided by states like the United States, France, or by organizations such as the EU, NATO, and the OSCE.

Regarding the forums and platforms available to discuss these issues, the interviewees agreed to say that they exist and some are good. Especially with the work like the World Bank does for example, they look at the issues "holistically" and are much more effective. Even at a more local level in Paris, the city has started a series of debates to exchange on these issues and at the last municipal elections, the mayor has been reaching out to his constituents. Issues debated include living together and diversity. Preparations for big energy summits or meetings were usually more important than the meetings themselves. Once preparations were done well, all that was needed is the right timing of political will.

4.4 Section about the role of the EU in the Atlantic

The EU could play a key role in the global economy in the future but to do so it has to change the way it is perceived on the ground and around the world. Due to the fragmentation of aid and funds and a lack of flexibility and efficiency, the EU is not as pertinent as it could be. Sometimes the EU's overregulation makes the process more difficult. So far, it has faced difficulties adapting to evolving markets because it lacks flexibility, which means that there is a need for more reforms and political and economic impulses from the European Commission that should also seek for the progress of the Member States and the opening of more treaties and partnerships. The Chinese growth, and role as an international actor, will undoubtedly remind Europe of the need for more unity. In Europe there is no industrial and security consensus and it lacks a real European strategy. The circuit is too complicated to handle a crisis that requires immediate responses. However, it is non-sense to ask the EU to be a military power if it has been conceived for the

opposite purpose. In times of crisis the EU should be more an economic machine rather than a political machine that does not work. Its budget cuts should though exclude the defense sector. Or, should at least recommend for the UK and France not to touch their defense budget since they are the last able to provide the EU with real military operations through its member states.

The EU is still attractive and plays a positive role for security, but it is not an active role. Yet its role is crucial in Africa, mainly through its development aid. From the African standpoint the EU has a positive influence; Africa uses the EU model for mediation and other internal structures. In the Atlantic area, NATO handles security and power. When it comes to the energy sector, the EU's role was pertinent and may gain influence in the future. The EU could play a very relevant role in Africa because of historical and existing cooperation. In Central and South America the EU's role was remotely relevant. And finally through its strong exchange with North America, the EU could play a very relevant role especially considering the current crisis and a common transformation of the sector. On a similar vein, on free trade and commercial negotiations the EU is always relevant.

5. Conclusions

The Paris interviewees identified the EU's role as extremely relevant trade wise. The North Atlantic link remains strong, and the African bound even if very blurry will remain since the two regions are neighbors. On the other hand, the lack of knowledge and interest for Latin America from the French perspective reflects the consensus that the Atlantic space, with four continents, does not formally exist or seem to be emerging at this moment.

In the four Atlantic sub-regions (Africa, Europe, North America and South America) values and norms such as the respect of human rights, the rule of law, economic liberalism, and to a lesser extent democracy have been identified as common grounds in the Atlantic, mainly due to a strong cultural proximity, the colonial past, and the Christian heritage. Trade and investment are the common denominators and driving forces for cooperation between the four regions. The North has clearly been identified as a strong like-minded area. Questions related to democracy, gender equality, and sustainable development remains contested across the South Atlantic in particular. Broadly speaking, although there are differences in the perception and implementation of values and norms within the Atlantic basin, there appears to be more convergence within this region than with other regions such as the Asia-Pacific. In the end, the important differences have been more highlighted than the shared values within the Atlantic region as a whole. According to most of the Paris respondents, no common ground could be identified mainly because of Africa's very different level of implementation of the "Western" norms and values.

From the French perspective, the construction of a unified Atlantic space has many obstacles that could limit further collaboration with other regions of the Atlantic. The respondents identified the need for different priorities between North and South Atlantic. For the South, the priority is definitely in the construction of new infrastructures, especially in Africa. For the North Atlantic, the main focus is negotiating new free-exchange deals.

In regards to obstacles in creating a common Atlantic space, there is not a "one size fits all" approach. Between Europe and Africa, the lack of reliable and stable contacts, general violence, autocratic political systems, corruption, and the difficulty to collect high quality data have been identified as the most relevant impediments to deeper cooperation. Essentially, most African countries have to

catch up with the other Atlantic regions with regards to improving governance and the rule of law. The main obstacles identified for cooperation with Latin America are protectionist and nationalist policies that have been implemented. Regarding the challenges for cooperation with the U.S., the asymmetry of the intellectual input that makes them want to decide the agenda was pointed out. All in all, bilateral cooperation in the Atlantic seems to function better than the multilateral one, and there is globally an identity fullback and growth of nationalism that makes the Atlantic cooperation more and more difficult.