



# ATLANTIC FUTURE

## ATLANTIC PERSPECTIVES INTERVIEWS REPORT

18

Perspectives from International Organizations in New York  
and Washington, D.C.

**Elizabeth Tedsen**

Senior Fellow, Ecologic Institute

### ABSTRACT

The conventional dynamics of pan-Atlantic relations and North-South dichotomy have changed dramatically over the past ten to twenty years, with Southern countries rising to greater economic and political prominence. Fundamental changes are taking place within and between Atlantic countries, yet many of these are eclipsed by, or ultimately part of, growing globalization and multipolarity. These may be accompanied by the relative decline of the European Union as it turns inward to meet internal challenges and as political and economic gravities shift. Historical and cultural ties provide a deep foundation for interregional cooperation between Atlantic countries on issues such as trade, drug trafficking, and governance of shared commons. Yet whether these ties can form the basis for a new "Atlantic Rim," or whether instead the dynamics and trends within the Atlantic herald an increasingly interconnected and globalized world whereby the relevance of these linkages weakens, remains to be seen.

*The preliminary results of the interviews were presented  
at the ATLANTIC FUTURE Seminar in Lisbon, April 2015*

ATLANTIC FUTURE – Towards an Atlantic area? Mapping trends, perspectives and interregional dynamics between Europe, Africa and the Americas, is a project financed by the European Union under the 7th Framework Programme. European Commission Project Number: 320091.



## ATLANTIC FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

# 18

### Table of contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Regional shifts .....	3
3. Thematic trends.....	4
3.1. Economy and finance .....	4
3.2. Security.....	6
3.3. People and institutions.....	7
3.4. Resources and environment .....	8
4. Norms, values, and interregional cooperation.....	9
4.1. A place of shared norms and values? .....	9
4.2. Interests and incentives for cooperation.....	10
4.3. Regional and interregional actors and initiatives .....	11
4.4. The European Union as an Atlantic actor.....	12
5. Conclusions.....	12



## 1. Introduction

This paper was written as a deliverable for Work Package 7, Perspectives, of ATLANTIC FUTURE, a three-year collaborative research project funded by the European Commission under the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7). ATLANTIC FUTURE aims to study the rationales of cooperation in the Atlantic Space and to consider interregional links and transatlantic engagement in the context of ongoing redistributions of power and rebalancing of relations around and within the Atlantic space. The work performed in Work Package 7 analyzes the perspectives and agendas of actors in the wider Atlantic area and considers whether a new pan-Atlantic system of relations emerging in the Atlantic Space beyond the traditional North Atlantic alliance and North-South dependencies.

This paper summarizes and analyses a series of interviews performed in late 2014 and early 2015 with representatives of international organizations in Washington, D.C. and New York City. The interviewees selected represented a wide range of thematic (economics, security, people and institutions, environment and resources) and regional (Europe, the Americas, Africa) expertise. The interviews covered perceptions about the Atlantic Space, covering links between regions, critical changes, challenges, and trends. Twenty interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner and lasted between thirty and ninety minutes each. This paper is written solely based upon analysis of the input and perspectives provided within these conversations.

## 2. Regional shifts

The traditional dynamics of pan-Atlantic relations and North-South dichotomy have changed, as representatives of international organizations attested to in the series of interviews. In the last 20 years, there has been a global shift both southward and eastward, resulting in a set of increasingly vocal and powerful countries that are flexing political and economic muscles. These global shifts can be seen within the Atlantic, with Southern countries rising to greater prominence. The Atlantic is witnessing dramatic changes within the region and the emergence of new leaders such as Brazil (of particular mention), South Africa, Mexico, Chile, and Columbia. In other parts of the Atlantic, however — such as the Caribbean, West Africa, and parts of Central America — this type of ascent is not occurring and countries remain economically depressed and vulnerable to emerging threats such as, for example, climate change and the Ebola virus.

The rise of developing countries is not limited to the Atlantic, but is in fact part of a global trend that includes non-Atlantic countries, such as China and India, where growth overshadows that seen in the Atlantic. Fundamental changes are taking place within and between Atlantic countries, yet many are eclipsed by, or ultimately part of, growing globalization. The world is becoming increasingly interconnected and multi-polar in nature and is expected to continue in this direction.

This may, however, be accompanied by the relative decline of the European Union (EU) and the United States (U.S.), as they counter internal challenges and as political and economic gravities shift. While the U.S. economy appears to be stabilizing in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis (hereafter financial crisis), U.S. world leadership has languished as the country is occupied by rival priorities in the post-9/11 era. Meanwhile, the EU single market is still struggling with the ramifications of the euro crisis and Member State discord.

### 3. Thematic trends

Conversations with interviewees focused on Atlantic trends and dynamics covering four primary subject areas: economy and finance, security, people and institutions, and environment and resources. In many cases, these thematic areas overlapped, as did interviewees' expertise.

#### 3.1. *Economy and finance*

Relationships within the Atlantic Space have changed dramatically due to the growth of economies in Latin America and Africa. Many Latin American countries have attained improved economic positions within the last ten years and are expected to keep growing, South America more so than Central America, which remains indebted and dependent on Venezuelan oil. Brazil is transitioning to macroeconomic stability following a sluggish economy in the 1990s, growing considerably in the last ten to twenty years while also making strides in reducing inequality. Other countries in Latin America, such as Chile and Colombia, are following suit.

Shifts in emerging markets in Latin America have included the emergence of “Multilatinas”—Latin America companies that have moved from the local or regional levels to the global, particularly within the banking and infrastructure sectors. The financial crisis saw the retirement of European businesses and Multilatinas stepping in and purchasing assets, in Latin America as well as other parts of the world. This trend is part of the growing sovereignty and independence of the Latin America business community and is making the region less vulnerable to global crises and less dependent on foreign investment.

Looking forward, Latin American economic growth could be held back by low productivity, the result of poor labor force education and lack of infrastructure. However, an unprecedented push to improve infrastructure is being seen in Brazil and other countries which could help bridge this gap. Major infrastructure investments in Latin America and Africa are being undertaken by investment banks, such as the New Development Bank (“BRICS Bank”), which has made infrastructure projects a primary lending focus. New infrastructure, such as trade transport corridors between Brazil and Peru, could dramatically influence the region. In the U.S., infrastructure is not lacking so much as depreciating, and there is insufficient political will to tackle the problem.

A division between two types of economic models in Latin America is becoming more apparent — those countries with market-based approaches (e.g., Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Chile) and those with socialist-leaning approaches (e.g., Venezuela, Bolivia, Cuba), as well as those lying somewhere in between (e.g., Brazil). This has a significant influence on relations with other Atlantic countries, whereby the U.S. and Europe have closer ties with the first group, but a separation, or even hostility, with the latter group, which are moving towards closer relationships with other countries, such as China.

Africa has experienced growth, too, but also declining GDP per capita. Interviewees held mixed perspectives on future growth in Africa, with some projecting large relative growth, including an explosion of agri-business, while others saw continued challenges for long-term investment and planning in the face of political changes and instability. Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has emerged stronger in the banking sector in recent years, with a rise in local institutions (e.g., Ecobank) and decreased dependence on foreign banks. Economic relations between the North Atlantic and SSA have not changed considerably, but China has stepped in as an important partner, driving new strategic infrastructure projects.

Both Latin America and Africa have benefitted from high commodities prices, with large exports of oil, copper, agricultural products, and more. Commodity prices have begun to drop, however, including a sharp decline of oil prices, which threatens to slow growth. Looking at the region broadly, the Atlantic economy used to be commodity driven, but is now increasingly propelled by manufacturing and knowledge-based industries, while the growing Pacific remains more commodity-based and drives global raw materials markets.

It remains to be seen whether the growing wealth and political clout of Southern Atlantic countries and expanding global multi-polarity will go hand-in-hand with a relative decline of the EU and the U.S. The U.S. appears to be bouncing back from the worst of the financial crisis, while the EU is expected to continue to experience economic pain for some time, perhaps at levels not yet seen.

The Eurozone is in crisis — not as acute as that which loomed several years ago, but chronic problems continue. Growth and employment remain sluggish and bank health poor. The EU is still dealing with structural issues due to a “fiscal federalism agreement and monetary union without greater fiscal integration,” according to one interviewee. These issues are contributing to a European North-South divide, wherein countries in the North (e.g., Germany, the Netherlands) are reluctant to finance fiscal shortfalls in the South (e.g., Greece, Italy, Spain). Germany, which appeared to have somewhat decoupled from these problems, is now sharing Europe’s pain. As a result of these challenges, the EU is seen as being focused internally, with fewer resources or political will to tackle external problems. Widespread unemployment has also created an environment conducive to more nationalistic and trade-defensive policies.

One interviewee reflected that, “Trade is the backbone of the Atlantic, at the heart of the relationship.” Trade once drove colonialism and continues today to be an important, if fading, link between the Atlantic regions. Some viewed the density of intra-trade links in the region as weak, as many countries look primarily to the EU and U.S. as bilateral trading partners. New trade agreements have the potential to increase interregional economic activity, though oftentimes there is more talk than action in this regard. The Pacific Alliance is one example whereby regional trade links have grown between Chile, Colombia, Peru, and Mexico, albeit looking to the Pacific and potentially distracting from Atlantic relationship-building.

Most interviewees had not closely followed negotiations of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). Some saw TTIP as a positive development for boosting trade and growth and “tremendous gain” for the U.S. and EU, yet were skeptical as to whether the two parties could reach agreement on all issues, especially with unemployment conditions in the EU contributing to anti-trade integration positions. Others felt that in principle, trade negotiations should take place at the global level and that pursuing regional agreements is sub-optimal, but perhaps inevitable as the Doha Round continues to stall.

Alongside the growth of Southern economies, South-South financial flows are growing. Brazil-Africa trade has grown, especially between Portuguese-speaking countries. Trade with China has boomed in both Africa and Latin America. In light of growing independence and failed economic governance from the North during the financial crisis, Southern Atlantic countries are progressively looking into Southern investment banks and trading partners.

### 3.2. Security

While there are many important security challenges in the Atlantic Space, the leading one, according to interviewees, is the fragility of states. Underlying vulnerabilities may lead to new or enhanced insecurity. Weak governance institutions and financial instability, especially in Africa, are a foundation for future threats. One of the chief among these threats was climate change. Not only are many Atlantic states particularly vulnerable to the physical impacts of climate change, but they lack the institutional and financial resources to effectively manage them. Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Guinea Bissau were all mentioned as being affected by drug trafficking and criminal activities and as having weak security and institutions. Illicit economies are seen in conjunction with emerging democracies, corruption, and an absence of rule of law. In Central America, economic conditions have improved in some places, but horrible violence and high homicide rates persist due to youth unemployment and the drug trade. Many were pessimistic about Africa, feeling that progress was not where it should be given levels of investment in the region and that with a lack of stable governance institutions, future prospects were not bright; others saw a hopeful future and opportunity, but agreed that Africa remains highly vulnerable. In other words, interviewees felt that attention often focuses on the symptoms (e.g., drug and arms trafficking, crime), rather than the underlying causes and systematic issues (e.g., inequality, rule of law, lack of faith in public institutions).

In addition to being discussed as a symptom of state fragility, drug trafficking was frequently mentioned as an important Atlantic security issue in and of itself and one that is being given insufficient attention by the international community. Drug trafficking is improving in some individual countries (e.g., Colombia), but still must be tackled as a global supply and demand issue. Where the problem improves in one place, it worsens in another (e.g., from Colombia to other parts of Central America, Peru, Mexico). And as demand for drugs shifts, supply follows. The North (e.g., U.S.) must be able and willing to tackle domestic drug use and arms trafficking.

Maritime security received relatively little mention and was seen as more of an issue for Africa than for the Atlantic as a whole, with an exception being that some Latin Americans are involved in piracy incidents in the Gulf of Guinea due to shared language. Another interviewee noted the links between poor maritime security and an increase in illegal trafficking of drugs and weapons.

The challenge of terrorism primarily arose within the context of changing EU and U.S. foreign policy priorities, rather than as a problem unique to the Atlantic. One interviewee noted that Latin America has largely been exempt from terrorism to date, but hypothesized that it may grow as a region from which to launch attacks on the North. Another similarly noted that in the Americas, terrorism has only been a problem for a relatively small group of countries, such as the U.S., Argentina, and Peru, but that increasing awareness and cooperation throughout the region is critical for the safety of all.

We are seeing the end of traditional state-on-state conflicts which are being replaced with conflicts characterized by non-state and informal actors, making it harder to identify a “common enemy” or apply military responses. Conflicts used to largely take place between countries, but are now more amorphous, with no clear combatant or political agenda. Today’s interconnected world and rapid rate of information exchange also raise the profile of lone wolf actors and new threats such as cybersecurity. From this perspective, traditional security architectures are less able to tackle problems and institutional reform is needed. Long-term solutions must look towards sustainable governments and stability and address evolving threats.

Finally, several interviewees brought up increasing tensions with Russia and the potential for this to alter the geopolitical, security landscape.

### 3.3. People and institutions

The last few decades have shown significant progress towards democracy in the South, first in Latin America, then in Africa. Latin America has largely moved from military dictatorships towards more democratic regimes. From this perspective, one could say that the Atlantic is moving towards becoming more democratic, but exceptions remain (e.g., Venezuela, Nigeria, parts of Central America and the Caribbean). In parts of Africa and Latin America (e.g., Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia, Ecuador), there are problems with delayed elections, term limits, and fragility revolving around weak commitments of incumbents leaving office. These trends are not universal, however, as these regions are far from homogenous and other countries show positive models of democracy and political transitions. In West Africa, instability remains due to divides along religious or ethnic lines and has undermined the legitimacy of political processes. Even in the North, democracies have problems: the U.S. sees plummeting voter approval for Congress, while Europe experiences increasing resistance to the EU from those, especially young people, who feel disenfranchised following the euro crisis.

Some of this European sentiment has also taken root in anti-immigrant, nationalist movements. Europe has “cold feet” on immigration, as surges in migration coincide with terrorism (albeit a minority of immigrants) and dissimilar value systems. At the same time, Europe is declining in population, but the South is growing and demographic balances changing. Thus, migration routes and patterns are shifting and countries still formulating diplomatic, human rights-oriented solutions. Brazil, too, is figuring out how to cover African immigrants under social safety net programs, such as *Bolsa Familia*, which some Brazilians resent as they perceive a lack of equal economic contribution from immigrants. Economic-driven migration patterns have also changed between Europe and Latin America: Migration to Europe from Africa and Latin America was strong five to fifteen years ago, as immigrants moved in pursuit of new job opportunities. Today, economic-driven migration has reversed from Africa and Europe to Latin America, particularly for young people seeking jobs and as it is easier than immigrating to or getting a visa for work in the U.S.

Human rights in the Atlantic are seen as moving in a positive direction overall, with increasing awareness of human rights issues within governments and amongst the public, yet with work to be done still. Latin America has come a long way, but still has widespread inequality. Some countries (e.g., the ALBA bloc, Argentina) have seen new and disturbing trends towards curbing freedom of expression. One interviewee mentioned that in Mexico, “explicit violations of human rights” are occurring without censure from other (OECD) countries. Other interviewees cautioned that human rights issues are not exclusive to the South Atlantic, noting fallout from U.S. actions in response to 9/11 and similarly, a willingness to abandon principles when faced with threats in Europe.

In assessing major challenges within the Atlantic related to people and institutions, several interviewees added “poverty reduction” to the list. Latin America is seen as having made great strides in the past fifteen years in reducing poverty and inequality on the whole, due to improved social policies, demographic changes, and macroeconomic stability.

As the timing of many interviews coincided with the 2014 outbreak of the Ebola virus in West Africa, this subject was raised on multiple occasions. It was described as a large issue with “huge potential to affect development” (e.g., decreased productivity, reduced



opportunities for children) and as the consequence of poor development (e.g., weak health care systems, lack of financial resources), as well as a breakdown of trust between people and public institutions — an issue that was raised in and of itself as an Atlantic challenge.

Finally, regarding diplomatic exchanges, several interviewees observed trends relating to Latin America. First, Latin American countries used to select high-level candidates for European diplomatic posts, but now, like Europe, reserve the “best” posts for more challenging locations or those where the state has greater economic interests. Second, as Latin American countries grow more politically and economically powerful, they no longer want to be perceived as the *subject* of action, but rather as actors on the world scene.

### 3.4. Resources and environment

Interviewees agreed that the impacts of climate change, transformation of the energy sector, and resource depletion “contain the major environmental challenges facing the world in fact, therefore also facing the Atlantic.” These issues are highly interconnected, with numerous feedback loops; however, climate-related issues were regularly singled out as being the most important environmental challenges for the Atlantic and globally. A wide variety of climate change impacts are projected to impact the Atlantic Space, spanning eroding ice sheets, Caribbean tropical storms, hurricanes such as New York’s Sandy, flooding in West Africa, Amazonian dieback and regional water depletion, declining crop yields in Africa, and much more. Many coastal areas in the Atlantic are particularly vulnerable to sea level rise, including the east coast of the United States. Understanding of the full nature of these impacts, along with factors such as ocean dynamics and global circulation patterns, is still developing, yet the serious consequences for Atlantic countries are clear.

There are commonalities in the types of climate change impacts predicted for certain parts of the Atlantic, but also diversity regarding impacts, intensity, and abilities to respond. In West Africa, for instance, there are highly vulnerable populations, poor institutions, and a lack of financial resources to address climate impacts that may leave national governments severely stressed. On the whole, African countries have higher correlations between livelihoods and climate risks, such as in the field of agriculture. High-risk events such as hurricanes and floods, coupled with economic weaknesses, could produce major shocks to Atlantic countries. These challenges should be addressed within regional development discussions and help prioritized to vulnerable groups and low-income countries.

Transformation of the energy sector was seen as crucial in so far as it is related to climate change. Greenhouse gas emissions from the energy sector must be reduced to avoid climate change impacts and transformation is essential, but remains to be seen; with the exception of Europe, there is more talk than action and emissions continue to rise. Meanwhile, Atlantic producers are bringing new unconventional fossil fuels to market, thanks to hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking,” and deepwater drilling. Between new drilling technologies and liquid natural gas (LNG) exports, the U.S. energy profile has changed significantly in recent years. U.S. LNG exports to Europe were viewed as “tactical” in the medium term for both the U.S. as an exporter and EU in decreasing reliance on imports from Russia, where political tensions have grown, although this could in fact contribute to increased reliance on energy imports for the U.S. in the future. It remains to be seen whether the Atlantic is moving towards renewable energy sources or towards further entrenchment and reliance on fossil fuels, especially within the context of recently falling oil prices. Meanwhile, energy poverty remains an important issue, especially in African countries but also in parts of Latin America.



Resource depletion was also seen as most critical within the context of global climate change and consumption and production dynamics. Generally, the Atlantic area is rich in resources, but there was widespread agreement of the critical need for cooperative governance institutions to manage them, with depleted North Atlantic cod stocks cited as an example of failed governance. Fisheries depletion was of particular concern to interviewees, as fisheries provide livelihoods for many in the Atlantic and overfishing impacts relations between regions, such as, for example, with Europe and North Africa.

In general, Atlantic marine governance efforts have been led by the EU and U.S. In the last five years, marine issues have seen an increasing standoff between the U.S. and EU on high seas issues, with each taking dissimilar stances on the role of international law and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in governing high seas areas. The U.S. is not a party to UNCLOS and resists adding new international agreements, preferring instead to work within existing institutions. This stance has created tension with the EU and other countries and blocked global negotiations on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction (BBNJ). Europe has traditionally been a dominant player on oceans issues, playing a strong role where other countries lack capacity or interest, and is expected to continue to be in the near future. At the same time, new Southern Atlantic countries, such as South Africa, are becoming more influential and are keen to participate. Furthermore, there are growing examples of cooperation with non-state actors, such as the Sargasso Sea Alliance, and in existing institutions that are promoting effective governance solutions in the Atlantic.

Seabed mining is emerging as a new oceans use, but was not predicted to be a major “challenge” in the next ten to twenty years, only later coming into conflict with other marine uses such as fisheries, shipping, scientific research, and more. Today, most interest in Atlantic seabed mining has come from Atlantic countries, with exceptions, including Russia, which holds an exploratory permit with the International Seabed Authority.

## 4. Norms, values, and interregional cooperation

### 4.1. A place of shared norms and values?

Interviewees were nearly evenly split as to whether or not they perceived common values and norms that are unique to the Atlantic Space. Many felt that ties between the Americas and Europe have historically been strong, based upon shared culture, language, values, religion (e.g., Protestantism, Catholicism), legal systems (e.g., Napoleonic Code from France exported to parts of Latin America, English Common Law to the U.S. and Canada), political movements and philosophies (e.g., constitutional frameworks), migration, tourism, literature, music (e.g., tango), and more. Values were often seen as shared between the regions of Latin America, North America, and Europe, but less so for Africa. Africa was largely perceived as more of an outlier that does not share the same culture and values and is more heterogeneous in nature. This may be of decreasing relevance, however, as globalization and increased information sharing lead towards a shared global culture where some of the ties that bind the Atlantic (i.e., cultural, linguistic, historical) become less relevant.

Latin America was characterized as the “last preserve” of European ideals, as Europe meets new challenges and changes (e.g., the influx of Islam). Cultural exchanges, linguistic ties, investment, and economic (e.g., telecommunications) exchanges are enormous between Europe and Latin America. In Latin America, aspirations towards traditional Western values and ethics were seen as historically present, but waning. In the past, the elites of Latin America spoke European languages and looked to

European culture. Today, U.S. consumerism patterns are sought after and both the U.S. and Europe are top travel destinations. Yet, as Latin America grows increasingly independent, this dynamic has softened. Moreover, the relationship has been and continues to be asymmetric: Europeans see Latin America as “exotic,” while Americans are often “self-centered and not interested in the rest of the world.” Spain has been an exception, with stronger ties to Latin America, but the country increasingly self-identifies with Europe and no longer has the financial means to continually invest in regional relations. The links between Latin America and Europe remain strong between the citizenry and the private sector, but have been neglected at the political level.

Other interviewees disagreed with the concept of “Atlantic values” for a myriad of reasons. Some strongly felt that most shared values are universal in nature or “human values,” and that it would be inaccurate to characterize these as something regional in nature; by and large, most people of the world want greater security, prosperity, and sustainability. While it may be tempting to identify a greater proclivity towards democracy and human rights in the Atlantic than in other parts of the world (e.g., more autocratic regimes in Russia, North Korea, China), this still may be a stretch. Others saw strong interregional identities (e.g., within Africa, Europe, Latin America, or North America). Others still saw an increasingly “globalized culture” dominated by unprecedented information sharing — the “internet has dwarfed everything else” — and globalized supply chains and countries around the world are becoming more and more similar.

#### ***4.2. Interests and incentives for cooperation***

Reflecting on the region’s history, the relationship between the U.S. and Europe has shaped the Atlantic region’s development; for example, through the development of NATO and the Marshall Plan. This strong cooperative relationship has had “ups and downs,” (e.g., the Iraq War). The “transatlantic concept” is more new for the rest of the Atlantic, but is growing, alongside with South-South cooperation (e.g., Brazil-Africa).

Europe is viewed as having neglected relationships with Latin America in recent years, particularly at the EU level, but ever more in bilateral relations as well. This is in part due to the nearly undisputed view that the EU has begun to look more and more inward, focusing on internal problems such as the ramifications of the financial crisis and immigration. As a result, there is a sense that the EU may be neglecting important foreign policy issues and relations-building. Likewise, interviewees felt that the U.S. was neglecting transatlantic relationships, particularly with Latin America. This was not perceived as active neglect, but rather a side effect of U.S. foreign policy being overloaded and interest diverted to other issues and regions following 9/11 and the financial crisis. For the U.S., the major obstacle to cooperation will be a lack of sufficient dedication to preserving and promoting the transatlantic relationship in the face of other foreign policy priorities and the “pull” of Asia. Right now, U.S. policy towards the Atlantic is perceived as largely reactive and without a comprehensive regional strategy. For Brazil, too, internal problems may come to dominate priorities; already, ties with Africa have been neglected, following the efforts of the Lula administration to rebuild.

In Latin America, a distancing from the U.S. and Europe is occurring, and their influence diminished. This is attributable to a variety of factors, including the growth of Latin American institutions, growing assertiveness and economic strength, and the above-mentioned shifting U.S. and EU attention. Latin America has grown in economic and political strength and has distanced itself from the EU and U.S. as it becomes more independent and sets new political priorities. For Europe and North America, vis-

à-vis Latin America, the relationship of donor-recipient has changed, providing fewer funds and projecting less influence as a result. Much aid in Latin America originates from and stays within the region these days. These dynamics and relationships have changed, but are still not equal, though are growing closer in countries such as Chile, Colombia, and Brazil.

In the future, greater cooperation is generally foreseen within the Atlantic, not conflict, but in the context of a different world. The pre-Cold War era dominated by NATO and the OECD is gone and never to return — which may be a positive as the world must adjust to greater multilateralism and accommodate the role of the “Brazils and Indias of the world” through new governance models. The United Nations (UN) model needs to be reformed to accommodate new players with growing populations and effectively promote cooperation and co-existence. The EU model was cited by some as a positive example for horizontal management and greater collective decision-making, despite its current challenges.

Global, more than regional, trends may have a greater influence on future Atlantic cooperation. There has been a break between the traditional dichotomy between developing and developed countries, and new “emerging economies” (e.g., Brazil, Argentina, South Africa) that fall somewhere between. This is creating a shift in international negotiations (e.g., trade, climate), whereby Southern countries are increasingly driving processes and agreements. It also muddles the “divide” between the North and the South. Moreover, the unprecedented speed and access of information by the public and globalization are driving international relations, rather than traditional political divides or even “wars of conquest.”

#### ***4.3. Regional and interregional actors and initiatives***

The interviewees, themselves coming from international organizations, did not have any consensus views on the importance of particular regional initiatives or institutions, and did not see any as having a clear or unifying influence across the Atlantic Space as a whole. The EU was mentioned several times as a type of regional actor with a strong influence. NAFTA, Mercosur, and ECOWAS have influenced sub-regional trade and economics, alongside bilateral trade agreements. Regional development banks, too, (e.g., IADB) have had a major influence throughout the Atlantic. NATO is associated with the conception of the EU-U.S. “transatlantic relationship,” as a driver of close ties between the two, and one of the strongest regional institutions. The Organization of American States (OAS) plays an important role in security cooperation. Overall, however, interregional organizations were seen as fragmented and covering a broad range of issues and agendas.

Private actors are seen as having a growing influence, driven by economic investments. Within the sphere of private actors, U.S. foundations are influential and make considerable investments in poorer regions such as Africa and Latin America. Nevertheless, state backing is still needed to “do anything in the international space.”

International organizations such as the UN and World Bank may have started with Atlantic roots, but are now truly global in nature. Within the Atlantic, the influence of the World Bank Group is strongest in Africa, as reliance from Latin America has lessened. The suitability and relevance for the UN in a more multi-polar world is becoming questionable, as is the likelihood of reform or for development of new (regional) institutions (e.g., IBSA, BRICS) as new models. Atlantic countries hold privileged positions on the Security Council (e.g., United Kingdom, France, U.S.), but have declining influence and comparative populations (versus e.g., India, Brazil) and much to lose given this imbalanced ratio of power.



#### 4.4. The European Union as an Atlantic actor

Due to the EU's turn inwards, its global and regional influence is seen as declining. The primary areas where EU leadership is thought to remain strong are its progressive social and environmental policies. The EU is identified as a leading example and “great experiment” of democratic values and collective governance. At the same time, the ability for the EU to maintain its positions is under threat, as it is absorbed by internal problems between Member States. In an era of relative peace, the EU model's role may be underappreciated and its roots forgotten.

The EU is perceived as investing more in relations with Africa, as it has a more recent historical (colonial) presence and is geographically closer, than Latin America, despite the many linkages previously discussed. Africa remains more dependent on EU financing and investment, though less so than in the past due to increased trade with China. Brussels is not seen as giving sufficient attention to Latin America, a source of frustration. Partly as a result, EU relevance and political influence in Latin America have dropped and there, too, Chinese investment and commodity trade is growing. Still, in both Latin America and Africa, the EU's role is important, and roots deep, even as EU visibility and influence fluctuate.

While historical ties provide a foundation for EU cooperation with Atlantic countries, some interviewees cautioned against building relations off of colonial ties: “We live in a different world now, not the colonial era, and need to give countries the space they deserve.”

Overall, the EU's influence on Atlantic countries was viewed as positive. The EU's soft power approach to international relations was perceived as responsive to state concerns and respectful. Some felt it was more helpful, however, to evaluate bilateral relationships with EU Member States than for the EU as a bloc, especially for trade.

## 5. Conclusions

The interviewees were split as to whether they perceived the emergence of a unified “Atlantic Space.” In light of an increasingly globalized world, an expansion of regionalism seemed a *non sequitur* to many interviewees. Connections between people, and the velocity in exchange of ideas and information, are expanding rapidly, and beyond physical (regional) barriers. According to a number of interviewees, globalization is the primary driving force behind the trends and dynamics witnessed in the Atlantic, not regional relations. Traditional linkages of language, history, and more cannot be replaced, but have become far less important in the face of globalization. Further, however bright the prospects of the Atlantic are, it “cannot escape the growth of Asia Pacific.” The Pacific has taken on a new dimension and is almost on a new footing now with the Atlantic.

Others clearly saw the potential for an interconnected Atlantic Space, based on strong historical ties between the regions, though cautioned that this would likely not necessarily develop naturally and would need further investments in conceptualization and creation. While the concept of the “transatlantic” relationship has historically focused on the North, and new efforts are underway to promote South-South cooperation, the existing ties between the North and South should be reexamined and further built upon.

Still others approached the concept with some skepticism, identifying (growing) commonalities but suggesting that the existence of an “Atlantic Rim” was too strong. Whether or not they agreed upon the existence of a common Atlantic Space or epistemic communities, nearly all saw value in pursuing further cooperation, particularly

to improve governance in specific sectoral spheres (e.g., shared commons, trade, drug trafficking). While the benefits of pursuing new regional cooperation mechanisms may not be clear yet, these should be explored and analyzed and complementarities built upon.