



# ATLANTIC FUTURE

## ATLANTIC PERSPECTIVES INTERVIEWS REPORT

### 13

#### Perspectives from Poland (Warsaw)

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#### ABSTRACT

The concept of a new pan-Atlantic system of relations emerging in the Atlantic space beyond the traditional North Atlantic alliance and the North-South dependency has captured the Atlantic space. Polish interviewees from Warsaw viewed the idea with a measure of scepticism. Although there was no unanimous opinion, many interviewees from various sectors in Warsaw appeared to be sceptical about this potential scenario stating that the lack of a unified EU and Europe could prevent this idea from forming. The German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) and their Warsaw based office used their networks to interview the relevant actors based on their professional and academic expertise. The overall main concerns regarding the current state and future of the Atlantic region included, amongst others: the current and future state of transatlantic relations, the future of the TTIP trade negotiation between the US and the EU, the lack of a cohesive "Atlantic" security approach, the U.S.'s shift towards other regions, and the lack of a cohesive energy and climate and environmental policy both within the EU and the Atlantic space.

*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.



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## 1. Introduction

The Atlantic Future project aims to provide new evidence from a regional perspective on whether a new pan-Atlantic system of relations emerging in the Atlantic space beyond the traditional North Atlantic alliance and the North-South dependency is developing. In order to gain a better understanding of regional perspectives in Europe, Europe was broken down geographically by key city-states that was then combined and cross referenced with other key states for an overall European perspective. GMF was selected to utilize its transatlantic network in Poland which has been developed since the 80's and further fostered with the establishment of a Warsaw based office in 2011.

In accordance with the general project structure the interviews in Warsaw reflected a general sample of the public sector, specifically the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, diplomats and the Polish Agency for Information and Foreign Investment. The private sector included international and regional companies such as banks and private consultancies. The academic sector included international academic institutions such as research institutes like the Center for International Relations. Warsaw's media sector was represented by Warsaw's leading newspaper Gazeta Wyborcza and political magazine syndicates such as Wyborcza. Lastly, Warsaw's civil society was examined through various international and state-supported NGO's and international organizations such as Polska Agencji Informacji i Inwestycji Zagranicznych (PISM), demoseUROPA, and the Sobieski Institute.

In all sectors, questions were asked according to thematic areas such as; Economy and Finance, Security, People and Institutions and Resources and Environment according to the interviewees professional and academic expertise. The interviewees were then asked a series of overarching questions pertaining to the norms and values of the Atlantic space; the convergence or divergence in norms and values, interest and Incentives for cooperation and Regional and interregional cooperation initiatives. The interviews were conducted in person and standardized questions were asked to ensure objectivity.

## 2. The Developing Regions in the Atlantic

In the last decade, the four Atlantic sub-regions (Africa, Europe, North America and South America) have experienced various levels of economic growth. North America has grown in economic and financial importance but remained stable in regards to influencing others in the Atlantic space specifically through bilateral trade deals but also with the on-going trade negotiations with the EU (TTIP). The overall Polish perception for Europe's economic growth was that it has also grown in the last 20 years but was noted for being intrinsically linked and dependent on the U.S. market lacking autonomy. Latin America, while credited for its monumental strides to reduce poverty and increase economic importance was still referred as relatively growing in global importance. The African region was mentioned as not growing in economic importance to Poland but had untapped potential markets due to the current missing and low investments in the region.

According to Polish respondents, the entire Atlantic region has experienced various levels of growth in regards to security development. In the last decade, the North Atlantic has primarily increased capacity to counter mounting security threats from extremists and issues surrounding migration influx. While the South Atlantic which have

been plagued with maritime issues and human and narcotics trafficking, have increased their own security development in result of these increased threats. However, it is North America who continues to bring global security in both defence and economic terms; specifically within the context of NATO and has remained relatively the same in the last 20 years. The U.S. continues to serve as the main global player, but the Atlantic region could have a gap if the U.S. continues to pivot towards an Asia-Pacific orientation or focus on domestic issues, returning to a period of “isolationism” where the U.S. distances itself from European issues. For Poland, this is of great concern as respondents felt the future of Europe’s security continues to lie with the U.S. The current state of European security was mentioned as being one of the largest concerns regarding the future role of Europe in global and domestic issues - Europe could take a more unified security approach in the future. Latin America remains on the periphery of Europe’s security interests but has experienced moderate growth and will continue to grow and develop, but in security terms it may be dealing with more intra-national and regional issues such drug trafficking, corruption, social and economic unrest. From a European perspective, Africa has grown significantly in security terms both in regional issues as high levels of corruption were only heightened by the recent Ebola outbreak. As for Poland, Africa remains a ‘mystery’ as historically, Poland had little security linkages with the region, but for Europe as a whole, issues such as freedom fighters and illegal immigration from North Africa - remain top security issues for the region as a whole, including Poland.

In terms of political growth, North America continues to be important especially for Poland in regards to taking a more active role in Eastern and Central Europe and is still of value to the European Union as a strong ally. While the transatlantic link is of high political importance to Poland, Latin America and Africa were both noted as not being of high importance to Poland’s political interests mainly due to a lack of strong colonial link – or economic or diplomatic ties for that matter. Africa however was mentioned as having grown slightly in importance to Poland as being a member of the EU, especially due to the proximity and migration issues that North Africa has to Southern Europe.

Over the past 20 years, resource and environmental issues have been of great importance to Poland especially with Eastern and Central Europe’s reliance on Russian gas outputs, but also because of the growing instability in the region which has been further enhanced by the Ukraine crisis. Environmental concerns related to Poland’s outdated energy infrastructure was also of concern as heavy reliance on coal burning has caused pollution concerns and has ranked cities in Poland as some of the worst polluted areas in Europe. In addition, in Poland’s pursuit to become more energy efficient, oil companies have introduced fracking methods which have caused further environmental concerns for the agricultural industry with concerns of toxic leakage into farm lands. Overall, Poland’s current situation was mentioned as being strongly linked with Europe’s overall energy infrastructure and resource sustainability and should be addressed in addition to the mounting issues in the Atlantic region.

### **3. Section on Questions on Thematic Areas**

#### **3.1 Economy and finance**

According to Polish respondents, economy and finance were both important issues to the construction of the Atlantic space but especially in regards to the transatlantic link as Europe and the U.S. continue to be intertwined economically through the current Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations. The U.S. was noted for becoming specifically “advantageous for the economy” referring to mounting concerns that because of Europe’s weakening economy, economic reliance on the

U.S. as a main trade partner could be risky. For Warsaw respondents, this has been a growing concern as it could limit growth and possible investments elsewhere like Latin America and Africa. However, it was noted that while Poland has not been trading with Latin America and Africa; there are concerns that TTIP could close these market opportunities and prevent Poland and especially Europe from seeking outside markets in the future.

The main economic drivers for change in the Atlantic were perceived to be driven by the North America's economic stability while Europe's role in the Atlantic was seen as less optimistic. Poles fear that Europe has the risk of becoming disintegrated or will stagnate as it 'reaches its economic limit'. Since Poland is still outside the Euro zone they are concerned about the future internal European development. In general, Poles saw the South Atlantic region, particularly Latin America potentially adopting the "Brazilian method" of economic growth. Respondents were less united about Africa which in their views has the potential to become either more integrated or fragmented, depending on external investments.

Out of the main changes in economy and finance in the Atlantic region, there was an overall shared consensus that growth of trade and investment flows and the negotiation of new free trade agreements were vital and relevant to the growth and development of the Atlantic region. Meanwhile the construction of new infrastructures and new transport routes was perceived as being less relevant in the overall construction. However, it was noted that the South Atlantic, specifically Africa may value the construction of new infrastructure and transport routes higher than trade agreements. Responses varied among the interviewees who worked specifically on these regions compared to those working in European and Transatlantic issues.

### **3.2 Security**

Security was seen as one of the most important and major components within Poland's political environment. Both the diplomatic and defence sectors stressed their concerns on the U.S.'s continued pivot towards the Asia-Pacific and the lack of a strong U.S. presence in Europe. Poland has traditionally relied on a strong U.S. presence in Eastern and Central Europe either through a bilateral relationship - or through NATO. Warsaw respondents stressed their concerns for the future of EU's security structure as well as their potential leadership role within it, and the U.S.'s response to the growing threats to Poland's Eastern border in Ukraine and the rise of Russian hostility. Security issues in the Atlantic were of little concern to the majority of respondents, but it was noted that having a stable security environment in the Atlantic was critical to tackling the mounting global issues in other regions.

Some of the main drivers that could change and further connect the Atlantic region would be North America's perceived refocus on its security agenda as it counters mounting challenges from Asia in the Atlantic specifically their growing economic interest in the region. There was also a fear that the U.S. may decide to focus more internally on domestic and social issues –returning to a period of "isolationism", instead, the U.S. should focus on continuing its relations with Europe and potentially, the Atlantic space as a whole. The perception of Europe's security future lies within the growing gap in the global security network from the U.S. pivoting to Asia. According to the interviewees, Europe could take a more unified role especially in Africa as their migration and proximity will continue to raise security issues in Europe. From the Polish perspective they believe that with new European leadership, the EU could be stronger against the growing aggressions from the East, mainly Russia. Africa may 'continue to encounter security problems' but primarily for stability, it was mentioned that African nations may see some 'levelling off in the North African region' as governments strive

to become more stable. Latin America will continue to grow and develop, but in security terms they will be dealing with more intra-national and regional issues.

Out of the main security challenges in the Atlantic region, the results varied amongst the Polish respondents as some perceived certain security challenges from a strictly Polish/European perspective and some viewed the challenges as an overall Atlantic region threat. For example, fragile states and terrorism was ranked as more relevant especially in Europe while maritime security and the illicit trafficking of drugs, weapons and humans received a more relevant score for the Atlantic space as a whole.

The main actors capable of playing a security role in the Atlantic region were regarded as being the main security players, the US, Germany, UK, Brazil, Argentina, South Africa and Nigeria. However, from the Brussels perspective, “the US has a tarnished reputation and EU needs to take the initiative more.” The EU was noted as lacking a concise security approach to the Atlantic region but was closely interlinked with the U.S.’s security –especially through organizations like NATO. Respondents commented that international non-government organizations could “play a role, even though a minor one” in the Atlantic space.

### ***3.3 People and institutions***

As the Atlantic space transforms into a “solid block” of political, cultural and social relations, Polish respondents view the EU’s role as having potential political influence by taking on a stronger leadership role in the region. However, concerns about the EU’s governance and capacity were raised as interviewees stated that they would have to take a more independent stance regarding economic, political and social issues and not rely too much on the current U.S. driven foreign policy in the Atlantic region. Overall, Europe would need to become more aggressive and autonomous regarding their external relations.

North America’s political continuity in the Atlantic region received a mixed reception; some believe that it will continue to grow in importance; some believe it will stagnate or decline. On the other spectrum, Poland viewed Europe as continuing to grow politically in importance, specifically as it deals with issues within its Eastern neighbourhood. For Latin America, much of its political growth was inductive with its economic potential.

When asked ‘what were the main political threats to the Atlantic region to further cooperation’, respondents noted that the main political threats in the region varied amongst the North and South Atlantic. For example diplomatic and migration trends were ranked higher for North America and Europe whereas human rights and state of democracy was ranked higher for issues perceived more relevant in Africa and Latin America. However there was an overall degree of concern for the state of democracy and how human rights were perceived and implemented in the region Atlantic region.

### ***3.4 Resources and environment***

The main concerns of the interviewees in Warsaw surrounding resources and environmental issues in the Atlantic were skewed towards a more transatlantic perspective. Polish energy experts commented that they were on the periphery when concerning wider Atlantic energy issues but mentioned that these issues were of concern for the entire Atlantic region. Another growing concern for respondents was the instability in the East (Ukraine) as Russia continues to dominate the energy sector and hence poses a threat to the energy security of Central and Eastern Europe.

Energy security was of high importance and has developed within many of the political platforms within Warsaw.

While North America in the last decade has grown dramatically in energy importance with the shale gas revolution, Europe was noted as continuing to struggle for reaching 'joint energy measures.' However, respondent did note the strong, positive influence on climate and environmental issues as climate change was being addressed by UN and Poland was taking the leading role as for example as they hosted the 2013 Warsaw Climate Change Conference. As for the rest of the Atlantic, Latin America and Africa's energy sectors remain a mystery to Poland but were mentioned as having the potential for becoming more relevant for renewable energy.

With the self-reliance on local energy resources and a surplus, North America has the potential to change the Atlantic environmental landscape in the next decade by driving the "geo-politics of energy and resources." Polish energy experts stated that if the U.S. in particular, took on issues such as climate change and resource depletion, the issues could have a positive domino effect and spread through the Atlantic. According to the interviewees, Europe will not have a huge impact in the region as long as they continue to lack strong leadership and a joint-system approach on energy issues. Africa could grow in importance but it would continue to rely on external investments from either the U.S. or EU. Latin America's energy future remains unknown from the Polish resource and environmental viewpoint.

The main environmental and energy challenges in the Atlantic space were all indicated as vital issues that have the ability to transform and affect the entire region/space. However, the transformation of the energy sector and the impacts of climate change were indicated as the largest challenges leaving resource depletion as the least. The respondents did note that these challenges vary among the Atlantic sub-regions though. For North America and Europe they listed 'impacts of climate change' and; 'resource depletion' high on their regional and global agenda meanwhile it was speculated that challenges such as the transformation to the energy sector was of higher priority to developing nations in the South Atlantic where resources are more abundant but issues of climate change were not high on the institutional level yet.

## **4. Section on Norms and Values, Cooperation and Regionalism**

### ***4.1 Convergence or divergence in norms and values***

Polish economic experts indicated that they found little values and norms in common within the Atlantic space. The mention of a divide between the North and South Atlantic was highlighted through issues such as human rights; democracy promotion which was drastically different between the two hemispheres. While North America and Europe share a common historical and often, colonial past with South America and Africa, they have produced strong economic and trade ties but it was mentioned that these economic bases alone were not enough to conclude common values and norms.

According to Polish security experts, the concept of a space with common values and norms only existed to a certain extent; the region did share some similar values and norms but was often "lived differently". In the North Atlantic region there was already a strong transatlantic security link via NATO and bilateral relations such as Poland and the US' security relations. However, for the South, they were still "aspiring producers



and users of democratic will” and have yet to establish their security networks to the same extent as those in the North Atlantic.

In political terms, the Atlantic space had ideally more in common with each other than that of the Pacific region when examining the nations that border these spaces. According to the interviewees, the Atlantic region did have more in common in regards to it's politically and historically linked through colonization. The structures and function of the state, democracy, human rights where influences by historical linkages but the application and to what extent nations followed and upheld these values differ greatly between the North and South Atlantic.

The existence of common norms and values in terms of resource and environmental issues was indicated as not existing but rather taking place on a “country - country basis.” The regions in the Atlantic were “dispersed on energy and joint-security markets and put different values on energy and security.” The lack of universal energy values already questioned the idea of a joint Atlantic one but the possibility of developing one in the future seemed heavily reliant on the current development of regional energy norms according to the respondents.

#### ***4.2 Interest and Incentives for cooperation***

According to the interviewees an economic divide had occurred and was highlighted by the drastic different levels of development and standards of living between the North and South. According to them this would continue to be a challenge to more cooperation. While TTIP remained another possible exclusionary element as the U.S. and the EU create a joint trade agreement, some thought it could have the potential to foster economic growth within the South Atlantic and regionally.

As China continues to invest in the Atlantic region and Russia threatens its stability via Europe, these external powers could become an obstacle for the construction of a common Atlantic region and a possible security threat. However, learning from developments and threats which the Pacific region encountered could serve as a catalyst for the Atlantic region to create a unified security space. Polish respondents noted that while the transatlantic security link remains strong with NATO, out-of-area cooperation could also be vital in creating a stronger Atlantic security approach to external threats.

As interviewees noted, the Atlantic space lacked internal institutionalized cooperation amongst each other and most politics were driven by the North Atlantic. Finding a joint approach and actively and collectively addressing human rights, democracy, gender and rule of law issues in the Atlantic space had the potential of being a unifying cause. Polish respondents were specifically targeting Latin America and Africa, but it was also mentioned that Europe's overall policy was insufficient. Again, the Ukrainian crisis served as example here as well.

The Atlantic space faces challenges with finding common political objectives on tackling resource and environmental issues. Polish experts noted that there is a lack of business understanding when specifically facing environmental challenges that span across borders and regions. This has the potential to continue to be an obstacle unless the regions create a common approach but currently there are “little incentives for the Atlantic space to work together on these issues.”



### ***4.3 Regional and interregional cooperation initiatives***

When it came to the main regional actors capable of playing a role and therefore foster further cooperation in the Atlantic, the U.S. and Europe (the EU and its member states such as Germany, UK and France) were referenced as leading as main economic and regional actors, in terms of economic impact, on the Atlantic region. Meanwhile, mid-sized economic states were also accredited for having potential to play a role in the Atlantic such as Brazil, Mexico, Argentina and Colombia. A mix of non-state and international organizations such as the IMF, World Bank, G20 and private companies were also mentioned in having a growing role and responsibility to these regions especially in Africa and Latin America. This could indicate that further economic development in the South Atlantic region could have more influence from a mixture of state and non-state actors.

The main security state actors were listed as the U.S., Europe (Germany, France, and UK), Brazil, Mexico, South Africa and Argentina. Organizations such as NATO, OSCE, and G20 are leaders in the Atlantic region. Polish interviewees did not have much trust in the United Nations referring to it as being too soft in their security approaches. The media was credited from playing a large role in engaging different interests in the region.

The main political actors and regional leaders were both the U.S. and EU – the later with countries such as Germany, UK and France as the main internal leaders. African nations such as Nigeria, Angola, South and North Africa (Egypt) were mentioned as potential being able to play a leadership role in the Atlantic region. The same was said about Brazil in Latin America but according to the interviewees all had not taken this opportunity to the fullest. United Nations, World Bank and IMF were listed as influential international organizations driving some changes and issues in the Atlantic space. However, again, their true impact was questioned by some respondents.

The U.S., and certain EU member states such as Germany and Poland could play a large role in the Atlantic region's resource and environmental capacity but only if they choose to work together. Think tanks like GMF and the Atlantic Council were noted as working on these issues in the Atlantic region but more could be done from the NGO perspective. Businesses with interests in the Atlantic region could also serve as both environmental and economic stakeholders in the region and help stimulate a common approach. By creating a joint market that utilizes resources within the Atlantic region could help stimulate not only an Atlantic space but also a joint approach to tackling the varying environmental concerns in the region.

### ***4.4 The role of the EU in the Atlantic***

In regards to creating a unified Atlantic space, Poland viewed the EU's potential role in the region as being economically and fiscally driven in especially in developing areas such as Africa and Latin America. The EU's current role in Africa however was mentioned as being too "historically interlinked" and focused on development aid projects. The EU would need to diversify and potentially invest more in Africa's infrastructure. For Latin America, the sheer distance was noted as being an obstacle for the EU to take a more leadership role, however if Latin America diversified its trade further to Europe, the EU could play a stronger economic role in that region and further link the regions.

While North America has a global leadership role already developed, the EU was noted for having the potential to take a stronger leadership role in stimulating growth in the Atlantic space but this would be dependent on how the EU further develops its

leadership in these regions bilaterally and if the US continues to steer towards its Pacific policies, the EU could take over as a leader in the Atlantic space. Poland's main critique of this potential role would be the lack of a strong and unified security approach both within Europe and globally.

EU approaches to energy issues were specifically discussed and according to Poland, the EU was "lacking a cohesive policy approach." This also particularly referred to the Poland's energy system which is currently relying on old technologies and resources such as coal, while parts of Europe are becoming more focused on renewables – showcasing a divergence in Europe's energy needs.

## 5. Conclusions

Polish respondents view the idea of a common Atlantic area with a degree of scepticism. "The Atlantic area has too many differences, no common interests to unite them." The divide between the South and North Atlantic in economic, political and security terms was seen as too large for a common, interlinked economic market or political space –there needed to be the political will and leadership to create the space. While colonial linkages were seen as unifying aspect, from which countries like Poland indirectly profit as member of the European Union, the same historical past also continues to be a dividing aspect that prevents trust and parity among the Southern and Northern countries in the Atlantic space.

According to Poles the advance of TTIP for the transatlantic community has the potential to interlink the U.S. and the EU even further but when asked what kind of effect it could have on the South Atlantic region, the overall conclusion was that it has the possibility of excluding the South Atlantic space, making a united Atlantic space unlikely.

However, regional issues remain the dominant feature in how Poland looks at the Atlantic space in which they are a part. The current "global order" was being challenged or imposed further by Russia and China, and if continued the region as a whole has the potential to serve as a unifying cause for a pan-Atlantic security area." If Russia continued on this trajectory, a united Atlantic response would be regarded highly beneficial for Europe's security.