



ATLANTIC
FUTURE

ATLANTIC PERSPECTIVES INTERVIEWS REPORT

15

Perspectives from Spain (Madrid)

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ABSTRACT

The perceptions and opinions of Spanish stakeholders on the Atlantic are highly diverse but coincide in the need to include Latin America in Transatlantic relations. Most interviewees in Spain focused on economic aspects and security interests in the Atlantic, while people and institutions, resources and environment ranked second. The overwhelming majority of interviewees shared a rather sceptical view on the future of the Atlantic as an articulated and institutionalized space or a community of values. There was also a consensus on the view that Latin America is part of the Atlantic identity, while Africa is more distant in terms of values and norms, development and common interest. The North-South divide is still present, but most interviewees agreed on the need for a more balanced and horizontal relationship taking into account the power shifts towards regional leaders like Brazil, Mexico or South Africa, on the one hand, and multinational companies and "global civil society networks, on the other.

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1. Introduction

From a regional perspective, the project aims to provide new evidence on whether a new pan-Atlantic system of relations is emerging beyond the traditional North Atlantic alliance and the North-South dependency. Furthermore, the research team analyses the rationales behind cooperation in the Atlantic space and suggests strategies for the European Union (EU) to engage with the wider transatlantic region. FRIDE interviewed a series of actors from various sectors of society: government officials (particularly from the Spanish Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense), academics (political scientists, IR experts and economists), representatives of the business community and financial sector. Finally, several members of NGOs were interviewed, as well as key journalists from the main Spanish outlets. The conducted interviews covered four thematic areas: Economy and Finance, Security, People and Institutions, and Resources and Environment.

2. Atlantic Actors and Regions

There was no agreement on the Atlantic leadership. While some saw the North Atlantic as a major driving force, divided between those that appointed to the EU as a potential leader and others were convinced that the US will assume the leadership of the Atlantic project. Regarding security, both regions share the same concerns in terms of terrorism and migration issues.

2.1 Key Atlantic States

All experts agreed that North America is not a collective actor, but composed by three individual states. Most interviewees argued that Latin America will be more important in terms of trade and investment. According to journalists, Latin America's relations with Asia, mainly Russia and China, and the existence of natural resources could make South America a pivotal actor in Asia and the Atlantic. To a minor extent, Africa will also become a more relevant partner.

As for Africa, it is expected that the continent becomes a relevant actor and the main economic driving force, together with Latin America (raw materials and energy resources), in the Atlantic space in the near future. However, Africa first needs to become more stable politically and most experts considered state fragility as the major risk for the region and a potential Atlantic community. The risk of more internal conflicts in Africa in the next 15 years would diminish the level of cooperation with all Atlantic partners. For those reasons, all interviewees were rather sceptical on the African participation in an Atlantic project. Most Spanish experts made the argument that Africa has a much more recent experience with independence and decolonization (since the 1960s), democracy and human rights are less consolidated and values and traditions are very different compared to the EU, the United States and Latin America.

As refers to the role of states, the US was identified as the most powerful and relevant Atlantic country. Several interviewees identified South Africa, Nigeria and Angola as key actors in Africa, being particularly South Africa closely linked to the EU (as a strategic partner and due to the signature of an FTA). In Latin America, most experts referred to Brazil as a stable country and potential leader, and some included Mexico – as a bridge between Atlantic and Pacific – in the list. Journalists mentioned Brazil's strong economic and political interests in Africa. As a bridge between the Atlantic Latin America and the Atlantic Africa, Brazil should be a major driving force for an integrated Atlantic space between the four regions, taking into account its close links to the EU, the US and Africa. The organization of Summits between UNASUR, the Arab League and the African Union prove Brazil's political will to develop a South Atlantic space. Nonetheless, some academics were sceptical about Brazil's capacity for leadership and thought that its South-South policy is rather “a dividing than a uniting factor”.

Several diplomats stressed the strategic importance of Spain as a link between Europe, Latin America, the Mediterranean and North Africa. Spain (and the Ibero-American community) could be a platform for a Triangle between the EU, the US and LAC. From a Spanish perspective, an Atlantic Triangle between the EU, North America and Latin America seems to be a likely scenario, while cultural differences are the main obstacle for a major cooperation with African countries. Many interviewees stressed the importance of Latin America and the Ibero-American community for Spain as a historic bridge to Europe.

Within the Atlantic Triangle, most experts identified Brazil, the EU, Mexico and the United States as the protagonists with capacity to create a common space. Some diplomats argued that those four actors share similar values and convergent interests to create an Atlantic community (in order to maintain their international position and economic weight). Others disagreed with the idea of a quartet and excluded Mexico from the group. As for Europe, economist thought that Germany should take the lead and define the future of the EU.

2.2 The four regions of the Atlantic: organizations and prospects

A majority of experts argued that the Atlantic space and regional organizations represent separated channels. No regional organization has an Atlantic agenda, and the emerging powers' engagement made the traditional North-South gap more visible. According to many interviewees, regional organizations play a minor role in the space, compared to states and multinational companies. Others stated the opposite by saying that regional organizations (NATO, MERCOSUR, CELAC, AU, etc.) are the main channels of dialogue and cooperation within the Atlantic. Due to weak institutions and low levels of intra-regional interdependence, many interviewees were sceptical about the prospects of regional integration in Latin America and Africa.

While many included the African Union (AU), the Latin American and Caribbean Community of States (CELAC) and MERCOSUR in the category of not successful regional organizations, some diplomats considered the EU, ECOWAS, and the Ibero-American Community as the main regional or collective actors in the Atlantic. According to those "regional optimists", ECOWAS should speak with one single voice and further engage on political stability, migration and conflict resolution in Africa. The Ibero-American Community of States serves European and Latin America interests and, by deepening its South-South cooperation program, could be used as a bridge to West Africa.

No clear picture can be drawn on the future position of the four regions: North Atlantic, EU, Latin America and Africa. Although most interviewees draw a conservative picture of the hierarchy between the sub-regions, some predicted that, in the next 15 years, either Latin America or Africa will be more important than the United States and the EU. Today's clear hierarchy between North America identified by nearly all interviewees as the most relevant "region", followed by the EU, Latin America and Africa contrasted with speculations on their future weight in international relations.

Estimations varied between conservative scenarios of a North American dominance; visions of a more powerful Latin America; a clear and more pronounced EU leadership; and – as a minority position – a much more relevant Atlantic Africa in terms of economic development and growth. Particularly diplomats and experts described Latin America as a more self-confident and autonomous region with closer links to China and other Asian countries. Some stated that African renaissance reflects the continent's struggle for identity and economic progress.

All experts referred to a slow economic power shift towards Latin America and Africa. Consequently, relations within the Atlantic should be more horizontal and address the problems and interests of the “South”. These changes should be taken into account in the EU-Latin American cooperation system, the Ibero-American Community and the EU partnership with Africa. In the same direction, economists stressed the importance of the “global supply chain”, conducted mostly by the US, the EU and Asia, and the need to further integrate Latin America and Africa by diversifying their economies and consolidating democracy. To bridge the gap between both poles of the Atlantic, will be a challenging task for the EU and the United States that requires cooperation and consensus-building with emerging powers like Brazil or South Africa but also a closer cooperation between regional organizations.

3. Thematic areas

3.1. Economy and Finance

The lack of growth in the Eurozone and, to a lesser extent, in the United States (US) was qualified as a major concern for the future of the Atlantic space. Consequently, the political and economic leadership of the North Atlantic is declining. This trend sharply contrasts with substantial GDP increases in Africa and Latin America. According to some forecasts by academics, in the next 15 years Africa and Latin America will most likely be the main economic driving forces of the Atlantic. Above all, Africa could experience high growth rates, given that, according to an economist, “everything has to be done” (from transport routes and other infrastructure to trade and investment). The economic scenarios towards 2025 depend on major investment for infrastructure and transport routes in Latin America and Africa, the conclusion of free trade agreements (FTAs) – including the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) –and the evolution of trade flows between the regions of the Atlantic.

Large parts of the economic debates focused on the TTIP as a driving force or obstacle for the Atlantic. Although the TTIP was seen as a decisive factor for the future of the Atlantic, there was no common ground on the future of the TTIP, and its effects for the Southern axis. For some economists and diplomats, the TTIP would launch a positive message of economic growth, the reactivation of the labor market and increase the visibility of the Atlantic.

Others argued, from an economic perspective, that the EU should not engage with bilateral free trade agreements, given that it has always been a strong multilateral player and promoter of the WTO Doha Round. Diplomats tend to be more optimistic about the prospects of the TTIP as a main driving force of the Atlantic (and the possible inclusion of South Atlantic countries), while critical academics thought that the TTIP would be a dividing line towards Latin America and Africa, and its achievement would further weaken South Atlantic countries.

Journalists added that many European citizens and civil society organizations see the TTIP as a threat (in terms of norms and standards, social progress and jobs). Several interviewees referred to civil society protests in Germany and France, and some diplomats predicted that the TTIP will not be signed. As an argument, they referred to a recent (not published) study by the European Commission on costs and benefits revealed that Sweden and Spain would be the European “winners”, while the positive impact for Germany and France would be much lower. Some academic experts added the possible negative migration effect for Europe, since many skilled workers would take the chance to emigrate to the United States where unemployment is lower and salaries tend to be higher.

Most interviewees thought that the TTIP should be open for those Latin American countries that already apply similar norms and standards in the FTAs they signed with the EU and the US¹. NGO representatives argued that the economic strength of Europe and the USA is limited and they have to rely on third parties. Government officials shared this vision and affirmed that an Atlantic TTIP including Latin America would lower costs, and serve as an incentive for economic growth and identity in an Atlantic space (without Africa). In contrast, some economists underlined serious regulatory problems of Latin America and Africa that would also pose a problem of harmonization in a future TTIP.

In the same direction, other economists qualified the differences on regulations, norms and standards of production as major obstacles for European and US investment in Latin America and Africa. According to others (diplomats, journalists and academics), although all four regions – North America, Europe, Latin America and Africa – share a preference for a market economy, incompatible institutional regimes, different perceptions regarding the degree of state regulation and intervention, and the lack of harmonization of norms and standards limit cooperation and integration in the Atlantic. While Africa and Latin America ‘need to adapt’ their regulations to international standards, some academics identified the EU’s complex decision-making process and shared competences as an additional obstacle to a more fluent economic cooperation in the Atlantic.

Moreover, economists mentioned two important trade disputes related to the Atlantic: 1) “Low-intensive conflicts” like the one between the United States and the EU on Boeing versus Airbus, 2) “High-intensive conflicts” such as the EU and the US versus China on solar panels. While the latter represents an obstacle for closer economic links, the second could serve as an incentive for cohesion against third countries.

According to academics, two parallel phenomenon’s are visible in the Atlantic space: “renationalization” and “globalization. Others agreed with this view and warned that the economic crisis entails the risk of re-nationalization and protectionism in the Atlantic, trade sanctions and a decline of the international economic regime driven by the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. For most analysts, an increase in trade and investment flows will be decisive for the economic future of the Atlantic, challenged by the economic and political rise of China and other Asian powers.

Some interviewees criticised the lack of an Atlantic platform to discuss those issues, while others recommended a higher degree of coordination at the G-20 Summits and were rather sceptical regarding the launch of a new dialogue forum.

3.2. Security

Drugs-trafficking, fragile states, international terrorism and, as the lowest priority, maritime security, had been identified as the main security issues within the Atlantic. Other security-related problems refer to energy, climate change, religion and the status of women in the societies. According to most interviewees, different cultures and identities represent a serious obstacle for the establishment of an Atlantic security community beyond the North Atlantic. Migration flows and radicalism were also been mentioned as major security threats. From a Spanish and European perspective, the

¹ The four countries of the Pacific Alliance (Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru) and Central America.

Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region represents the most important security threat in the Atlantic. Another one is the need to guarantee security in the Gulf of Guinea.

Particularly for Spain, North Africa is the most important and challenging region in terms of security and migration. Spanish diplomats underlined that terrorism is a serious challenge for Spain and its North African partner, particularly Morocco. Migration and the lack of integration in the Spanish society were mentioned as driving forces for terrorism. For some diplomats, "terrorism begin in Spain", given that an increasing number of terrorists are born and grown up in European countries. Related to that question, critical journalists qualified the EU's counter-terrorism strategy in MENA as "cynical and driven by self-interests" (security and energy, among others). According to them, The EU under-performed during the Arab spring and took the wrong decisions during the so called "Arab Spring".

Several interviewees affirmed that, in terms of security, Africa has been the most relevant region in the last 20 years. Conflicts continue in many countries and zones, such as in the Sahel, the Gulf of Guinea, the DRC or Nigeria. Compared to Africa, North America keeps its traditional stability and Latin America evolves to democratic stability. Fragile states were identified as a major problem for Africa and some diplomats mentioned Nigeria and Venezuela as a potential source of conflict within the Atlantic.

In Europe, security conflicts concentrate on the Eastern part (Ukraine, the Balkans, Moldova and others). Others referred to the EU's mislead role in the recent conflict on Ukraine. According to some diplomats, the EU was "humiliated" by the Russian annexation of Ukraine, and it was "a mistake" to open the NATO to Russia and East European countries. After the crisis in Ukraine, the EU has lost confidence and credibility as a global actor. In this context, security experts suggested to reform the EU Security Strategy, approved in 2003 and adapt European security policy to new global challenges (such as the Islamic State) and in its neighborhood (Ukraine, North Africa, Eastern Europe).

NGO representatives stressed the imbalances between the powerful US and the relatively weak European security agendas. They also made the point that the US tend to mix development and security driven goals, while the EU argues that development policy should be complementary and coordinated with other policies, but not follow the logic of the security agenda. From an NGO point of view, security and development shouldn't be treated as separated issues, since both are not inter-related: development does not necessarily improve security and, vice-versa, security does not promote development.

Beyond regional debates, some academics argued that there are no converging security interests between the most powerful states in the Atlantic (Brazil, South Africa, the EU and the United States). Ukraine and other international conflicts like Syria prove that there is no security community and even in the North Atlantic, the NATO is affected by a crisis of identity and legitimacy. There was no agreement on the role of NATO. Some journalists and diplomats perceived the organization as the main Atlantic pillar, while others saw the NATO rather as an obstacle for a closer cooperation between the Northern and the Southern part of the Atlantic. According to critical voices, an Atlantic space require "rethinking the future of NATO" including a Southern approach and a debate on how to address new security threats like those posed by transnational criminal groups, and the establishment of a mechanism of deterrence and protection.

3.3. People and Institutions

How to consolidate liberal democracies and guarantee the respect for human rights – both issues are closely linked – is the most important political and institutional challenge in the Atlantic. Many interviewees argued that democracy and human rights are push factors for a rising middle class in Africa and Latin America. According to diplomats, this trend might create, at the long run, a normative Atlantic community. In principle, common political values and norms are a clear advantage compared to Atlantic relations with Asia.

Nonetheless, there was no consensus on the idea, formulated by a diplomat, that democracy and human rights are the “political model” and the main driving force of the Atlantic partnership. While some perceived common political values as a major advantage of the Atlantic space, others stated the opposite – increasing levels of disagreement on what democracy and human rights mean in the political practice. According to journalists, for example, there is no or only limited freedom of speech in many African and Latin American countries, and electoral democracies contrast with the rule of law in Europe and the United States. In some Latin countries – particularly Venezuela -, populist regimes are a problem for democracy and a dividing line between South American countries on the one side, and North Atlantic community, on the other. In Africa, several interviewees appointed to Nigeria, when predicting potential political conflicts in present and future.

Nonetheless, several interviewees stressed the increasing differences in norms and values among the four sub-regions (North America, the EU, Latin America and Africa), notably in terms of democracy, rule of law, human rights and family values. One of the reasons is the emergence of a more powerful and autonomous South Atlantic space that tends to balance and present alternative views to the already consolidated North Atlantic Community. The second most relevant political and social issue is migration, as a potential security threat and a challenge for integration, particularly within the European Union. How to deal with South-North and South-South migration and address common challenges such as the regulation of flows, the balance between negative (poor working conditions, difficult integration, security threat) and positive effects (labour force, cultural enrichment and diverse societies) is a shared dilemma within the Atlantic that should be treated collectively.

From an NGO perspective and with views on the next World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 in Istanbul, development is also a fundamental challenge in the Atlantic. In this area, countries like the US, Canada, and the EU (the Nordic Member states, the Netherlands and the UK) are the most influential in this sector. There is also an increasing number of new donors in the South, especially Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and Venezuela. In Africa, South Africa and ECOWAS are the most engaged actors in the field of humanitarian and development assistance. NGOs considered this trend towards South-South cooperation within and between regions as positive, taking into account that the US understanding of development cooperation tends to be linked to security interests and “the EU understands humanitarian aid from a Eurocentric and defensive perspective”.

In a globalized world of immediate communication flows and widespread networks of information, diplomatic exchanges lost weight in International Relations and were qualified by all experts as less relevant for the creation of an Atlantic community. Similar to other fields, some diplomats stressed the need for a common forum on political issues and particularly on democracy and human rights, and others mentioned the Atlantic Dialogues organized by the German Marshall Fund as a positive step forward]

3.4. Environment and energy

Compared to energy-related issues, environmental concerns had no prominent place in the interviews conducted in Spain. Few experts related both issues, and debates concentrated on energy as a major concern for Spain and the EU.

Most experts were sceptical about the creation of a European energy market in the next future, but all stressed the importance of a common policy and the need – pointed out by the private sector - to diversify its energy sources and providers. EU member states represent a major obstacle to a common energy policy. According to some experts, they are highly protectionists and still define energy security in strictly national terms. According to many, the emergence of real 'Atlantic Energy Union' would accelerate an EU energy union.

Many experts identified economic exchanges and energy as major drivers of cooperation and convergence within the Atlantic. Economists explained that an Atlantic energy space would be beneficial for the EU as an important consumer and Africa, Brazil and the US as energy providers. All agreed that an Atlantic energy space has a large potential, particularly with regards to oil: The United States and Brazil will be important oil suppliers, Venezuela has the world's largest oil reserves, and Libya and Nigeria are also important providers. Moreover, the Atlantic space has important gas reserves.

According to some academics, shale gas could be a game changer and an incentive for a closer partnership. Journalists referred to the importance of natural resources as a potential for cooperation (Africa and Latin America as suppliers, the EU as a demander) and conflict (for example the extractive industries and related environmental damage). In the next future, through the technique of fracking, the United States could become the second largest producer of liquid oil in the world, after Saudi Arabia.

Some journalists, specialized in environment, and NGO activists linked the energy and environmental agenda. Both groups argued that the principle energy source in the Atlantic should not been oil but clean energies like solar energy and wind power. The promotion of renewable energies will further reduce external dependencies (from Russia and the MENA region). This policy would also count on the participation of civil society pushing for clean energies and climate action.

Different to the energy sector, the EU has defined a common policy on climate change including concrete commitments to reduce emissions. These have been adopted by all countries in the Atlantic basin by signing the Kyoto Protocol and participating in the COPs (2014 in Lima, 2015 in Paris). Nonetheless, according to journalists, in this field "the EU has neither the leadership nor the decision that had a few years ago". Moreover, countries like Germany that made a strong commitment to move from nuclear to renewable energies have not be followed by other countries nor accomplished initial expectations

There is little chance that the Atlantic countries will shift towards renewable energies or adopt common policies or positions in this field. Even the EU does not speak with one voice. At climate change negotiations (Conferences of the Parts, COPs), where the EU adopt a common position, the Union is still represented by the European Commission and EU member states like France and Germany that beyond a minimum common denominator tend to give priority to national interests. Critical journalists argued that, if not even the EU is an indivisible bloc, even greater is the fragmentation of positions in other regional spaces such as UNASUR or ECOWAS.

4. Norms, Values, Cooperation and Regionalism

4.1. A Normative Community?

Although some journalists affirmed: “there are no general values and norms shared by all countries of the Atlantic Basin but a North/South divide”, a clear majority agreed on a high level of political convergence. Within a broad range of interpretations and political praxis, interviewees identified democracy, human rights, languages, culture, and the market economy as shared norms and principles in the Atlantic.

There are signs of a greater convergence of values. All interviewees agreed that the countries of the Atlantic share more values and common principles among themselves than with Asia, much more distant in political and cultural terms. Some diplomats even exclaimed that “there is no similar space of common values on the globe”. They considered the absence of fundamental debates on political and economic principles (liberal democracy, human rights and market economy) a clear comparative advantage.

All interviewees appointed to the differences within the South Atlantic: For cultural reasons, Latin America shares more values and norms with the EU and the United States than with Africa. The so called “Atlantic triangle” – integrated by the EU, North America and Latin America - shares a common Greek-roman and Jewish tradition including values like solidarity, individual rights, the rule of law, and property rights. A strong multilateral commitment, and a similar view on peace and security are also part of that common heritage and political preferences.

Nonetheless, most experts highlighted increasing differences between countries when it comes to the political praxis of those shared values. For example, academics affirmed that even within the EU can be detected fundamental differences with regards to the perception and functioning of a market economy². European countries like France are less liberal than the Anglo-Saxon states, and Germany ranks somewhat in between. A similar trend can be identified in policies against terrorism: while there is a certain trade-off between security and human rights in case of the US, EU member countries are more prone to combine both issues. Priorities are also different: terrorism ranks high at the US and EU agenda and is less relevant for Latin America and Africa.

In this context, several academics and diplomats mentioned the North-South divide – particularly the distance to Africa - on controversial issues such as religion, migration, women’s rights, human rights, rule of law, democracy and, related the those, political culture. According to journalists, religion is a uniting (LAC-EU-US) and dividing factor (Africa) in the Atlantic. Tribal traditions in Africa and indigenous movements in South America reveal different forms of organisation and politics, defined as a potential obstacle for cooperation and a normative community for action.

Another difference is the role of the state. While in most EU member states and the US prevail a liberal view on democracy and the market economy, in the South Atlantic is taking place a controversial debate on the role of the State: in Latin America it is related to the question of “identity”, and in North Africa on the role of religion (secular or theocratic state).

Those differences can be explained by diverse political cultures, religions and

² Pew Research Center, Pew Research Survey on Globalization and Trade: <http://www.pewresearch.org/topics/globalization-and-trade>.

traditions. Other explanations are power imbalances and the hegemonic position of the United States – opposed by some African and Latin American countries. Journalists stressed a high level of convergence in terms of “Western values” between the United States and Europe and some countries of Latin America (Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru) and in Africa (Tunisia, South Africa, Ghana, Senegal). On the other ideological end – opposed to the Western leadership – are Algeria, Cuba and Venezuela. According to others, Brazil, Mexico or Colombia are closer to the North Atlantic than the ALBA countries or the indigenous communities in Bolivia, Guatemala or Peru. In Africa, there is also a divide in terms of values: South Africa, for example, shares liberal values with the West, while this is less visible in other African countries or some ethnic communities.

From a Spanish perspective, there is a clear gap between Africa, on the one side, and the Atlantic triangle composed by the EU, the United States and Latin America (integrated by a common history and cultural tradition), on the other. According to many interviewees, the EU, the US and Latin America are part of a community of values, while Africa and Asia are more distant political partners. This does not mean that all three partners share the same interpretation of a liberal democracy – for example, local communities and traditions are more important in Latin America than in the North Atlantic - but agree to the same principles and norms. In terms of political values and cultural and religious identities, Africa was considered by most experts as “a case apart”. According to some diplomats, the cooperation with Africa is more difficult, due to diverse cultural traditions (religion, gender, ethnic, tribal structures), authoritarian regimes in some countries and the competition with external actors like China or India.

4.2. Opportunities and Limits for Cooperation

There was no clear agreement on the balance between cooperation and conflict in Atlantic relations. Most diplomats considered that there are no serious territorial conflicts between countries, neither now nor in the next 15 years, but shared concerns like terrorism, maritime security, fragile states and development gaps. The problem is that none of the actors has a real “Atlantic vision”.

Related to this critical position, the absence of a consolidated Atlantic forum was identified by academics, journalists, NGOs and diplomats as an obstacle for the creation of an Atlantic identity. While most diplomats argued that the signature of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) would be a building bloc for a more institutionalized space, academics had rather critical perceptions on the inclusion of Latin American or other Atlantic countries in a possible agreement.

Several interviewees reminded that different actors from Atlantic countries and regions cooperate in multilateral organizations or at a bilateral level in a large number of fields, including the four thematic fields considered in this report. Some stated the close cooperation and spirit of “identity” between the EU and the United States as major push factor for the Atlantic, while others were more critical about the trickle-down effect of the North Atlantic model to the South.

Most interviewees mentioned the importance of the NATO as a consolidated security organization, and some Professors drew the attention on academic spaces like the Atlantic Dialogues organized by the German Marshall Fund (GMF), or less specific forums such as the Global Forum on Migration and Development, the Forum on Maritime Security, the Global South conference or the G-20 Summits – where Atlantic countries coincide. Given the absence of specific meetings and a low level of exchange between the North and South Atlantic and, most experts agreed that the creation of an

institutionalized Atlantic space in the forthcoming five years looks highly unlikely, although they admitted that bilateral channels of cooperation increased.

From an economic perspective, an important obstacle for increasing cooperation is the unequal distribution of income and resources in the North and South Atlantic. It will remain a problem for the next five to fifteen years aggravated by the transfer of less resources (investment and development cooperation) from the North to the South as a result of the economic and financial crisis.

Security experts identified religious-based radicalism as the most conflictive element within the Atlantic Space. According to them, non-state actors like the jihad and organized crime and its increasing military and political power in fragile states pose major security problems for all four Atlantic regions, but particularly for the EU (and Spain).

There was no consensus on which areas are more prone for cooperation or conflict. While some diplomats saw the integration and regulation of migrants as a major controversy in the Atlantic, economists identified migration as a potential area of cooperation and economic push-factor. Many interviewees identified energy, development, the middle class, culture, values, climate change and drugs trafficking as main areas of convergence and common interests, while other fields like terrorism, security and migration were said to be more conflictive and sensitive. Similar views or concerns in these areas should enhance (functional) cooperation between Atlantic partners on an ad-hoc, voluntary bases. Competing national interests and the lack of political will to progress were identified as a major obstacle for further progress in the Atlantic.

4.3. The Role of the EU

Most interviewees qualified the EU as an important "pole" to define the future of the Atlantic or argued, a little less enthusiastic, that the EU is a relevant actor in the Atlantic. Some stressed its single voice in trade issues and the harmonization of policies in other areas such as development cooperation or climate change. The EU was cited as an example for cooperation and pooling of sovereignty in many areas: human rights, development, climate change, security, global finances. Additionally, academics stressed that Inter-regionalism, promoted by the EU, is also an important motor of cooperation within the Atlantic. They explained that the EU is promoting associations with Latin America and Africa, parallel to special bilateral relations with Strategic Partners (Brazil and Mexico in Latin America, South Africa, Canada, the US). For all these reasons, many experts said that the EU should be the major driving force of the Atlantic, given its branding as a "model for integration, cooperation and governance" through its own process and inter-regional dialogues with Africa and Latin America.

Interviewees were divided on the role of the EU in Latin America (relevant or irrelevant) and in Africa (relevant or neutral). Many predicted that the EU will lose weight in the Atlantic space. Transatlantic relations are much closer, but there is a certain rivalry for leadership between the EU and the United States. Some diplomats warned that Europe has to invest in maintaining its relationship with the United States. To the contrary, Washington will lose interest in maintaining its close relationship with the EU.

Although the EU will remain a key partner of the United States and a counterbalance to Asia, Europe has lost economic weight and political influence in Africa and Latin America. The EU's declining influence in the "global South" contrasts with China's increasing presence in Africa and Latin America. Compared to Africa – where

European trade, investment and ODA flows are high and European states play an active role in conflict resolution -, the EU has lost weight in Latin America and is unlikely to recover the presence and active role it had in the 1980s. Its declining role in the region can be explained by higher development levels and less instruments (as an interviewee said, the EU "no tiene palanca") to exert influence in Latin America, and particularly in countries like Venezuela. According to most experts, the EU should further engage in Africa and Latin America and counterbalance the increasing role of China.

In general terms, most experts were rather sceptical about the capacity of the EU, in the next five to ten years, to assume the role of an Atlantic driving force. According to economists and IR experts, at the medium term the EU will have a low profile (until the economic crisis of Southern Europe is solved by deepening integration) and a limited capacity to promote an Atlantic community. Economists criticised that the EU is not a "strategic actor" but involved in small, bureaucratic and irrelevant decision processes. The EU should have a sharper global profile and develop strategic visions. Even as a donor, the EU has poor results, and the EU does not benefit from its soft power. As an example, journalists referred to the neighbourhood policy and qualified the role of the EU in MENA as a "complete disaster", particularly its policy towards Egypt.

In the next five to ten years, the EU has to solve it, according to some academics, "self-created" crisis and problem of "actorness", given that the EU has no single voice at the G-20 and other multilateral forum. Optimist diplomats considered its long-term crisis as an advantage, because, according to them, the result will be deeper integration (banking union and full economic and monetary union). From a similar view, diplomats said that, particularly in Europe, "we are currently witnessing a time of turbulence and fragmentation" by the Euro crisis and the problems related to irregular migration from North Africa to Italy and Spain. Pessimist economists predicted that the future of the EU entails "ten years of self-inspection".

According to some diplomats, EU has lost weight after the crisis and should concentrate simultaneously on its internal and external consolidation by creating a real political and economic union (including Eurobonds and the "mutualisation" of external debt) and by sharpening its external profile and global projection beyond the traditional neighbourhood policy. Its future role in the world and in the Atlantic depends on its capacity to advance integration and further engage on foreign policy and defence. By strengthening the European External Action Service (EEAS) and speaking with one voice at the international stage, the EU could also improve its visibility and relevance in the Atlantic.

Diplomats suggested that the EU should be more enthusiastic about European integration and address European citizens by organizing more public debates and pro European campaigns. This would also strengthen its role and visibility at the international stage and reduce the weight of certain EU member states in European foreign policy. The EU is important for all regions and actors, and its future role in the Atlantic depends on its capacity to relaunch its soft power model and to increase its global outreach.

Discordant views included the perception of an academic that, in the long run (50 years ahead), the EU might replace the United States. Different to other interviewees more sceptical about a leading role of an inwards-looking EU muddling through, he argued that the US power position depend on a solution of the serious debt and currency crisis and the power struggle with China.

5. Conclusions

Pessimist views on the future of the Atlantic contrasted with more positive perceptions on a shared identity. According to some diplomats, the Atlantic is already a common space as the result of a constant process of harmonization and integration within the triangle EU, United States and Latin America. They were backed by academics convinced that, a pan-Atlantic space “already exists but it lacks a unity of action” among the regions. Others mentioned the de facto Atlantic space for drugs (by new routes in Atlantic Africa) that needs to be addressed by governments of all four regions. But to address those challenges, it is necessary to overcome the “dysfunctional North-South divide”.

Several experts did not believe in the emergence of an ‘Atlantic. For them, the Atlantic is just a geographic, but not a political or cultural space. Although the North Atlantic is institutionalized by NATO and other dialogues, it has no connection to South Atlantic countries. There is neither a Transatlantic dialogue with Latin America (against the wishful thinking of a Triangle) nor with Africa. The links between Africa and Latin America are incipient and needs further consolidation.

In general terms, most interviewees were sceptical about such a project, underlining the lack of political will, common action and a ‘push factor’ in the Atlantic basin as well as the contrast between a strong EU-US transatlantic space and weak relations with the South. It was not clear if a possible TTIP would have a positive uniting or a negative dividing effect for an Atlantic space. All interviewees stressed the importance of including Latin American countries in the future agreement. According to some economists, a wider TTIP would be the largest free trade area in the world.

The convergence of a common Atlantic space as an institutionalised forum has been qualified by most interviewees as an uncertain, long-term future scenario. According to diplomats, a Pan-Atlantic space seems less likely than a Pacific one, since there is no clear political will to advance. In their view, neither a particular institution nor a particular state seems to be interested in creating a political space. Some diplomats stressed the power imbalances and different weight of the Atlantic for the participating countries. If Spain, France, the United Kingdom and the United States were seen as the “most Atlantic countries”, followed by Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Mexico - as a bridge between the Atlantic and the Pacific space - , Central America and Africa (including South Africa) tend to ignore the Atlantic (“viven de espaldas al Atlántico”).

Many experts thought that the most relevant actors and regions lay outside the Atlantic space: China and other Asian countries, MENA and, according to some journalists, Central Asia, will be more relevant in the near future. Within the Atlantic space, diplomats argued that, in the near future, states and regions will remain the most relevant actors. To the contrary, academics, journalists and NGOs stressed the increasing influence of non-governmental players such as international organizations, multinational companies and banks, criminal and terrorist groups and civil society organizations. These actors prevail over states in the economic, financial and security sector.

Critical Professors and journalists sustained that not institutions but multinational companies are “the real supranational government” within the Atlantic. According to the defenders of a non-state centred world, these actors impose “laws” and pressures that can “paralyse the entire economy of a country”. They reminded that multinational corporations have more financial resources than, for example, the US Administration. Nonetheless, multinational companies will promote more cooperation and (a rather

asymmetric) integration, while governments are more divided between cooperation and conflict.

Most interviewees stressed the importance of ad hoc alliances and agreements between regions and actors (EU-LAC, EU-US, LAC-US, Africa-EU) within the Atlantic space that appears rather as a puzzle or a network than a coherent space. For example, compared to the EU's strategic interests in the region, there are less common interests between the MENA and the United States, or between the EU and Latin America. Moreover, in a "world of multiple choice", China and other emerging powers increased their presence in Africa and Latin America replacing the EU and the US in areas such as trade and infrastructure. Those links outside the "Atlantic world" will also create closer political relations with countries like China, much more distant in terms of values than the EU and the US. There is a risk that those "south-south" relations might undermine common values within the Atlantic.

Interviewees divided between an optimistic and a rather pessimistic scenario. While the "Atlanticists" stressed the importance of the TTIP as a main driver for convergence and the creation of an Atlantic space, "Atlantic skeptics" perceive a fragmented and highly dysfunctional Atlantic and were divided between a decline of the traditional North Atlantic community and its reactivation by the signature of the TTIP between the EU and the United States. According to sceptics, most of them journalists and academics, there is no ground for an Atlantic consensus, neither in five nor in 15 years.

This rather negative scenario contrasted with the perception of a more articulated and institutionalized Atlantic triangle between Latin America, the EU and the United States, defended by Spanish Atlanticists within the diplomatic community. Critical academic voices argued that there are no prospects for an Atlantic Triangle (EU, US, LAC), relations work reasonable well between two regions (Africa-LAC, US-EU, EU-LAC, EU-Africa, US-LAC, US-Africa), but not between all four partners.

Diplomats identified the "lack of ambition" and of a "long-term vision" as the main obstacle for an Atlantic space. According to them, particularly the EU should motivate people to believe in European integration and based on its own model, could be a driving force of the Atlantic project, in close coordination with its strategic partners the United States, Latin America and Africa. Others suggested that the EU should project its integration and soft power model and serve as a pivot to Asia and the US.

According to those diplomats, for the United States, the Atlantic space would be rather a "complement" for its Asian project than its most relevant foreign project. Several experts mentioned the ambivalent role of the United States by playing in both sides (the Atlantic and the Pacific rims). The Atlantic space cannot serve as a counterweight to China, since the United States is part of the Pacific space and has no interest in weakening it. From this geopolitical perspective, being a Pacific outsider, the EU should be the most interested actor when it comes to create a consolidated Atlantic space.

Pessimist diplomatic voices predicted that the Atlantic space will decrease, compared to the emergence of the Asian-Pacific space which will be much more dynamic and attractive for Atlantic players like Brazil or the United States than a closer engagement with Europe and Africa. According to economists, "egoism", "introspection" and the lack of an "Atlantic conscience" are major obstacles for a common space. China's increasing global power was seen as an important incentive for the creation of an Atlantic space as a counterweight to an Asian-Pacific bloc. In this sense, China is a uniting factor between the EU and the US. According to NGO representatives, the creation of a more formalized Atlantic should be pushed by a leading group of states, including the EU and the United States, Brazil, Mexico, Nigeria, Colombia and South

Africa. A common space driven by the United States and the EU or centred around an economic agreement TTIP “would make no sense” and reflect the traditional North Atlantic view in a new world of emerging powers and regions.